

Oregon ending involvement in Kitzhaber probe, defers to feds

PORTLAND (AP) — The Oregon Department of Justice is ending its involvement in the influence-peddling investigation of former Gov. John Kitzhaber and Cylvia Hayes.

The Oregonian/OregonLive reports that the department's criminal justice section head Michael Slauson told federal prosecutors last week that the state was officially out "and will not be pursuing any further inquiry into the misconduct" by the former first couple.

Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum opened an investigation into the matter on February 6, 2015, days before Kitzhaber resigned.

Three weeks later she agreed to suspend it at the request of federal investigators, who took the lead in the case.

A protracted legal fight over evidence has delayed the federal investigation. The U.S. Justice Department has yet to decide whether they have evidence to support any charges.

Kitzhaber insists he did no wrong.



Life with a Willing Heart

Jayson Berray
Columnist

The hard battles we fight

Be kind. Everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.

This simple tenet came into my life several years ago and struck me as profound and necessary. I have tried my best since then to put it into practice whenever I can, but I do fail from time to time.

For whatever cruel reason, it's so easy for us humans to forget this simple truth. Assumptions are often somewhat if not fully incorrect and they breed judgments. To make matters worse, judgments sometimes breed harmful words and actions. Think for a second about how many interactions you have in the span of a week, which are driven by incorrect assumptions, judgments, and actions. I have many. Simply being human in this world seems like kind of a scary game to play when you really think about

it, because each of us is simply trying to do the best we can with what we have been given — but so many times we assume the worst of each other.

Every Wednesday morning while on my first break at work I look forward to perusing the latest issue of *The Nugget*. This past week I was particularly struck by the first letter to the editor, and I have to say, it wasn't in a good way.

I shudder at the language, "put your big girl pants on" and the idea that certain people aren't American if they don't appear to agree with and support the views of another group. Dealing in absolutes and adhering to an if-you're-not-with-us-you're-against-us mentality, in my humble opinion and based on life experience, seems more harmful than good. Do absolutes have their time and place? Possibly, but the political arena isn't the place for them. It's a spectrum, and everyone's views are based on the battles that he or she is fighting.

This letter seemed charged with assumptions, judgments, and verbal action. I viewed it as cringeworthy. But the tricky part was that my emotions immediately kicked in and drove me to that same degenerative chain — assumptions, judgments, and actions. So I started thinking, "Wow, how many times over the past couple of years have I felt like I was on the receiving end of incorrect assumptions, judgments, and actions?" The answer was

quite often, and it never feels good no matter who you are. Why is that? Because my wife and I are often fighting hard battles that no one else really knows about. 2016 was riddled with them, chief among which was losing a baby at five months.

One thing that helped me check my attitude and take heart was the moving tribute to Jack Fields, which was in that very same issue of the paper. Jack was a friend of ours. Granted, we weren't as close with him as the other great folks in our community who called him a friend, but we knew him well enough to be more than acquaintances. In fact, he lived in our house with some other folks before we moved in and put in a good word for us with the landlords.

Jack was one of the friendliest people I have met in recent years. The fact that his life ended so soon is a tragedy, unfortunately, a familiar concept to many of us. But my underlying response to the news

of his passing ended up being thankfulness at having known him because of what a kind man he was. No matter if it had been days, weeks, or months in between our interactions, he always greeted us with that warm smile, asked how our kiddos were doing and made sure to always check in with my wife on if she had made any great and interesting thrift store finds. He admired her talent for "thrifting."

When I read that letter to the editor it was easy for me to adopt a bad attitude. But I don't think it was an accident for the article about Jack to be in that same issue because I couldn't help but think, "What would someone like him do?" The answer immediately became clear and reminded me of that truth: Be kind. Everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle.

Opinions will always differ, but one constant is that we are all fighting hard battles and should be trying to be in this thing called life together.

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