

O EAST OREGONIAN

OPINION

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OUR VIEW

Attempt to intimidate newspaper a red flag

Malheur County Sheriff Brian Wolfe effectively ended a broiling controversy Wednesday when he announced that there would be no investigation of a local newspaper regarding alleged telephonic harassment of a local official.

Just Monday, the *Malheur Enterprise* newspaper in Vale reported county officials sought out advice from Wolfe about the possibility of opening an official inquiry of the weekly publication.

Officials assert that the newspaper crossed a line and potentially set itself up for telephonic harassment charges by making phone calls and sending emails to the county’s economic development director, Greg Smith, as it reported on economic development.

The *Enterprise* reported the story Monday in its online edition.

The timing of the move by the county is interesting — the *Enterprise* had just finished an investigative story about county economic development projects — but Mr. Smith’s involvement in the issue is troubling. Smith, who also represents Umatilla and Morrow counties in the Oregon Legisla-



The Malheur Enterprise is a small weekly newspaper located in the agricultural town of Vale west of Ontario.

ture, essentially complained the *Malheur Enterprise* was sending questions regarding a story to personal email addresses of economic development officials. Questions, it appears, Smith did not want to answer.

Smith, by the way, uses two emails to conduct county business. Neither one is secret or “personal.” In fact, last year

Smith gave out his personal cellphone number to the public and told the audience at a government meeting he was available “at any time” and they could call him directly.

So why is he complaining now about the *Malheur Enterprise* seeking information on a story in the public interest?

Using emails to send questions or

calling public officials while working on a story is about as standard an operating procedure for newspapers as putting ink on paper.

It is a routine way for reporters to secure information from elected and appointed leaders so the public can be informed. There is no “harassment” about the practice.

At first glance the saga could seem to fit into a small box of modest face-off between officials and a newspaper in a far-off place.

Except it can’t be dismissed. When elected or appointed leaders try to intimidate — which seems to be the case here — a newspaper and its reporters from a story, average voters should give it their undivided attention. And they should be worried.

Thankfully, Wolfe made the right decision.

When public officials squawk about being asked questions, that should send up a red flag of warning to voters.

And the red flag flying over Malheur County right now is big enough to be seen from space.

OTHER VIEWS

Health Authority transparency changes not enough

Bend Bulletin

The Oregon Health Plan spends some \$5 billion of taxpayers’ money each year, though figuring out where and how that money was used can be difficult. Senate Bill 1041, approved by the Legislature and signed by Gov. Kate Brown in late June, is a step toward making spending more transparent, though it doesn’t go nearly far enough.

The new law gives the Oregon Health Authority power to regulate the financial condition of coordinated care organizations around the state, something that had been done only by contract before. The 15 CCOs in Oregon manage health care for Oregon Health Plan clients. The result, lawmakers hope, is more consistency and uniform reporting of financial information by the state’s CCOs and a better process for managing CCOs in financial difficulty. They hope, too, for more transparency.

Unfortunately, if the law’s transparency measures really do improve transparency, it’s difficult to see how.

Yes, there will certainly be more unifor-

mity in how the information is reported. The new law is based on the reporting requirements established for health insurance providers and endorsed by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners. It will allow consumers to compare the finances of one CCO to another by 2021, something that’s difficult to do now.

Too, the measure will require all CCOs to report annually on “financial distributions by the coordinated care organization to shareholders, equity members, parent companies or any related parties.”

But the new law apparently makes it impossible for the public to find out about complaints made against CCOs in the health authority’s regulation of them, and that’s a serious absence. Moreover, reports on those complaints also will be secret.

At least two members of the House Committee on Health Care recognized how little transparency actually is improving, and they weren’t happy. Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer, D-Portland, decried what she called the measure’s “baby steps” toward transparency. Unfortunately, her fellows on the committee failed to get the message.



YOUR VIEWS

Our northern border works

We understand the fright that some criminal border entry people might be living under in our country, a country that they have entered into without legal permission. Contrary to a televised crying child’s statement, the person who has entered the USA without citizenship or legal permission is now a criminal.

There is no such thing as illegals or undocumented immigrants. An immigrant is a person who has applied and filed the necessary paperwork and is awaiting a legal decision to enter our country.

President Trump independently has been attempting to stop any harm against women and children who want to seek asylum. The number of people seeking a life in our country has been overwhelming. Isn’t it time that we make our southern border more secure like our northern border? Don’t you feel that all Democrats and Republicans should join together to make our southern border secure?

Now, with an executive order, criminal aliens who have crossed into our country and used our government benefits (in many cases) cannot become a citizen and if caught will have a criminal record. It is so hateful of the media to publicize a child crying for their parent and not say

anything about what is legal or illegal. Shame on the media.

Obama and George W. Bush all used the same methods to deport. Only now the mass of aliens at our border require more actions and possibly personal consequences, such as removing children from their families. No one likes the thought of losing one’s child(ren) and especially if there is no proof or documentation tying the child(ren) to the adults.

If I were to throw stones, those stones would firmly hit all who do not stop criminal entry into our country at the southern border. It is so inhumane to have previously allowed criminal entry, which now creates a rush to our border by people who believe that America has an open pocketbook waiting for them inside America, as well as citizenship for their babies. Those stones would also hit every Democrat and Republican who support open borders as well as sanctuary cities who keep providing more than initial humanitarian aid to those criminal aliens until they can be returned to their countries.

Our northern border is working; let’s stand together and make the southern border work as well.

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