

**GUEST EDITORIAL
FROM THE BEND BULLETIN**

DHS works to delay, conceal care progress

What a terrible time for the Oregon Department of Human Services to conceal what it's doing to improve foster care.

The state has paid out millions in settlements for failing to ensure the children in its care were safe. An Oregon Secretary Of State audit found in January that DHS has been "slow, indecisive, and inadequate" in fixing recurring problems in the foster care system.

To its credit, DHS pledged to address all 24 of the audit's recommendations for improvement. The agency wrote it would cultivate the "need for transparency, strong and open communication." DHS published on its website some updates on its progress, though it didn't address all 24.

When we asked for a more comprehensive update in mid-April, DHS was slow and inadequate. DHS staff went to considerable effort to write a more comprehensive memo for The Bulletin to update the public about its progress. But DHS did not release it. To get it, we had to compel its release under state public records law. That's the DHS idea of transparency?

Internal DHS emails show the agency's leadership was more worried about how the information might be seen than being open with the public about what it was doing. Jay Remy, who was the head of public information at DHS at the time, wrote on May 9 he was worried releasing a response might surprise Gov. Kate Brown's office or the Secretary of State's Office. He advocated delay.

Jeannine Beatrice, chief of staff at DHS, responded: "If we push it off, we need to get something on line that shows progress ... as we promised in many communications that we would be transparent going forward."

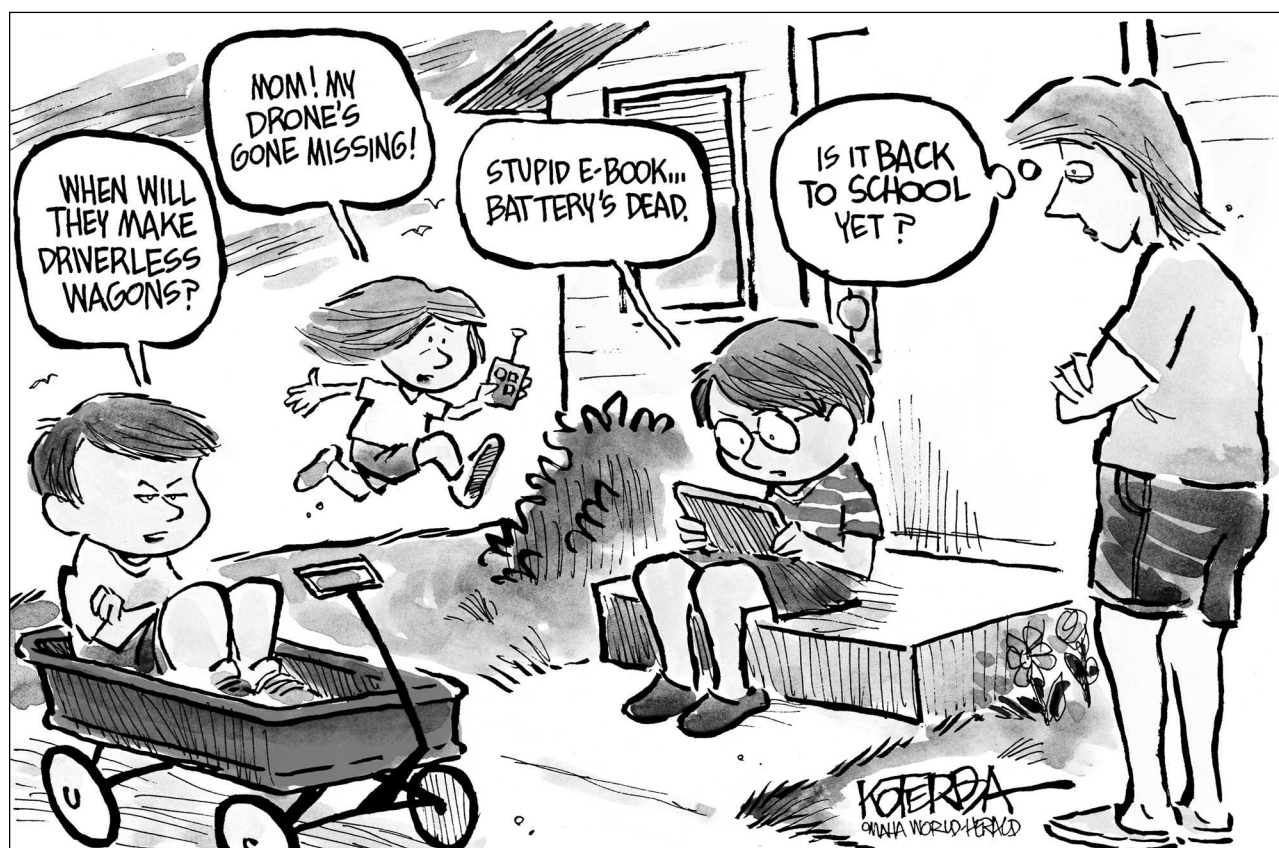
"I agree," replied DHS Director Fariborz Pakseresht.

Remy then added in an email on May 10 that Kate Kondayen, who worked in Gov. Kate Brown's office, wanted to hold off releasing anything and roll it into a media campaign. That's not transparency; that's control.

DHS never told us why it would not give us a comprehensive update. We got tired of waiting and made a public records request on May 21 for emails related to our request for information. That's how we got those internal emails and the release of the memo. (You can see a version of that memo on The Bulletin's website.)

DHS didn't even get our public records request right. Under state law, DHS had 15 days to give us a reasonable estimate about when our records request would be completed. We never got that.

The episode with DHS is a good lesson in why Oregon needs strong public records laws. All the government talk of transparency can be a charade.



Your views

Firor: Humans have lived in Eastern Oregon for perhaps 15,000 years

To the Editor:
In his charming article about backpacking with his family in the North Fork of the John Day Wilderness, Jayson Jacoby made an incorrect, but commonly made, assumption.

Mr. Jacoby obviously had no intention of offending anyone, but he well may have. His gentle musings about "when people first pitched tents here" either ignores the evidence that humans have made a living near streams and rivers in Eastern Oregon for perhaps 15,000 years (see "Fossil intrigue" by Dick Mason in the Feb. 27, 2013, Observer) or else discounts early inhabitants as something other than "people."

While neither of these possibilities was his intent, it is important for us all to recognize that life is a continuum; that each of us walks behind those who've come before; and that those who came before us were following in the steps of even earlier inhabitants. To think of North America as having been a vast, empty land that was just waiting for Europeans to "discover"

it is to make invisible the millions of people who already lived here.

I cannot speak for the local Native American community, but if I knew my own ancestors had been living here throughout the past 15,000 years, I believe I would be ruefully amused and at least mildly offended whenever someone wondered if the earliest human use of a lovely campsite was a century ago.

Kay Firor
Cove

ORD2 Indivisible Steering Committee: Why is the media keeping Walden's secrets?

To the Editor:
A couple weeks ago was Congressional Recess Week — that time when representatives and senators are supposed to come back from D.C. to hear from their constituents.

But not Greg Walden. For 15 months, he's been playing a pretty good game of hide-n-seek in Oregon's 2nd District. And you, the media, are playing right along.

Here's how it works: Instead of holding a town hall, Walden sets up a series of meetings only with constituents who support him.

He does not put out a press release, but he does tell the media when and where he will show up. At the meeting, he brags about some bill or proposal he wants everyone to know about. There are no hard questions asked. Then he leaves.

By the time we see photos or film of him — head cocked, arms crossed, looking like he cares — he is long gone.

Oregon District 2 Indivisible is a group of concerned Oregonians from the 2nd Congressional District who are united in resistance to the Trump agenda of hatred, exclusion and social inequality. Based in Phoenix, we are committed to actively creating a path from protest to power by insisting that our congressional representatives hear our voices.

We have made regular calls to all of his offices, asking when he will next come to town. They say they do not know. We have directly contacted his scheduler in D.C., but for some reason, she never knows either.

But you know. And we don't understand: Why are you keeping his secrets? When a congressman who has been avoiding his constituents for more than a year sneaks into town, that should be news! It should

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be sent out on Twitter and shared on Facebook and posted as breaking news on your website — immediately. If you truly believe in public service, then please, serve the people who read your paper or watch your news, and share the information that our congressman is coming to town.

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