

Our View

# Another push in Oregon government for more secrecy

Sharing someone's personal information with intent to harm them could soon get you sued in Oregon. A bill in the Oregon Legislature would permit a lawsuit for what's commonly called doxxing.

The bill may help fill a gap in Oregon law. What's worrying is a proposed amendment that would create more secrecy in Oregon government.

House Bill 3047 has more detail than we will summarize here. It ticks off a long list of things it defines as "personal information," including address, email address, phone number, photographs of children, identification of children's school and more. It says if a defendant with the intent to harass, injure or stalk knowingly discloses such information and knew the person didn't want the information disclosed and a plaintiff was harassed, injured or stalked, a plaintiff can seek damages. You can read the bill yourself on the Legislature's website.

One important thing to note: The bill does not specify the personal information disclosed is or is not already publicly available. So it may not matter if anyone could find the information if they went looking. What can matter is the intent of the disclosure and if the person was harassed, injured or stalked and if a reasonable person would have been, as well.

Let's look at the amendment. Members of the public and journalists can get into battles with government agencies over public records. The proposed amendment aims to expand the list of things exempted from disclosure.

The Oregonian reported the "amendment was introduced on behalf of the League of Oregon Cities." Scott Winkels, the organization's lobbyist told that newspaper: "We were just trying to align the language to what a lot of people in the state had always felt like it meant."

Part of the amendment may do that. It also would throw a shadow over much government activity.

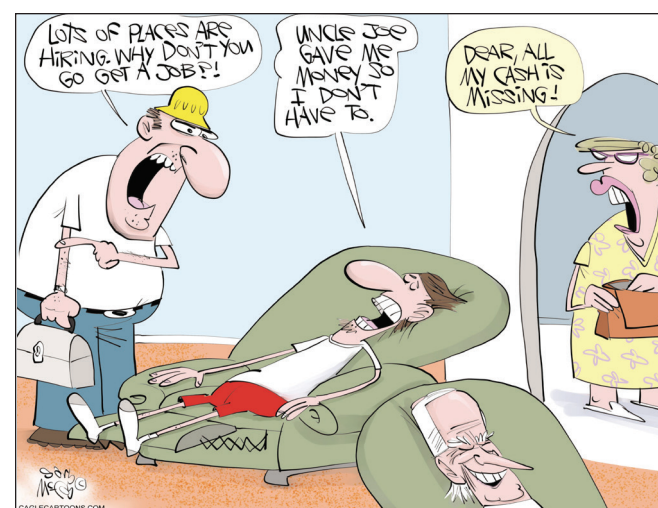
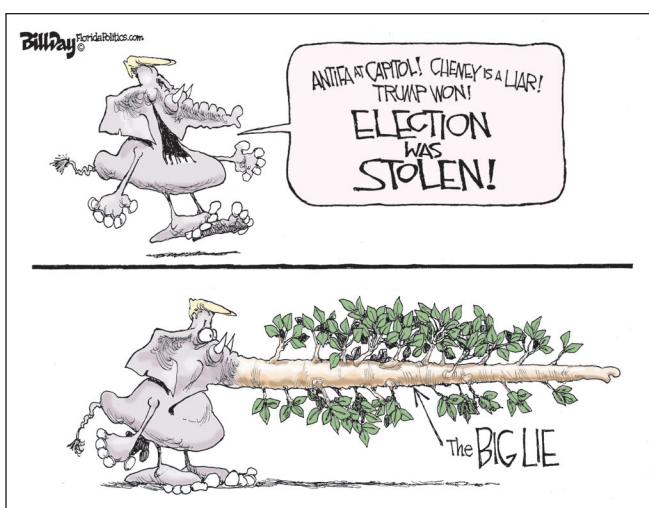
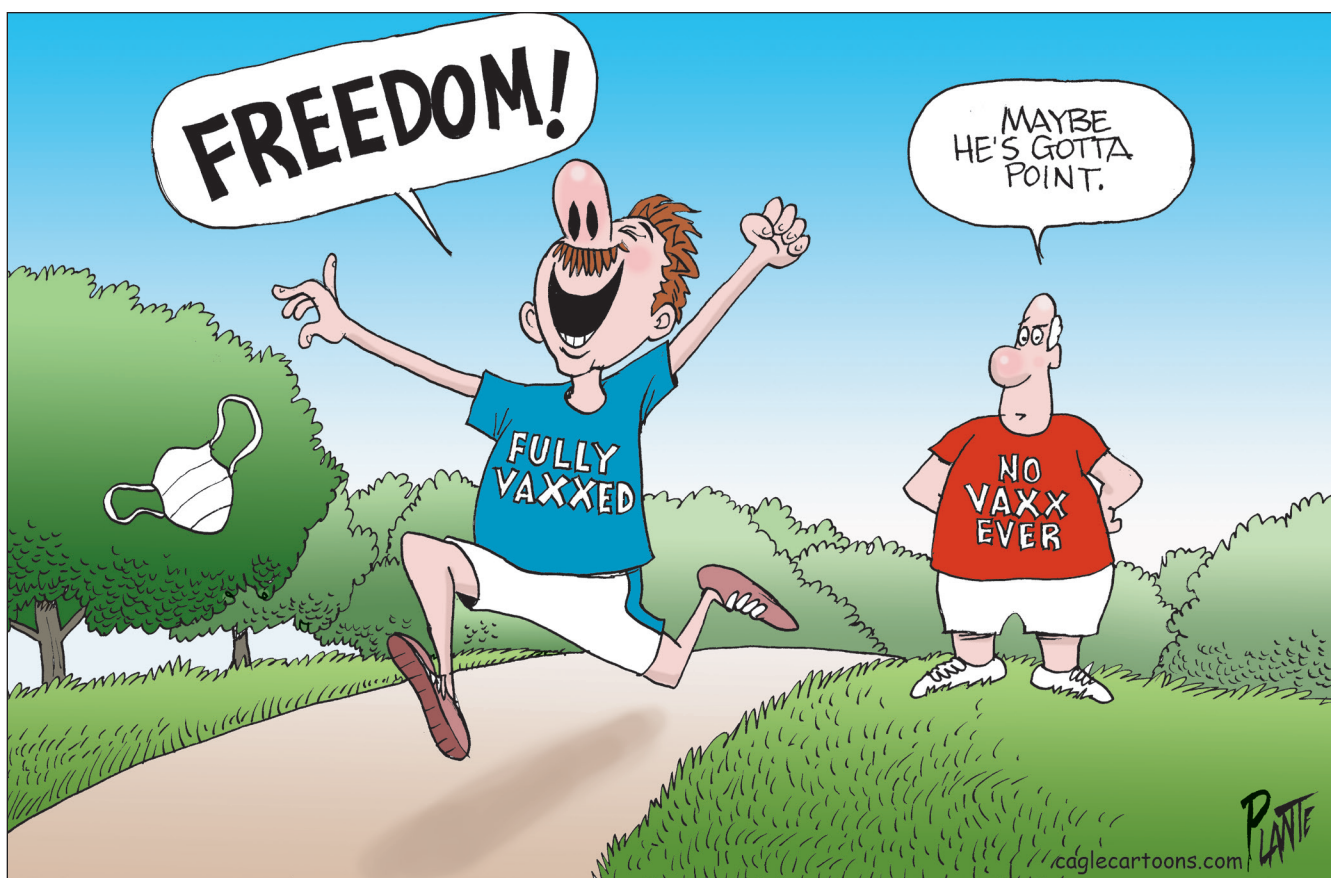
Just one thing the amendment does is exempt from disclosure communications within a public body or between public bodies if "they cover other than purely factual materials and are preliminary to any final agency determination of policy or action." The communications may still be released, but a member of the public might have to go to court to get them.

It's easier to understand with an example. An Oregon Secretary of State audit found in January 2018 that Oregon's Department of Human Services has been slow, indecisive and inadequate in fixing recurring problems with foster care. In April 2018, The Bulletin in Bend asked DHS what it was doing to make progress. When The Observer's sister paper didn't get a response, it made a public records request for DHS emails connected to our request.

It turned out DHS had written up a memo to answer the questions. The Bulletin only ever received the memo because of the public records request. Other emails the paper received showed the agency was more concerned with how the information might be seen than informing the public what it was doing. It wanted to hold off releasing anything and roll it into a media campaign.

That's an example of how your state government works. Its priority can be controlling information, not informing the public. And under the amendment such as the one to House Bill 3047, we may never have received those emails.

The amendment doesn't simply line up state law with what people think state law says. It's also a move to suppress the people's ability to understand how their government behaves behind the scenes.



Other Views

# There's value in work, like it or not



**RICH MANIERI**  
JOURNALIST AND AUTHOR

The disappointing April jobs report should surprise absolutely no one, given we now have a government more interested in providing incentives for people not to work rather than paving the way to gainful employment. There is something to be said for and gained putting in an honest day's work and collecting a paycheck.

When I was a teenager, my mother worked as my talent agent. She landed me two busboy jobs, a few babysitting gigs and a handful of snow-shoveling and grass-mowing jobs in the neighborhood. But her biggest score was the Enchanted Village.

It was a small store in a strip mall that sold Christmas items and was owned and operated by the meanest man I have ever met. I'll call him Wally.

One afternoon, my mother walked into the shop and asked Wally if he needed anyone after school. They talked for a while. My mother worked her magic. It was the first and only time in my life that I was hired without being interviewed.

You would think a guy who spent his days around twinkling lights and snow globes would have a bit of the Christmas spirit about him. But Wally saw Christmas as if it were a bully

who pulled his pants down every afternoon at recess. It was his mortal enemy, a nemesis, a burden to be endured.

Wally was in his 40s. He had a beer belly and a big, wild, salt and pepper moustache that seemed to be trying to overcome his entire face. His most distinguishing feature, however, was his absolute hatred of anyone under 21.

One day, I was on my knees stocking shelves with boxes of red satin Christmas balls.

"Reverse them," Wally ordered as he stood over me with his arms folded. Reverse what? I didn't know what he was talking about.

"Reverse them!" "Reverse" seemed like an odd word. My brain defined "reverse" as to move backward. I think that's what threw me. I looked at Wally. I didn't say anything but I hoped my look told him I didn't know what he wanted me to do or how he wanted me to "reverse" the red balls. He didn't take the bait.

"Reverse them!" he yelled. I figured I'd better do something. So I took each box of balls and turned it around so the front of the box was facing the back of the shelf.

When Wally yelled "No!" or "Stop!" he wasn't just barking an order. It was more desperate than that, almost like he was watching some horrible tragedy. Not being able to put up with my stupidity any longer, Wally grabbed the boxes of red balls and put them on the floor.

"Reverse them! Reverse them! Moron."

He took boxes of green balls from the shelf and put them where I had been stacking red balls, and he put the red balls where the green ones were.

Yes, I hated the job. Yes, Wally was insane. But it wasn't the last job I would hate nor would Wally be my last combustible and unreasonable boss. I needed to learn how to deal with bad jobs and bad bosses. And, when it was over, I took my paycheck to the bank and deposited it — like an adult.

There are scores of jobs, right now, in the U.S. — well-paying jobs — that remain unfilled.

"I hear from too many employers throughout our state who can't find workers. Nearly every sector in our economy faces a labor shortage," Montana's Republican Gov. Greg Gianforte said last week. Gianforte announced his state is no longer accepting the federal government's extra unemployment payments.

Hopefully, there are more governors out there like Gianforte, who understand that paying able-bodied Americans to stay home is bad for business, and that it's even worse for Americans.

*Rich Manieri is a Philadelphia-born journalist and author. He is currently a professor of journalism at Asbury University in Kentucky. You can reach him at manieri2@gmail.com.*

Letters

## Coach Labarda will be missed on the basketball court

I first met coach Carlito Labarda Jr. in February 2019 at my first Eastern Oregon University men's basketball game. I had just moved here from Atlanta, Georgia, and was wearing a University of Georgia Bulldog shirt. I

was sitting behind the bench and after the game I spoke with the coach and told him that was a great win. He said to come to his office the next day and he would get me a EOU shirt to wear instead of that Georgia shirt.

So the next day I met him at his office and we talked a few minutes about his coaching career. I asked him what it was like to coach against Bobby Knight of Indiana when he

coached at Purdue under Gene Keady. He said it was always entertaining for him.

Whether I saw him at Denny's after a game or shopping at Safeway, he always had time to say hello and ask how I was doing. He will be missed on the court, and I wish him the very best in his future.

*Robert Beck  
Island City*

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Phone: 541-963-3161

Toll free (Oregon): 1-800-781-3214

Email: news@lagrandeobserver.com

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