

Oregon needs more auditing capacity

What are the biggest differences between Oregon and

Washington? They pump their own gas, and we don't? They have a sales tax and we don't? They have NFL and Major League franchises and we don't? Yes, yes and yes.

There is another significant distinction, which is glaring in the wake of the Cover Oregon fiasco and the departure of Gov. John Kitzhaber. Washington has an independent auditor who carries out aggressive, far-reaching investigations. He is much better funded and staffed than Oregon's.

In Salem you would be hard pressed to find a legislator or state employee who does not know that state government's computer systems are largely antiquated. "Our computer systems can't talk to each other," said state Rep. Dennis Richardson during his campaign for governor.

But nowhere will you find a comprehensive written study of state government's cyber readiness or lack of readiness. And nowhere will you find a complete listing of the state's huge computer blunders and what those disasters cost the Treasury.

Every Oregon secretary of state tells us they will use the Audit Division of their office to shine a light on state government. But few audits over recent decades have moved debate and discussion within Oregon. When Phil Keisling was secretary of state, his Audits Division did conduct an audit of the Department of Motor Vehicles computer fiasco. A major recommendation of that audit was that the state needed top expertise on its side, to ensure that software vendors didn't overcharge, and were held to the highest of professional standards. If that recommendation had been heeded, we would not have had the Cover Oregon disaster with Oracle.

So there is a question of institutional memory within state government as well as the state Legislature. An institution that cannot remember things will make the same mistakes over and over.

The other question is the capacity of Oregon's Audits Division.

In Oregon, the Audits Division has 35 financial auditors, 27 performance auditors, five IT auditors and two municipal auditor positions. Its '13-15 biennial budget is \$22.8 million. In Washington, the Audit's Office has a total staff of 355 and a 2013-15 budget of \$35.2 million.

Washington state's auditor delivers sharp probes of state, county and local agencies. The auditor is an independent statewide elected official, responsible for making certain government entities comply with rigorous accounting standards, free from outside influence and control. The mere prospect of such oversight might have been enough to curb the types of blurred lines being reported about former Gov. John Kitzhaber and his entrepreneurial fiancée.

In addition to finances, the Washington Auditor's Office investigates whistleblower cases and alleged fraud by government employees. Its performance audits are aimed at intervening before agency mistakes or inefficiencies get out of hand. It was, for example, recently key to helping Ilwaco, Wash.'s, Ocean Beach Hospital discover its mistakes and return to viability.

States and their many tiers of agencies and smaller jurisdictions are, in effect, giant corporations paid by taxpayers. Professional, independent and appropriately supported auditing is indispensable.

Having an independently elected auditor, such as Washington's, removes the political tug and pull of statehouse politics.

Oregon needs to increase its auditing capacity. There is too much at stake for us not to learn from state and local government's mistakes.

EDITORIAL

The voice of the Chieftain



America stubbornly unhealthy

By Rocky Wilson

There's one of those biblical things that says to count it all joy, yet that can be a tough assignment under many conditions.

Like most elements of this thing we call life, we can suffer mightily and feel sorry for ourselves when things get tough or exercise free will and gain abject pleasure from the small things like sunshine, wind, flowers, and cheerful birds.

We truly have options.

Yet, whenever one's overall health wavers, the odds of being cheerful seem to head south accordingly.

A wise man once said "ignorance is bliss," and too often it's more convenient to remain in ignorance than respond to warning signs that hint that one's health might be suspect.

A perfect example is the society we live in. That the United States leads the world in obesity is an example of sticking our heads under the sand and seeking "pleasure" ahead of common sense in regard to family health. You have to be of preschool mentality to believe that being overweight promotes quality health, yet repeated warnings by doctors and nutritionists to consume more fruits and vegetables and exercise more commonly go on deaf ears.

It's as if we, the general population, agree we want to live healthier, longer,

JABBERWOCK II

more productive lives but, by cracky, aren't willing to give up anything of pleasure to attain such things.

If it truly is ignorance, there has to be a giant assist given to our stubborn unwillingness to learn and apply what we don't want to know. It's hard to even assume that mothers, who love their children worldwide, conceivably cannot grasp the unhealthy link between their hefty kids and grocery baskets full of soda.

Whether you know it or not, there's a bit of an oxymoron currently ongoing in regard to Wallowa County's standard food fare and the Complete Health Improvement Program (CHIP) that Wallowa Memorial Hospital is midway in bringing to a total of 150 county residents.

Meat, preferably beef, and potatoes, plus eggs have been gracing the plates of Wallowa County residents for as long as anyone can remember. In contrast, Dr. Hans Diehl's 27-year-old CHIP lifestyle program that's graduated and tracked the success of more than 65,000 participants places health priorities on fruits, vegetables, legumes, and nuts. Exclusivity away from all meat is not Dr. Diehl's thing, but the message definitely conflicts

with Wallowa County's beef industry.

My wife and I are participating in the second of three waves of the CHIP program now, and the benefits are surprising. Personally, I've lost a total of 23 pounds I didn't need and, at my wife's insistence, am exercising more. My blood pressure has dropped so far in a healthy direction that my primary care provider has suggested I visit my cardiologist to determine if a medication change should be made.

I'm far from a poster child as I'd guess all participants are gaining in different ways. Even the scientific video clips shown during the 18-class course can be life-changing. Just recently the amount of measurable "bad" a healthy man ingested during one solid foray with ice cream was staggering.

But all things in moderation, right?

While attending the Hospital Foundation's biggest fundraiser of the year recently, I sat next to a veteran Wallowa County rancher who, along with his wife, was attending round No. 1 of the CHIP program and singing its praises. Too, he — like me — blissfully was enjoying a rare prime rib.

Taste cannot be overlooked, yet were mothers to toss in one or three fewer Snickers into the shopping cart might be a positive for their kids.

Jabberwock II columnist Rocky Wilson is a reporter for the Chieftain.

Bah to shallow-rooted spruces

How about that windstorm, huh? What. A. Day. High fives all around for the utility crews, who are probably still sleeping after that marathon. I wasn't getting any shuteye once that freight train wind started rolling through. I went outside for a peek at 4 a.m. and discovered my truck underneath a spruce tree.

That was enough distraction to let the dog I was supposed to be watching for a friend slip outside and run off into what looked and sounded a lot like the Wizard of Oz tornado scene. So I set out at a brisk jog at four in the morning, trying to keep this husky in sight while pieces of Enterprise flew by and loose roofing shingles on many houses flipped up and down like keys on a player piano. "Sit" and "stay" just made the dog run faster, so when she paused to sniff some landscaping I went for a flying tackle that ended against somebody's rosebush. Neither the dog or I got scratched, because my new down jacket got all the thorns. This was all before daybreak. Or coffee.

Walking home from that invigorating start to the day, with one side of my expensive coat getting smaller and blowing away in the breeze, I got a text from Paul at Winding Waters River Expeditions in Joseph with a photo showing how most of the mural I painted just wasn't there anymore. It seemed like a good idea at the time to paint it on panels and screw those to the building. But that was before I knew the wind was an art critic.

Still walking home, I took inventory of the carnage. Street sign snapped off. Fences blown over. Aspen grove at Ter-



AND FURTHERMORE

Jon Rombach

minimal Gravity listing to port. There was enough light when my homestead started coming into view that I could now see a hole in the sky where another big spruce tree used to be. My main concern was that my new metal roof had not run away with the mural. This is the roof I had already ordered twice, after letting the first batch sit outside too long and get wet, which causes the paint to peel off. Because roofing is strictly for indoor use until you take it out of its packaging and expose it to outdoors. If I had turned that corner and seen my second new roof missing, I probably would have just kept on walking and would now be living in a cave in Hells Canyon.

Luckily the roof was still on. Here's some fun facts about Engelmann Spruce. They're notoriously shallow-rooted and apparently do not want me to own any vehicles. My Toyota pickup was underneath one spruce, but this other tree really outdid itself by scoring a two-for-one, landing directly on my classic car collection. True, the value of these two rigs is mainly sentimental. But, c'mon. The 1966 Ford F100 Custom Cab pickup I got from my dad and learned to drive in: smushed. Next to the Ford is Grandma Helen's sweet 1967 Buick Electra. It's got everything you could want in a car. Fins. Fender skirts. 8-track player. Chrome Kleenex holder. 430 cubic inch-

es of pure thunder beneath the hood. And now a tree on top.

Yeah, well, you forgot about my Jeep, Engelmann spruce and wind. Better luck next time. Actually, I don't mean that. Please don't smash the CJ7. Let's just let bygones be bygones.

Six trees are now bygone on my place. One took the powerline with it. The root wad of a tipped-over juniper pried my footbridge up and out of the creek when it went over. I mean, that's just insult to injury is what that is. You pulled the bridge out of the water? Really? Crikey.

Many thanks to the folks who found and returned the Winding Waters mural panels. One of them was in Vermont, I think. I heard another turned up in a trawler net in the Atlantic. They're a little scuffed up but we'll just call that patina.

At least nobody got seriously hurt, that I know of. My pal Andy had a close call with an airborne sheet of roofing metal zinging by. And I heard that a contractor got blown off a roof while trying to batten things down. I heard all sorts of things during and after that storm. Lots of chainsaws. And lots of news updates, mostly from strangers driving around on the damage viewing circuit.

The only positive spin to the wind damage I can think of is owning a convertible Buick Electra once I cut the crumpled roof off. Then I'm going to plant some new Engelmann Spruce trees in the yard so I can drive over them with the Buick. See how they like it. Bullies.

Jon Rombach is a local columnist for the Chieftain. His hobbies include pounding out dents in old cars with a mallet made from Engelmann Spruce.

Reader disputes corruption column

To the Editor:

If Mr. Wandschneider really is eluded by the link between the demand for faith in the divine wisdom of Muhammed — and demands for the blood of all who dare to shirk that fawning sacrifice of critical intelligence (collectively cursed as The Infidel) — then it's no bloody wonder he is so confused by the incidence of corruption in places where the very sacrifice in question is the enforced shibboleth of "honesty, truth, transparency, and justice for all." The role-reversal involved is not

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

without a backfire of humor. Such is Mr. W.'s zeal to absolve Islam of all charges, that he drops all history and scholarship to find that the corruption is father to the fundamentalism(!). If the Prophet isn't mortally offended, perchance it is only because he is safely dead.

But that to which the human mind is

commanded to kneel and thereby stifle itself — whether to Islam, Mammon, or J.M. Keynes — is beside the point and determines only details. The essential outcome of mindlessness is the same in all cases and under all banners, is Mr. W himself inadvertently drags to our attention.

For his display of that much wisdom, I don't know whether to shake his hand — or my head. I offer both gestures.

Tom Anderson
Wallowa

WALLOWA COUNTY
CHIEFTAIN

USPS No. 665-100

P.O. Box 338 • Enterprise, OR 97828
Office: 209 NW First St., Enterprise, Ore.
Phone: 541-426-4567 • Fax: 541-426-3921

Wallowa County's Newspaper Since 1884
Enterprise, Oregon

MEMBER OREGON NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

PUBLISHER **Marissa Williams, marissa@bmeagle.com**
EDITOR **Rob Ruth, editor@wallowa.com**
REPORTER **Stephen Tool, stool@wallowa.com**
REPORTER **Rocky Wilson, rwilson@wallowa.com**
NEWSROOM ASSISTANT **Rich Rautenstrauch, rrautenstrauch@wallowa.com**
AD SALES CONSULTANT **Brooke Pace, bpace@wallowa.com**
GRAPHIC DESIGNER **Robby Day, rday@wallowa.com**
OFFICE MANAGER **Cheryl Jenkins, cjenkins@wallowa.com**

PUBLISHED EVERY WEDNESDAY BY:
EO Media Group

Periodical Postage Paid at Enterprise and additional mailing offices

Subscription rates (includes online access)	1 Year
Wallowa County	\$40.00
Out-of-County	\$57.00

Subscriptions must be paid prior to delivery

See the Wallowa County Chieftain on the Internet
www.wallowa.com
facebook.com/Wallowa | twitter.com/wcchieftain

POSTMASTER — Send address changes to
Wallowa County Chieftain
P.O. Box 338
Enterprise, OR 97828

Contents copyright © 2015. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited.