



# Looking Outward

Dan Glode  
Columnist

## Government is not a business

*We are not to expect perfection in this world; but mankind, in modern times, have apparently made some progress in the science of government.*

— George Washington, letter to the Marquis de Lafayette, Feb. 7, 1788

Way back before the dawn of time, in the last century, I was working in the valley for the Children's Services Division (CSD). That agency is now called DHS. It was the 1970s and I was working as a protective service social worker. One difficult duty I had was to assess reports of child abuse, conduct investigations with law enforcement and make an evaluation/assessment as to whether the child should be removed from the home and/or require the family to accept family support services.

It was certainly where the rubber meets the road in terms of government intrusion into the lives of families. If we had to remove the child or mandate services the court intervened and the state took over. Having the state take over in family matters was — and is — a big deal.

I doubt even the most conservative of you out there would say the government has no right to remove a child from a clearly abusive situation. And all would agree this is not a decision that should be made in haste or without proper deliberation, as the consequences of making a mistake could have disastrous consequences for a child.

These have been some of my most difficult decisions I have had to make on behalf of others. There are some black-and-white, very clear cases for sure, but oftentimes the decisions are made in a gray cloud where evidence is certainly needed and often many factors come into play. The legal standard of "best interests of the child" is not a bright line. I have a tremendous amount of respect for the men and women who have to make these tortured judgments day in and day out.

During this period, many

in state government believed that state agencies should be run by executives from the private sector, including my agency. The prevailing *idea du jour* was that people in business have the most relevant experience in efficiency, organization and cost-effectiveness. Those skills were assumed to be transferable. It was also assumed that government managers were inefficient, self-serving and entrenched.

Government, many thought, was bloated and those who ran it were tedious and incompetent. The reasoning went that if private-sector managers were put in positions of authority government would be a well-oiled machine which could carry out the public's affairs with diligence and frugality. This reasoning was misguided in the 1970s and it certainly is now, as we usher in the era of the businessman president. Looks like people are embracing this hogwash again. I guess you can fool some of the people all the time.

The business I was in was obviously one which did not make a profit, and people who were in the "widget-making" business (those who now lead the agency) had no idea of what child protective services and family restoration were. But, hey, they did love their numbers so since they had no clue what was going on they wanted to develop a system of quantifying the services that were provided to children and families.

Give them numbers and columns and they were happy. So began the genesis of one kind of management information system after another. They were difficult, time-consuming and

completely inaccurate in the way they described the real world. They tried to quantify that which could not be quantified.

It became a tarpit from which the agency still has not recovered.

Government is not a business. It's complex and operates with a different set of rules, precepts, laws, organization and mandates. Oil and water. Is it expensive? Yes, you bet it is. Roads, jails, court systems, needed regulators, justice, police, fire, schools, universities, aviation regulation, war, weapons, pensions, veteran's benefits, disability assistance, water, sewer and every other thing you can think of that government does for you are not cheap.

There are two prevailing assumptions: 1. Business is inherently more efficient than government and the skill-set for managers is higher than that of government managers, and 2. Government workers are lazy and time-wasters and their managers are incompetent plodders. Both assumptions are grossly incorrect.

In my view business skill-sets are not the same as those needed for government and are [not] necessarily transferable; in fact, most likely not transferable. Most government workers and managers work at least as hard as their private-sector counterparts. One of the current disasters I will write about at another time is the privatization of prisons and jails. As you want good management leadership in the private sector, you want it in public sector. The best place to recruit for the public sector is the public sector.

Let's not suggest George Washington was wrong.

*Quality: the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, skilled execution*

**LAREDO**  
DESIGNERS & BUILDERS of DISTINCTION  
541-549-1575  
LaredoConstruction.com  
Since 1994 CCB#194489

**DON'T MISS OUT**  
on this week's inserts in The Nugget:

**BI-MART: Keurig 2.0 K425 Brewers** are now over **\$40 off!** Regularly \$139.99, now **\$99.99**. And enjoy Bi-Mart's huge selection of K-Cups® at everyday low pricing — and frequent discounts!

**RAY'S FOOD PLACE: The Fantastic Friday One-day Deal** on January 13 is **Certified Angus Beef Top Round London Broil** Value Packs, marked at **\$1.99 per pound!** (30-lb. limit)



To view all our listings go to: [central-oregon.kw.com](http://central-oregon.kw.com)

### 14012 Hawks Beard, BBR • \$1,599,000



Five-bedroom home with 5 ensuite bathrooms. Two bedrooms are bunkrooms for the kids or young at heart. Perfect family gathering place...sleeps 20! Ideally situated overlooking Glaze Meadow and Heron Lake. Vaulted cathedral ceilings with wide-plank oak floors.



**CAROL ZOSEL, Broker, SRES** (Senior Real Estate Specialist)  
503-616-8712 • [carolzosel@kw.com](mailto:carolzosel@kw.com)

### 460 Maple St., Sisters • \$295,000

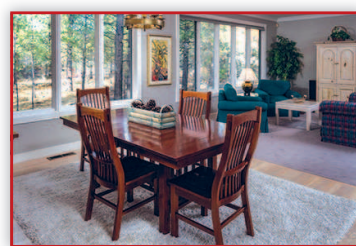


Location, location, location! Lovely and well-maintained 3-bedroom, 2-bath single-level home on .21 acre. Walk to town, school, library and restaurants. Light and bright open floor plan with newly remodeled kitchen. Fully fenced yard, storage shed. 1-year warranty.



**JODI SATKO, Broker, CSP** (Resort, Luxury & Ranch Specialist)  
541-550-0819 • [satkosellsoregon@gmail.com](mailto:satkosellsoregon@gmail.com)

### 70180 Mahonia, BBR • \$185,000 (Quarter Share)



Architecturally designed gem! Large home nestled in big ponderosas at the back of the Ranch is quiet and private. Gourmet kitchen is ideal for entertaining. 3 bedrooms (2 master suites), greatroom, 2 fireplaces, family room, large decks, 2-car garage. Two quarter interests avail.



**CHUCK HARPER, Broker, RENE** (Real Estate Negotiation Expert)  
503-915-9417 • [chuckharper@kw.com](mailto:chuckharper@kw.com)

### 20155 Marsh Rd., Bend • \$749,000



In the heart of Tumalo with full Cascade mountain views. 8.75 acres, 5 acres underground irrigation. 3-bedroom, 2-bath, 2,000 sq. ft. home with open floorplan, main-level master suite, office or guest room, plus a loft bedroom. 4-stall barn, storage, or covered RV parking.



**SHELLY HUMMEL, Broker**  
541-480-8523 • [shelly@sellbend.com](mailto:shelly@sellbend.com)

### Automobile Condominium, Sisters • \$36,000



Great commercial investment — 2-car/boat unit at the Classic Garage is 24 feet by 20 feet. Heated, security gate, clubhouse and security cameras. Includes use of indoor car wash with hot water and heat. Terms available. Units are condominiums so can be financed individually.



**STEVE MCGHEHEY, Broker**  
541-420-8103 • [stevemcghehey@kw.com](mailto:stevemcghehey@kw.com)

170 W. Cascade Ave., Sisters  
— In Barclay Square, behind BJ's Ice Cream —  
Offices also located in Bend and Redmond

Each office independently owned and operated.

