

Kitzhaber says Cover Oregon settlement vindicates him

No word on FBI inquiry

By NICK BUDNICK
Capital Bureau

Former Gov. John Kitzhaber says he is feeling somewhat “vindicated” by the recent settlement with California software giant Oracle over the \$300 million Cover Oregon website fiasco.

As for the long-running joint FBI-IRS influence peddling probe of him and fiancée Sylvia Hayes?

“I have no idea,” he says. “It’s been 19 months and I haven’t heard a word. I’m getting on with my life.”

Kitzhaber last week shared some thoughts after making his third prominent public appearance since resigning as governor in February 2015, at a health care conference at the Portland Hilton downtown.

Kitzhaber’s words took on greater significance because they come at a time when state leaders’ best hope to salvage the state’s bleak fiscal outlook rests once again on the vision he articulated as governor.

To close a billion-dollar gap in the state health care budget, lawmakers next year must hope Kitzhaber’s prescription for health care reform again results in a large federal payment, as it did in 2012.

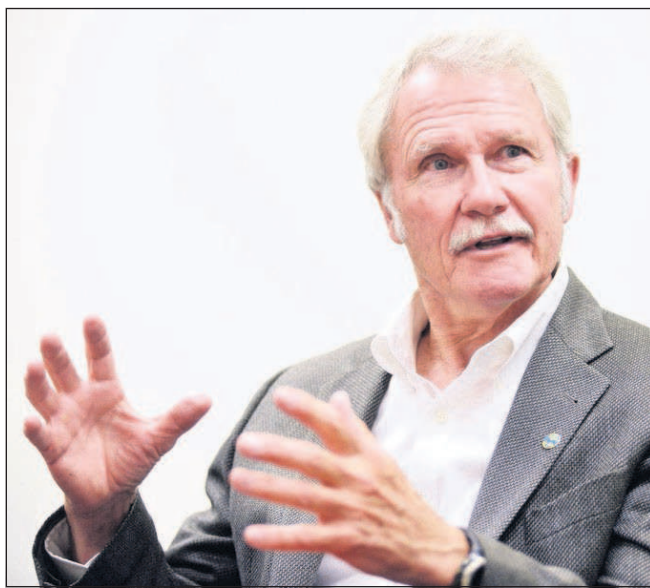
Re-entering public life

Kitzhaber’s speech came at an important time for him personally as well, serving as the latest installment in his long-term plan to re-enter public life and establish a new post-government career of consulting. In the nearly 400-member audience at the Sept. 28 “State of Reform” conference were plenty of potential customers, including executives of hospital systems and Medicaid care organizations.

He’s no longer in office, but “I would take exception with the statement that I’m out of it,” he said, referring to the dialogue on health care. He’s been “just doing a lot of thinking, speaking, doing a little consulting.”

Approached after his talk, Kitzhaber declined to revisit the circumstances that led to his downfall, including his complaints about the media coverage of how Hayes, while serving as his adviser, accepted more than \$235,000 from groups seeking to influence Oregon policy.

But on health care, he was happy to speak, including the Cover Oregon legal aftermath. His contention: that Oracle settled the long-running legal war he started mainly because it knew it would lose. He said he felt somewhat vindicated at the settlement, noting that internal corporate documents



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unearthed by the state indicated that the company had done shoddy work — or, as Kitzhaber put it, employed “bad technology” on the project.

“From my standpoint, they were partially responsible for what happened, and at least the settlement suggests that they knew that they were culpable and they didn’t want to go to trial. ... I’m convinced they would have lost at trial.”

Perhaps more surprising was what Kitzhaber said in his speech about Oregon’s

attempt to follow the path he charted and secure additional funds from the federal government to support the Oregon Health Plan.

Five years ago he secured a \$1.9 billion payment from the federal government over five years to support Oregon’s reforms to the Oregon Health Plan, which in turn is funded by the federal low-income health program Medicaid.

The state is now seeking a slightly lesser amount, \$1.25 billion.

But at least initially,

health outcomes for its population as a whole, reflecting the notion that socioeconomic status, not health care, plays a major role in an individual’s health.

The notion of remaking the Oregon Health Plan to include more spending on social services comes even as the state takes stock of its reforms, with even sympathetic lawmakers questioning whether the Medicaid “coordinated care” organizations Kitzhaber created enjoy too much latitude on spending, and too much secrecy.

When Kitzhaber resigned, some health care officials and lawmakers openly wondered what would come of his Oregon Health Plan changes.

But last week Kitzhaber said he’s not worried about his reforms. “There’s a lot of momentum out there, there’s a lot of people who are very committed to this within the (state’s coordinated care organizations). I think they can carry it.”

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.



Submitted Photo

Jennifer Crockett is the new director of the Liberty Theater.

Liberty Theater hires new director

Crockett is a clarinetist

By ERICK BENGEL
The Daily Astorian

After a five-month search, the Liberty Theater has hired Jennifer Crockett, a professional musician, as the venue’s new director.

The board of directors hired Crockett, 39, for the full-time position at an August meeting. She began work in mid-September.

The interim director, Carol Shepherd, plans to move back to Eugene after Saturday’s Storm Large concert.

As director, Crockett will handle bookings for the theater and its McTavish Room and Paulson Pavilion. She will also oversee the building’s retail properties.

Crockett replaces Rosemary Baker-Monaghan, the Liberty’s longtime executive director who resigned in April.

“We are very fortunate to have Jennifer Crockett as our new director,” Christine Lolich, president of the Liberty board, said in a release. “She brings new energy, creative ideas and a rebirth of the Liberty Theater.”

Crockett was chosen because of her background in arts and management. She graduated from the DePaul University School of Music in Chicago with a performance degree in clarinet and bass clarinet.

“She also came very prepared with what she wanted to do, so that was very attractive,” Lolich said.

Crockett, who has performed in the Astoria Music Festival, plays with a variety of organizations, including symphony orchestras, chamber groups and pit orchestras.

“After playing clarinet professionally for a number of years and also having business experience, I’m excited to merge the two together into arts administration,” Crockett said in a release. “I’ve realized as I’ve gotten older that music needs champions both on the

stage and behind it, and the Liberty is the perfect place to make a measurable difference.

“Like the arts in general, the theater took a beating over the years and has survived. I’m excited for the opportunity to help it continue to thrive,” she continued.

Crockett lives just blocks from the theater with her husband, Nathan Crockett, the fiddle player from the band Horsefeathers.

Last summer, Horsefeathers was the opening act for the theater’s inaugural Sunset Series, an indie folk concert series intended to attract theatergoers from a wider age range, particularly younger ones.

Asked what she’s most looking forward to, Jennifer Crockett said, “I’m excited to just throw open the doors and get as many people in as we can.”

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Kitzhaber said, he expects the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to pan Oregon’s high-stakes request.

“From my perspective, I don’t think CMS is going to give us that money just to maintain the status quo” as the state has requested, he said.

What’s necessary to improve Oregon’s chances, Kitzhaber said, are further changes to how the state’s hospitals and health care organizations operate.

Specifically, he called on his audience of health care officials to embrace more spending on social investments, such as housing, education and social services, and for the state to put that commitment in writing in its federal request.

“I think the likelihood of success goes up dramatically ... if we use that \$1.25 billion to leverage a redeployment of resources (into) social investments,” he said.

Kitzhaber cited statistics showing that other countries spend more on social services and also enjoy better

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