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Op-Ed**Giving law enforcement tools they need to help victims in an emergency**

By Rep. Greg Walden

On December 1, 2013, Kari Rene Hunt was brutally murdered by her estranged husband in the bathroom of a motel room in Marshall, Texas. Her three children listened through the door as she was stabbed repeatedly. Kari screamed to her nine year old daughter to "call 9-1-1." The girl did as instructed, frantically dialing 9-1-1 four times. But each time, she heard static on the other end of the line. What she didn't know is that, because of the way the motel's phone system was set up, she had to dial "9" first to reach an outside line. She told her grandfather later, "I tried, but it wouldn't work, Papa."

On June 2, 2007—just days after her high school graduation—Kelsey Smith went to a Target store in Kansas to buy a present for her boyfriend. She was abducted from the parking lot in broad daylight, and law enforcement began a massive search for her. They were unsuccessful for four days until her cell phone's location information was turned over to law enforcement. Kelsey's body was then found in about 45 minutes.

The House Communications and Technology panel, which I chair, heard these stories recently from the parents of both the slain young women. No family should have to face situations like these. And they were made worse by a confusing patchwork of laws that govern telephone and communications systems in this country. If the laws were different at the time, is it possible that Kari Hunt and Kelsey Smith would be alive today? Perhaps. That's why I'm pushing for the Kelsey Smith Act. Congress to pass two bills to ensure that law enforcement can help victims faster in an emergency situation, when time is precious.

One proposal, known as "Kari's Law," would require that all multi-line phone systems, typically found in hotels, offices, and schools, be configured to reach 9-1-1 without any additional prefix. After all, children are taught from a very young age to simply dial 9-1-1 in an emergency, not "9-9-1-1" or "7-9-1-1" or anything else. This fix would be both easy and inexpensive. Many others around the country have made progress addressing this problem, but we need a uniform, national standard to make sure what happened to Kari Hunt and her family never happens again. It's been said that you may only dial 9-1-1 once in your life, but that time will be the most important call you ever make. We should make sure it's as easy as possible so you can get the help you need when seconds count.

Another proposal, known as the "Kelsey Smith Act," would give law enforcement the tools to locate victims in emergencies, using location data from their cell phone providers. By creating a narrow set of circumstances in which law enforcement can access this type of data, the bill seeks to protect the privacy of users while still allowing access for law enforcement when the situation demands it. The Kelsey Smith Act is already the law in 22 states, including right here in Oregon where it was approved by the legislature unanimously in 2014. The federal bill would take the Oregon standard and apply it nationwide. It's just common sense.

Both these proposals were recently approved unanimously by the Communications and Technology panel I chair, as well as the full Energy and Commerce Committee. The next step is a vote in the full U.S. House of Representatives, which I hope will take action soon. These plans would save lives using existing technology and don't cost taxpayers a dime. It's time they become law so that what happened to the families of Kari Hunt and Kelsey Smith never happens to another American family again.

Rep. Greg Walden / Submitted photo

**Important Message from County Clerk**

"Our office has received several inquires when voters are receiving more than one ballot and questions as to which ballot to vote. I just want to encourage anyone who may have any questions or concerns regarding any ballot to call our office. This has been confusing and we need to have any voter know their questions will be reviewed, answered and clarified immediately. Thanks so much," said Cindy Carpenter, Baker County Clerk.

Baker High School Honors and Awards Night

will be held Wednesday, June 1, at 7 p.m. at the BHS Auditorium. Graduation will be Sunday, June 5, 2 p.m. Bulldog Memorial Stadium.

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Baker County Museum Commission to Meet
The next Baker County Museum Commission meeting will be on June 9, 2016 at 1 p.m. at 2480 Grove Street in Baker City.

Baker County Cultural Coalition Announces Grant Deadline

The Baker County Cultural Coalition is welcoming grant applications for the current round of Cultural Participation Grants with funding made possible by the Oregon Cultural Trust. The deadline to submit grant applications is May 16, 2016.

The Baker County Cultural Coalition is a nine-member planning committee appointed by the Baker County Commission to serve the goals of the Oregon Cultural Trust. A primary purpose of the coalition is to re-grant funds it receives from the Cultural Trust to local arts, humanities and heritage projects, which is done twice annually in mid-December and May. Applicants may only receive grant awards once during the year. New grant applications will not be considered if grant reports from prior awards have not been received. All recipients must submit a grant report indicating how funds were used by October 31.

The Oregon Cultural Trust designates approximately one third of the funds it distributes annually as Cultural Participation Grants to cultural coalitions in Oregon's 36 counties and nine federally recognized tribes. These funds are to be used for cultural activities and priorities, and local programs that increase access to cultural resources and opportunities. To obtain a grant application, visit the Baker County Cultural Coalition website at:

http://www.bakercounty.org/cultural_plan/grants.html. Forms must be completed, hand delivered to a Coalition Board Member or e-mailed (preferred) to bccc@bakercounty.org by May 16. More information is available at the website.

To learn more about how you can benefit by helping to support cultural programs like this, visit the Oregon Cultural Trust website: www.culturaltrust.org.

Letters continued from page 5**Experience Counts**

To the Editor:

For over 25 years, I have relied on and trusted the expertise, always provided to me by Bruce Nichols, of Nichols & Mitchell, CPA. He has served this county with great care for decades. I went to work for the City of Huntington, in 1977, as their City Recorder, Bookkeeper, Municipal Judge, Budget Officer and anything the Council directed me to do, as do most small town City Recorders.

Over my 25 years of working in that capacity for the City of Huntington, I was fortunate to work many with excellent people, leaders, judges, attorneys etc. I found Bruce a dependable, knowledgeable, associate that was proven time and time again with the work he put forth as our City Auditor. His know-how, professionalism and ability to communicate allowed me to not only learn but serve confidently in knowing that we had his talents available to the City.

Even after I had retired as City Recorder, and became the Mayor of Huntington, Bruce continued to serve the City and Baker County. Providing the qualified assistance a successful City requires. Most notably, Bruce was instrumental in helping me to convince to the Huntington City Council, Baker County District Attorney and the State of Oregon, how a City of Huntington Employee was seriously misappropriating large amounts of municipal funds. This was a complex task that Bruce was able to manage without problems.

Real Experience Counts. Vote for Bruce Nichols.

Donna J. Rush, Ontario
Proud former Baker County
Resident for over 50 years

Dear Lord: Please Restore Sanity to Baker County

To the Editor:

For almost thirty years it has been my privilege and pleasure to work with Bruce Nichols on behalf of mutual clients. For many of those years Bruce and I also served on the Hospital Board during the period of time when our community was in the greatest danger of losing that all-important facility. He served on the Finance Committee and was critical to the decision making processes that allowed Baker County to keep its Hospital.

Having also audited numerous municipalities, Bruce completely understands institutional and municipal finance — where the dead wood and fat are hidden and how to get the most out of each dollar of scarce resources. At a time like the present, when a good hospital and school system, together with a responsive and responsible local government are of the utmost importance to the

county's economic viability, no better person than Bruce could offer his services to the voters.

Bruce is not a showman. We don't need slogans and ill considered, emotionally based calls to action that, while making for good press, almost inevitably lead to disaster. At times like this we need a thoughtful person like Bruce to offer considerate, calm and measured responses to very challenging problems. He has a habit of listening before he speaks and is respectful to all involved. His knowledge of public finance and appreciation for his fiduciary responsibility to the voters are something that is sorely needed at the Courthouse.

Let's help Bruce help us to return to excellence and political sanity.
Martin Leuenberger, Lawyer
Sumpter

And, Yes, the Record-Courier DOES Reach a lot of Folks!

To the Editor:

My extended family has lived in Baker County since it was first settled. My grandparents, Skinner and LaVaughn Kirby were cattle ranchers in Durkee. I hold Baker close to my heart — In fact, I married a Baker boy, Doug Schmitt. Our roots in Baker run deep and we return many times a year to visit. Because we care so much about the area, we want to share why we think Bruce Nichols is the best candidate for Baker County Commissioner.

First, he has excellent financial management skills. Bruce Nichols is our personal accountant. We trust him and have the utmost faith in his financial knowledge and skills. These skills as a CPA / financial expert will serve the county well.

Second, Bruce is in tune with the needs of Baker County. When we have had questions about charitable contributions to Baker charities, Bruce has put us in contact with the right people.

Third, Bruce Nichols is a connector. He doesn't just watch things happen or complain about things happening, he makes things happen. Just one example is his part in ensuring that the Leo Adler House is currently managed by the Adler Foundation and not by a bank in a different state.

Bruce Nichols has outstanding financial acumen, is a straight-up kind and honest man, knows the needs of the community, is a connector, and can make things happen. These are exceptional skills that I think we can all agree are hard to find in political candidates these days! I hope voters see this unique opportunity to elect the kind of person we all want working to improve Baker County as Baker County Commissioner. Bruce Nichols is the ideal candidate for the job.

Amber (Mires-Cornett) Schmitt
Round Rock, TX