

EAST OREGONIAN OPINION

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Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEW

Move government closer to the governed

Last week it was reported that the Trump administration has decided to move the headquarters of the Bureau of Land Management from Washington, D.C., to Grand Junction, Colorado.

The Interior Department, the parent agency of the BLM, has yet to confirm the news, but the administration has made moving the headquarters to a western state a key part of its plan to reorganize the department.

A bipartisan coalition of members of Congress from western states put forward legislation last year to mandate such a move.

Interior Department officials have said they were considering Grand Junction as well as Denver; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Boise, Idaho; and Salt Lake City for the new headquarters.

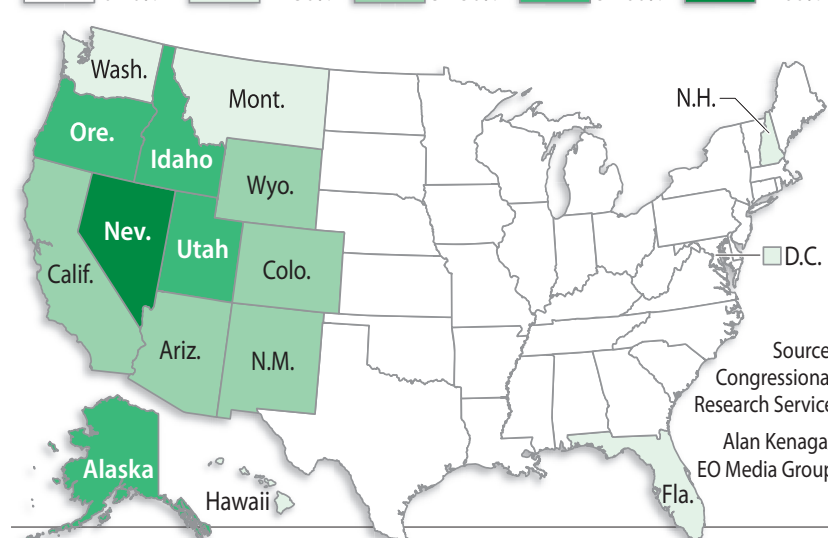
Whether western Colorado or some other city becomes the BLM's new home, we support the move.

As we said when the idea was first floated last year, the logic of moving the BLM west isn't hard for people in the West to understand.

Federal land by state

Land area by percent of state

0-10% 11-30% 31-50% 51-80% > 80%



Ninety-nine percent of the 250 million acres managed by the BLM is west of the Mississippi River. Its decisions impact the livelihoods of people who populate rural communities but those decisions are made far from the forests, grasslands and high deserts they call home.

Not everyone is in love with the idea, particularly members of the ruling class and the special interests that court influence inside the Washington beltway.

Critics say the BLM and other agencies need to be headquartered in the capital to be included in budget and policy discussions. But having all those discussions in Washington is part of the problem. That's better for K Street lobbyists and the environmental special interests, but not so good for the people those policies impact.

While it's true that fewer than 5% of the bureau's 9,000 employees are stationed in D.C., they have more say and less access to the

national treasures they administer than their colleagues in the field.

The BLM isn't the only agency the administration seeks to move out of the greater District of Columbia. There are also plans to move the Economic Research Service and National Institute of Food and Agriculture to Kansas City.

The elite hates that idea, too.

They proffer the same arguments in both cases. It will cost money to move these agencies out to the countryside, and probably won't save any in the long run. They say valuable employees will be lost if forced to move from the beltway.

All of these moves will cost money, and we've yet to see the government do anything that actually saves any money. We have a harder time believing that we will lose a huge amount of human capital if agencies are moved from Washington. It is probable there are a great many people who would find government service more rewarding if it carried with it an affordable duty station outside D.C.

We think the real value of these plans is to keep the government close to the governed.

YOUR VIEWS

Hamley's should stay in Pearce's hands

There has been a buzz around town for quite some time as to what will be the eventual outcome of Hamley & Company. It was founded by Parley Pearce and Blair Woodfield. The bankruptcy of Woodfield changes everything as to who now will own this historic company.

Over the years Hamley's has become an Eastern Oregon Old West icon — the western store in particular since 1905 — the oldest business in Oregon still in the same location (according to Travel Oregon). The Hamley Western Store, driven early on by the worldwide renowned Hamley Saddle Company, alone has had some pretty famous cowboys in the early years grace its portals — the likes of Wyatt Earp, Buffalo Bill Cody, Monte Montana, Hoot Gibson and Tom Mix — and made saddles for Roy Rogers and his contemporaries. I mention this because of the significance with which Hamley's is to our Pendleton history.

It has come to the attention of many in this community who I know that with the bankruptcy of one of the Hamley partners (Mr. Woodfield) that Mr. Pearce intends to buy his partner's interest in the business. It's my understanding an offer has been made to the bankruptcy court and accepted, with the exception that a third party has a small window of time in which to make an "overbid." Many around the community know the Confederate Tribes have intended to make an offer.

Mr. Pearce has remained the one partner that doesn't want to sell to any bidder — including the Confederate Tribes. He has spent nearly a life's fortune and years of passionate investment into preserving Hamley's historical integrity, with many of the artifacts in the western store and steakhouse from his own Wild West collection. It's pretty well known that the Confederate Tribes continue to have their eyes on Hamley's and certainly would enter any bidding with a much bigger checkbook.

It is my belief and experience in helping to preserve similar historic

locations in Pendleton that protecting Hamley's traditional significance (as is) is a whole different venture than even the monumental accomplishments that the Confederated Tribes have built on their own reservation properties. Who knows what their business plans for Hamley's would be, especially in regards to owning the oldest saddle company and keeping the traditional western ambience that attracts so many visitors.

If the Confederated Tribes owned the Hamley property and put those properties back into a CTUIR trust, a big question is: would the city of Pendleton lose that tax revenue? What would happen to the longtime employees? Does the Old West business model change?

As much as I admire the Confederated Tribes' contributions to Eastern Oregon, I call upon them not to bid on Hamley's and keep this Pendleton historical resource in the hands of one who rescued, rebuilt and has the passion for preserving this great old landmark.

Bill Dochnahl
Pendleton

All loads must be secured for highway travel

We drove through Pendleton via Interstate 84 on July 21, 2019. We were in the right-hand lane going 70 mph. A pickup truck in the left-hand lane passed us, going at least 80 mph. When that vehicle was 50-75 feet ahead of us, the unsecured gas grill in the bed of the pickup flew up into the air and into the path of our vehicle.

Sheer luck allowed me to be able to swerve and brake to avoid the path it was on, and the hundreds of pieces it broke into. Had we been directly behind, or if it had flown out two seconds sooner, that grill would have smashed into our windshield.

Please, people that could have killed us, do not drive with an unsecured load, no matter how heavy you think it is, or how unlikely it would be to fly away. Your irresponsibility could have killed us.

Nancy Freitag
Spokane

OTHER VIEWS

Steps forward and backward for open records

Corvallis Gazette-Times

By some measurements, this year's legislative session wasn't a bad one for proponents of a transparent state government.

On the plus side, legislators passed a bill that could give some teeth to an earlier measure that established deadlines for governmental entities to respond to requests for records. A law passed by the 2017 session requires governmental bodies to acknowledge requests for records within five business days after receiving a request. And the law requires those bodies to fulfill those requests within 15 days, although the law does offer a variety of escape hatches in cases where it would be unduly burdensome to produce the records in that time frame.

Under the terms of a bill passed by the 2019 session, governments can be fined up to \$200 or ordered to waive fees for gathering the records if a district attorney or the state attorney general determines that the delay is unreasonable.

This probably won't amount to much (the fine isn't particularly huge, and we suspect most district attorneys will not have much of an appetite to slap sanctions on entities under their jurisdiction), but this measure at least represents a small step forward.

The Legislature also approved a bill that made permanent the state's Public Records Advisory Council; when the 2017 Legislature first approved creation of the council, it made it temporary. But these public records issues aren't going away any time soon, so lawmakers made the right call when they made the council permanent.

And the Legislature did block a measure that would have represented a big step backward: a bill that would have required requesting parties to explain why they wanted access to the records died after word of the legislation spread. If a record is public, the government has no business asking why a citizen wants access to it. It is the business of the government to release that public record, no questions asked.

That's the good news. The bad news is that this session ended up inflicting another two dozen or so wounds to the state's open records laws.

It happens every session: Legislators pass bills that exempt from public inspection records that used to be open. In many cases, these bills are passed without much notice or public debate; in some cases, they slide through in the frenzy that accompanies the final few days of a session.

In any event, the end result is the same: The public loses access to yet another set of records that used to be open to inspection. Some of these so-called exemptions to the public records law are justified for privacy or other reasons. But many of them are not, and exist primarily because it's more convenient for parties to keep that information confidential.

No one knows for sure how many of these exemptions exist in state law; the best guess now is more than 650. And no one knows yet for sure how many new exemptions the Legislature added during its 2019 session. Ginger McCall, the state's public records advocate, told members of the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association last week that her best guess now is somewhere around 25, but she's still plowing through all the legislation that passed during the session.

Another committee, the Oregon Sunshine Committee for Public Records Law Reform, is working to review all the exemptions in state law, with an eye toward identifying the ones that no longer can be justified (if they ever could). The timeline for that work stretches out over the next 10 years, and this year's Legislature has added to the task.

We've always argued that government works best when it functions in the sunshine — and when citizens have easy access to records that help illuminate its workings. Oregon's records laws used to be among the best in the nation, but the sunshine fades a bit with every new exemption lawmakers approve. It will require sustained work to turn up the light.