

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Plenty to like in records fee suggestion

Ginger McCall, Oregon's first public records advocate, left office Friday with some suggestions for her successor, the Public Records Advisory Council she headed, and lawmakers and other officials in Oregon. Public records, she says, should be obtainable at prices the public can afford.

She's right, and while we disagree with one suggestion she makes, most of her proposals are right on the money. As she makes clear, the high cost of records requests can keep the public and the press from information they're entitled to have.

That said, McCall would create two classes of records requesters. The first, including news organizations, nonprofit organizations and educational requesters, would pay only for the cost of duplicating requested records. All others would pay that charge, plus the cost of searching for requested records.

Oregonians would be better served by a system that charges at



AP Photo/Andrew Selsky
Oregon Public Records Advocate Ginger McCall, at head of table, left office Friday with some suggestions for her successor, the Public Records Advisory Council she headed, and lawmakers and other officials in Oregon. Public records, she says, should be obtainable at prices the public can afford.

a single rate, either asking everyone to pay the cost of searching for records or charging no one for that service.

But, as McCall points out, state

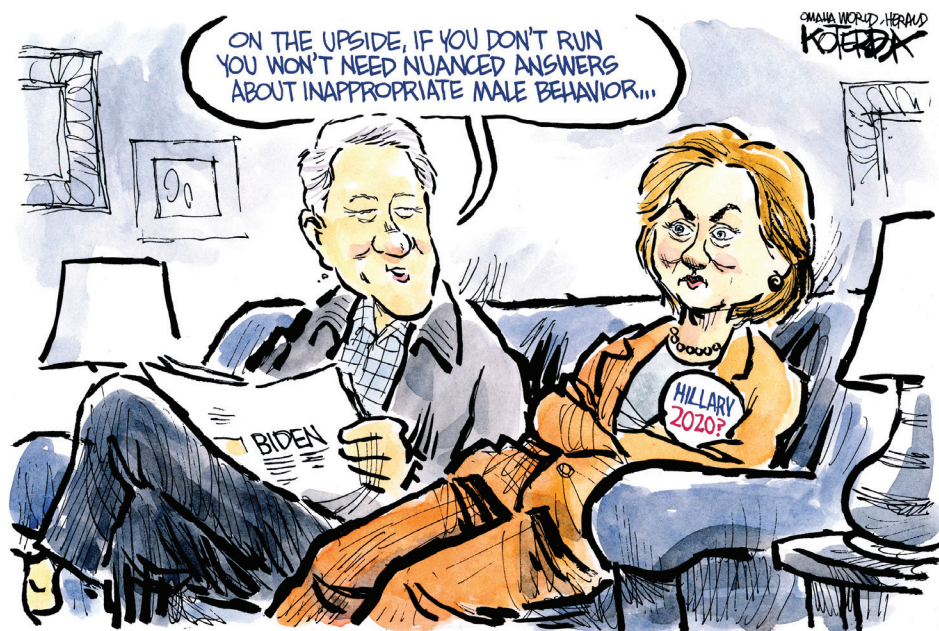
law allows public bodies to set their own charges, which vary wildly from agency to agency. Worse, she says, they also can charge attorney fees, sometimes \$180 per hour

or more, to have those records reviewed. The result is a price tag that is beyond the reach not only of the public and media — it may well be beyond the grasp of many of the lawmakers who write public records bills in the state.

She's right to suggest that the state scrap the allowance for attorney's fees, then set specific, low fees, perhaps \$15 per hour or 5 cents per page, to fulfill all requests.

In addition, McCall writes, Oregon should emulate the federal government when it comes to first-party requests for records related to themselves or a deceased family member, and charge lower fees to that group, particularly if they've been victims of crimes. She says charging those people exorbitant fees for records "is a clear and uncompassionate miscarriage of justice."

McCall's suggestions would bring order and uniformity to a system that lacks both. Lawmakers should take them to heart, preferably during the 2020 short legislative session.



YOUR VIEWS

Camp will be a draw for more homeless

Well, the city council wants to have a homeless area. I wonder if they have figured out just who is to be responsible for any illegal activity that may go on. Will the city be responsible for any illegal drug or alcohol use, or vicarious liability? Is the city going to pay for the toilets, the garbage and electricity for cellphones? Will the homeless be responsible for the cleaning of the property, or just the taxpayers?

Of course, the unintended consequences are when other cities or homeless find out about the paradise the city has created for the homeless, there will be more homeless. There are cities already giving the homeless "X" amount of dollars and a bus ticket to other cities. So, I suggest that if one cares so much about them, let them camp on your property. I have had to remove some from sleeping on my property or storing their possessions. Fortunately, they took the hint and have not been back.

Let's assume that one gets an electric heater and it starts a fire. Someone is injured or killed, or dies of a drug overdose — who is responsible? I, for one, would like to know.

**Roesch Kishpaugh
Pendleton**

America was great before Trump

In answer to Patricia Maier: I thought Regina Baker's letter said a lot of truths

about our wanna-be dictator Donald Trump.

Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., doesn't say much, like a lot of his colleagues. They just bury their heads in the sand, hoping things get better. Trump just does what he wants, and doesn't want to hear any advice from other politicians who might know more than he does.

He wants to impose higher tariffs and close borders. He puts children in cages. No deals if they don't go his way. He takes money from other agencies to finish his southern border wall. Trump admires the leaders of Russia, North Korea and Saudi Arabia because he wishes he was a dictator like they are. The only reason he won the election is because the Russians manipulated social media with ads for Trump and against Hillary Clinton. He still didn't win the popular vote.

He wanted to drain the swamp. He brought his own swamp with all kinds of corrupt people like himself. If they are decent and don't stand by him, he fires them. He's making all kinds of money in his foreign trips. He makes his staff stay in his hotels. All the criminals that have been arrested for illegal crimes, he says, "I don't know them." How convenient.

I admire all past presidents, Republican and Democrat. I have respect for all of them because compared to Trump's morals, lies and corruption, they are saints.

When it's fake news it's because they tell the truth about him. He says he wants to make America great again. It was great before he came along.

Aren't we glad Oregon is a blue state?

**Minerva Bethel
Hermiston**

OTHER VIEWS

Do the Democrats need Hillary or Michelle to enter the race?

It began with 25 candidates. It's been reduced by half, yet concern persists among Democrats that the party should look beyond the still standing contenders and seek an individual capable of party unification and persuade him or her to enter the race.

It is an acknowledgement that each of the current candidates is burdened by baggage — ideological or personal — but seem determined to take the contest through a string of expensive, exhausting and bitter primaries.

Former Vice President Joe Biden, whose lead has shrunk to single digits or vanished altogether, has been hurt by periodic mental lapses and scrambled syntax. His and his son's involvement in governmental and business affairs in Ukraine hangs darkly over his head.

Voters will hesitate to deliver the presidency to a 78-year-old heart attack survivor — Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders — despite his fervent and committed base.

Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, the leader, co-leader or strong second-place finisher in polling averages, has moved steadily leftward, embracing policies with which huge swaths of the nation disagree.

Despite the party's commitment to electability as the criteria for choosing a candidate, there remains concern that none of the three leaders measures up. The dilemma is in which direction should the party look for an alternative, someone it can rally around and convince the current field to abandon their quest.

To whom, might the party turn? Two names surface with some regularity: former Secretary of State and failed 2016 candidate Hillary Clinton, and former First Lady Michelle Obama.

In typical self-aggrandizing fashion, Clinton has ginned up speculation about her availability with a series of public appearances, media interviews and a ubiquitous social media presence, criticizing Trump and basking in the attention. But convincing the current candidates to stand down for her would be a herculean task. She is a polarizing

figure who many find untrustworthy and unlikeable, blaming her for booting away certain victory in 2016.

Clinton entering the race would not clear the field but tear the party apart, reopen wounds from 2016 and deliver to Trump the opportunity to raise her questionable — if not unethical — conduct as Secretary of State. The Democrats would be robbed of their most potent weapon — Trump's behavior and possible impeachable conduct — by repeating the litany of accusations against Clinton.

While Michelle Obama carries none of Clinton's baggage and could clear the field, her candidacy is wishful thinking. She is the country's most admired woman, a bestselling author, and an eloquent advocate for the causes in which she believes. She and her husband are financially secure (the purchase of a \$15 million beachfront mansion in Martha's Vineyard, for instance) and both are loathe to surrender their comfortable blend of private and public life.

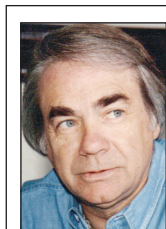
There is absolutely no reason why Obama would willingly take on what will surely establish a new low for the most brutal and brutalizing campaign in American history.

If unhappy Democrats intend to make a move, time is running out. The Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary are little more than three months off. The window of opportunity to persuade an outsider to step in will slam shut at that point.

Three years ago, voters confronted two flawed candidates and were left to determine whose flaws were less egregious than whose. If 2020 is Trump versus Biden, Warren or Sanders, voters face much the same choice.

By the time the presidential election arrives, it is likely that Trump will have been impeached by the House but acquitted by the Senate. His campaign will be a relentless and savage effort toward vindication as much as his re-election.

Carl Golden is a nationally syndicated columnist.



**CARL
GOLDEN
COMMENT**