

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW



AP Photo/Jackie Johnston

In this 2004 file photo, workers use heavy machinery to remove waste in an area near two dormant nuclear reactors on the Hanford Nuclear Reservation near Richland, Wash.

## Hanford's waste spread under secrecy

Citadel of Secrets is one way of describing Washington, D.C. The dirty little secret about Washington's secrets is that we all might be better off with fewer of them.

Writing Aug. 27 in *The New York Times Magazine*, Beverly Gage quotes the late U.S. Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who believed that it is easier to keep secrets when you have fewer of them.

The biggest shroud of secrecy in the Pacific Northwest lies over the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. Because of its extraordinary moment of creation, during World War II, and its mission — to develop material for the unproven concept of an atomic bomb — Hanford's very existence was a huge secret in the desert of southeast Washington state.

There is link between secrecy and the incompetence it hides. Of our government's secrecy cult, Gage writes "This secrecy was a useful tool, but it became a crutch too — a way for federal employees to cover up mistakes or to inflate their own importance."

As the dark side of nuclear secrecy, Exhibit A is Chernobyl, the Soviet nuclear power plant, which in 1986 had the most disastrous accident in history. The Chernobyl reactor was an old Russian design, without safety features and deep backup.

Its accident created a large disaster zone. Months later, *The New York Times Magazine* published a devastating gallery of

photos from that zone.

Like Chernobyl, Hanford's N-Reactor lacked a backup, steel and concrete containment system. It was subsequently shut down.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall, Hanford ceased manufacturing plutonium. That was also the point when Hanford's veil of secrecy was lifted. Mark Heater of Hanford's media relations office confirms that in February 1986, the Department of Energy released 19,000 pages of documents relating to Hanford.

In that decade, our region became aware that Hanford was a vast and leaking dump of hazardous nuclear waste. One of those underground waste plumes was headed toward the Columbia River.

It would be comforting to say that Hanford is a much more open secret these days. But Anna King cautions otherwise. As the Richland-based correspondent of the Northwest News Network, no journalist is consistently closer to Hanford than King. She says: "I don't know if the shroud of secrecy has come off Hanford. Their whole mission is to not let out information."

An astounding amount of money has been spent on cleaning up and containing Hanford's poorly stored waste. It is the drawback of nuclear energy writ large. What does a nation do with the waste? Behind a wall of secrecy, the scientists and technicians who ran Hanford for decades gave us a disastrous answer to that question.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of publisher Kathryn Brown, managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, and opinion page editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

## OTHER VIEWS

### Richardson's audit alert hits the bullseye

*The Bend Bulletin*

The Oregon Health Authority has had its share of problems this year, not the least of which was an "audit alert" from Secretary of State Dennis Richardson's office in May. The alert came as state auditors discovered OHA had fallen behind in checking eligibility for Oregon Health Plan (Medicaid) clients. The governor stepped in and gave OHA until the end of August to get the job done, and, on the last day of the month, it did so.

It was no easy task. The federal government requires that Medicaid eligibility be redetermined each year. In Oregon, with just shy of 1 million Oregon Health Plan recipients, that's a task that requires either a fleet of people or a computer system that's up to snuff. OHA had neither.

To make matters worse, beginning in 2013 the federal government allowed the state to skip annual continuing eligibility evaluations for several years. The last waiver expired in June 2016, and the

state began doing the required checking, though slowly.

The problem came to a head in May with Richardson's audit alert. At the time, nearly 12 months after the waiver expired, more than 80,000 Oregon Health Plan clients remained to be checked. The job was completed Aug. 31, right on time.

The state removed more than 54,000 people from the program. The costs add up.

Oregon pays some \$430 per Oregon Health Plan client per month, and finding the money to do that has become problematic.

The health plan is expensive, and its cost will only grow in the years ahead as federal payments for Medicaid decline. Assuring that everyone who is on the Oregon Health Plan is entitled to be there is critical. And had it not been for Secretary of State Richardson and his audit alert, Oregonians might never have become aware of how far away from being able to make that assurance the OHA really was.

**The state removed more than 54,000 people from the program.**

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

## OTHER VIEWS



### HURRICANE DACA

## After Trump acts, DACA is now Congress' problem

Arkansas Republican Sen. Tom Cotton, who after the departure of Jeff Sessions has emerged as the Senate's leading immigration hawk, says he would support the legalization of all current DACA recipients — nearly 700,000 of them — if Congress would at the same time pass measures to protect Americans workers from the effects of that legalization.

DACA, which stands for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, was created by President Obama's unilateral decision to shield from deportation and grant work permits to people who were brought illegally to the United States as children. On Tuesday, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that the Trump administration is rescinding DACA, effective six months from now. That leaves it up to Congress to decide the next step for the nation's so-called Dreamers.

"We ought to take care of them," Cotton said in a recent telephone conversation, noting that DACA recipients arrived in this country illegally, "through no fault of their own."

"In any legislative fix, I would like to see them receive a green card," Cotton said. At the same time, he continued, "We ought to recognize that giving them legal status has two problems. First, it creates a whole new class of people who will then be eligible for a green card and citizenship — namely, the extended family members of those who will receive legal status who can, through chain migration, get legal status themselves."

"Second," Cotton said, "it will encourage more illegal immigration."

The first problem can be fixed by passing the RAISE Act, Cotton said — the bill Cotton has sponsored with fellow GOP Sen. David Perdue that would strictly limit chain migration as well as re-balance current immigration policy in favor of skilled immigrants.

The second problem could be addressed by extending E-verify across the country, which Cotton called "the best way to reduce more illegal immigration."

Cotton has conferred with President Trump and with White House staff on the best way to move beyond DACA. Cotton said the president's instincts are that DACA, imposed by Obama with no action from Congress in what many Republicans felt was an unconstitutional overreach, would not have been defensible in court.



BYRON YORK  
Comment

Sessions said the same Tuesday when he noted, "If we were to keep the Obama Administration's executive amnesty policy, the likeliest outcome is that it would be enjoined (by a court)."

That was important because the attorneys general of several states threatened to sue the Trump administration if the president did not do away with DACA. Trump's action, announced by Sessions, makes any such lawsuits beside the point. And now, it throws the ball straight into

Congress' court. What will it do about those 700,000 soon-to-be-former DACA recipients?

That is where the negotiating comes in. Will Senate Democrats, not to mention Republicans who favored the Gang of

Eight comprehensive immigration reform bill, actually vote for the RAISE Act — which some have already said they oppose — in exchange for legal status for Dreamers? It's not at all clear. Would they agree to extending E-verify? Also unclear.

So far, most of the Republican lawmakers who have spoken out about DACA are supporters of comprehensive immigration reform —

Sens. Lindsey Graham, Thom Tillis, and Jeff Flake, as well as Reps. Mike Coffman and Carlos Curbello. And, of course, Speaker Paul Ryan, who has called on the president not to end DACA, even though Ryan once described the program as "blatantly unconstitutional."

But the vast majority of Republican lawmakers have not been heard from. Most are united in their belief that President Obama overstepped his authority by instituting DACA. They believe the action would not survive court scrutiny. They believe they have to do something to accommodate current DACA recipients while not making the overall immigration problem worse. And after Trump's action, it seems unlikely they would revive and codify the program without also enacting some significant reform of the immigration system.

DACA, Cotton said, is "a mess of President Obama's making." But now it's up to Republicans to clean up that mess. "We should find a way to give (DACA recipients) legal status," Cotton concluded, "but we also have to mitigate the inevitable consequences of that action."

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.

**"We ought to take care of (Dreamers... they arrived here) through no fault of their own."**

—Tom Cotton,  
U.S. Senator, (R.-Ark.)

## OTHER VIEWS

### Collaborative has been good for forest, local economy

By BRUCE DAUCAVAGE

*Ochoco and Malheur Lumber Companies*

Ochoco Lumber Company was founded in 1927 to work the vast ponderosa pine forests of the Blue Mountains of Eastern Oregon. In 1983 Ochoco Lumber owner John Shelk formed Malheur Lumber Company in John Day. Today, Malheur Lumber Company draws our raw product primarily from the Malheur National Forest in Grant and Harney counties.

Sourcing raw product for our mills has not always been easy. Tightening timber supplies forced us to consider closing, and we knew that if we wanted to remain in the timber business we would need to do things differently and to work with people with diverse points of view. That's why Malheur Lumber Company has been a member of the Blue Mountains Forest Partners since its founding in 2006.

Our company believed then, and is even more committed now, that collaboration among timber interests, the conservation community, local residents, elected government officials and the Forest Service — which manages about 72 percent of the land base in Grant and Harney counties — was our only option if we wanted to survive into the future. Thankfully these other stakeholders held a similar view, even though our opinions of a "healthy forest" or "responsible forest management" may have differed at the outset.

Working together, unemployment numbers

in Grant and Harney counties have dropped from 14 percent and 11.7 percent respectively to 7.7 percent and 5.5 percent.

Malheur Lumber Company has been able to maintain our operations, increase employment and are moving forward with investments in our facility to more efficiently process raw logs coming from our stewardship projects.

We have helped develop and implement a 10-year stewardship contract that represents 86 percent of the private employment — and all existing wood manufacturing infrastructure — within Grant and Harney counties. Ongoing research is telling us that the Malheur National Forest is already more resilient to future wildfire and the effects of climate change as a result of our restoration work.

There are currently 27 collaboratives operating in Oregon to encourage restoration of public lands. The aim is to facilitate compromise and consensus. Contrary to the perspective of someone who has never attended a partners meeting ("Forest collaboratives need to welcome all input," *East Oregonian*, Aug. 25) in our experience, the partners regularly solicit the views of all stakeholders who seek to productively and respectfully advance forest restoration and community well-being on the Malheur National Forest. That's the "Oregon way," and it works.

Bruce Daucavage of Bend is president of Ochoco and Malheur Lumber Companies headquartered in Prineville and John Day.