

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OUR VIEW

### A half-hearted commitment to open government?

Here's an editorial for the people who work in Oregon government. They can be excused for not getting as wound up about government transparency as journalists or other members of the public do.

But Oregon governments, from the governor's office down to the library boards, are supposed to be transparent. They are in a number of ways. But they don't always put their heart into it. Sometimes they don't follow the law. So when one part of Oregon government calls out another part of Oregon government for not being transparent, we pay attention.

The Oregon Secretary of State's Office recently released a follow-up to an audit it did in 2019. That original report encouraged the state — and in particular the state's Department of Administrative Services, or DAS — to enhance the transparency in the state's budget.

If it's not easy to find out where the state gets its money or how it spends it, that's a problem.

The department did implement a number of recommended changes since that 2019 audit. It worked with the Legislature to allow additional money to beef up the state's transparency website. And it hired a consultant to compare what Oregon does against some of the best practices of other states. That's good.

But DAS is not monitoring a practice of state agencies to use non-budgeted positions. And it's not using its position on the Transparency Oregon Advisory Commission to encourage the commission meet regularly and release transparency reports required by law in a timely manner, the report said.

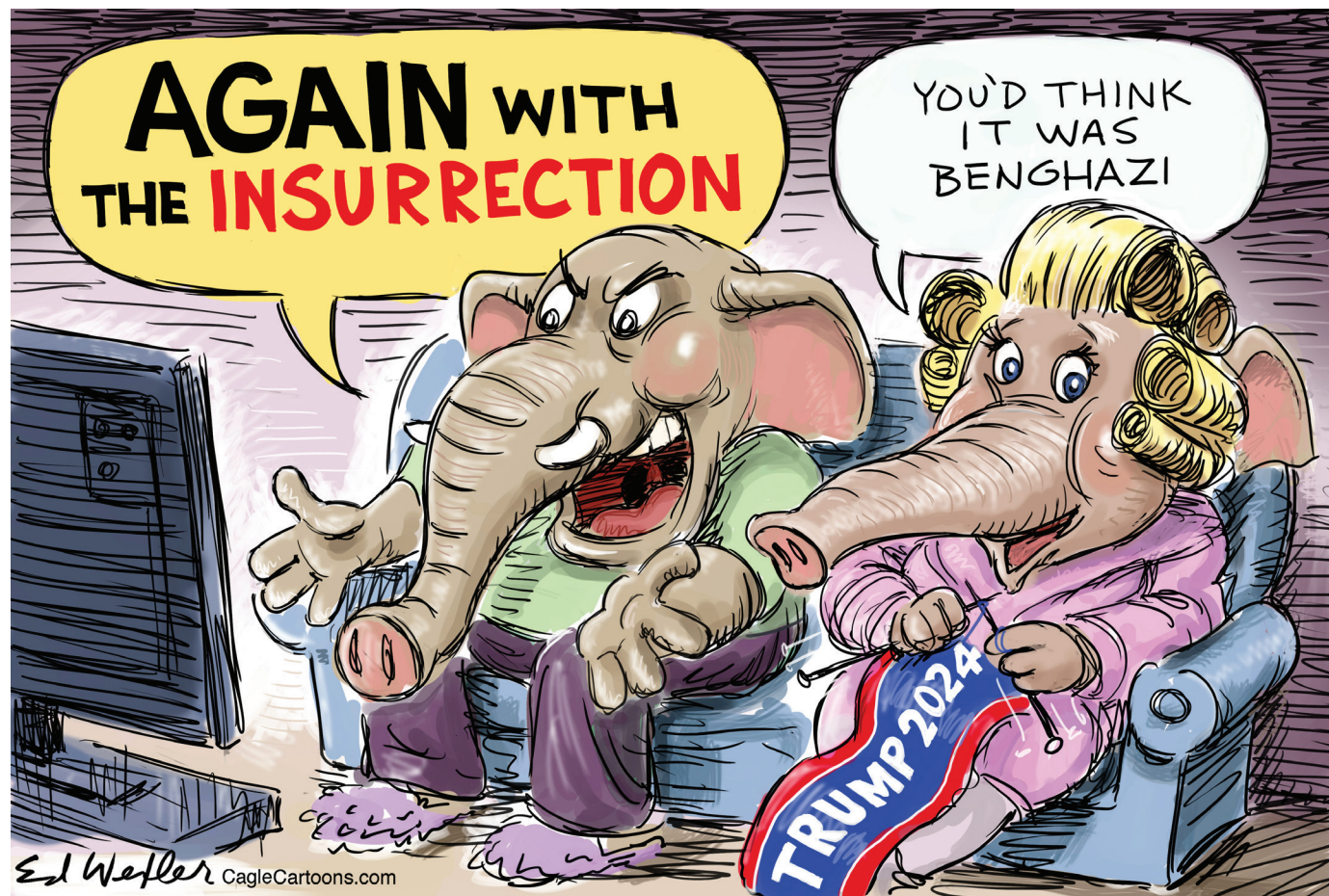
For instance, there's a requirement in state law that the commission shall report to the Legislature on completed improvements to the transparency website and ways to improve it further by Feb. 15 of each odd-numbered year. The Legislative Fiscal Office missed that deadline in 2019. It apparently has missed it again this year. At least, we couldn't find it on the office's website.

EO Media Group emailed last week the two members of the Legislative Fiscal Office assigned to the commission to ask what was going on. No response.

The impact of the pandemic on state staff could have certainly been a reason. There could be other parts of a heavy workload that they chose to prioritize. It would be nice, though, if they were transparent about why they aren't filling a transparency obligation required by state law.

One other thing struck us about the way the Department of Administrative Services — which it is important to note is overseen by Gov. Kate Brown — responded to the audit. DAS chose to respond to some of the audit recommendations with what state auditors called "extraneous responses." DAS declined to even disagree or agree with some of the audit recommendations.

Do some employees at DAS not have a commitment to transparency in their heart? Is Gov. Brown going to insist they act like they do?



### Touring my secret mushrooming spots



**BILL ANEY**  
THIS LAND IS OUR LAND

My mushrooming roots run deep. About the time that spring turkey hunting season winds down, my forays into the national forest shift to searching for another wild delicacy, the morel mushroom. I come by this pastime honestly, as I was exposed as a teenager to the wonders of mushrooms by my mother and grandparents.

Grandpa Elden Johnson in particular was a brave explorer into the world of wild fungi. He was known for occasionally trying what he called "just a small sample" of an unknown mushroom to see if it was delectable, barely edible or would make him sick. This is definitely not a recommended way of learning about mushrooms, but as a result of his style Grandpa's suite of mushroom species that collected for the table was a lot broader than mine.

I know morels, king boletes, shaggy manes and corals, but I remember him also talking enthusiastically about oyster mushrooms, chicken-of-the-woods and slippery jacks, none of which are on my positive go-to list.

Somewhere in my collection of papers I have a manuscript he wrote about the wonders of mushrooming in the Blues. He challenged the reader to take time to meander slowly among the trees soaking in the sounds, smells, and

feelings of the spring woods. His words resonate in me every time I step into the forest in search of mushrooms, and I find it is easy to fall into a meditative state. No wonder mushroom hunters get lost so often.

What I wouldn't give for one more chance to go with my grandpa to some of his favorite mushrooming spots in the Blues, for his haunts are lost to memory now. But I have started to develop my own mushrooming spots, and I like to think that some of them are the same pieces of ground that my grandparents used to walk.

This spring has been incredibly dry, and while turkey hunting I noticed how the forest floor was crunchy, more like August than May. But last week we had just a bit of rain, and my good friend Matt and I decided it might be time to look for mushrooms. We found the woods to be teeming with people heading out for Memorial Day weekend, with camps tucked into small forest openings and vehicles parked in wide spots along the forest roads.

Undaunted, we slipped into the woods and moved from one known honey hole to another, and after an hour of searching had collected exactly one medium-sized king bolete, one morel and one fresh coral mushroom. We moved down the road, parked at a road closure gate and hiked 20 minutes to another spot I had marked last year with my GPS. As I entered into the stand, my eyes were first drawn to the abundant corals.

These are not my favorite, so I continued my mushroom meander when I was rewarded by — a morel. I

went down to cleanly sever it from the stalk and saw another, and another and another. That's how morel hunting goes, and by crawling on hands and knees I was able to collect several dozen in just a few minutes.

The best part? There was no evidence of other pickers. My secret spot was and still is mine; Matt can be trusted to keep it to himself. A mushroom spot is a secret worth keeping close, and mushroom hunters understand that it is an honor to be taken to another's favorite spot, a sacred trust that is not to be violated.

There are some places in the Blues that hold mushrooms but that are off limits to me — private lands, the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Fortunately for us, the national forests have millions of acres of ground to search for these delicacies, and it is there for all of us. You don't even need a permit if you are just picking mushrooms for your personal use.

My grandparents and mother had their mushrooming spots, I have mine, and our daughter is developing her own. While my grandparents left me their books, their writing and some of their knowledge, they made no maps. Perhaps it is better that way, as I collect my own places to wander each spring.

I encourage others to the same while the spring flowers are blooming, the sun is shining and the birds are singing. It's a fine time to enjoy our public lands.

*Bill Aney is a forester and wildlife biologist living in Pendleton and loving the Blue Mountains.*

## YOUR VIEWS

### Simpson should put up or shut up

Why does U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho, expect others to present alternatives to his \$33 billion plan to gut the economy of the Pacific Northwest? He claims, "We need to have honest conversations."

So, let's be honest. The science has already been proven and recorded as fact; fish and dams can successfully co-exist. As a matter of fact, the highest numbers of both salmon and steelhead ever recorded returning to our rivers came during a 10-year period that began 25 years after the last dam was completed.

From 1938-1947, approximately 1.9 million anadromous fish returned over Bonneville Dam, the only dam in the river system at that time. From 2000-09, approximately 6.8 million salmon and steelhead returned to our river

system, an increase of 358%. The last dam was completed on the Snake River in 1975. Proof positive that fish and dams can, and do, co-exist.

Simpson and his minions need to prove their scheme to breach our dams and destroy our economy, at such a great cost, will result in the return of even one more fish to our rivers. The burden of proof is on them alone, nobody else. If they cannot prove their case, they need to shut up and go home.

**Dick Sherwin**  
Lewiston, Idaho

### Diverse student population makes for better teaching

I encourage all Eastern Oregon voters to contact your Oregon state legislators and ask them to support the Oregon Opportunity Grant for college students. Federal student loans and Pell

Grants cannot provide enough support for lower-income Oregon students to attend college.

I have been teaching in Oregon high schools, colleges and universities for more than 20 years and have seen the value of these Opportunity Grants first hand. Thanks to these programs, more of Oregon's student's are able to attend college and serve their communities across the state. My classes at Oregon State University and the University of Oregon are definitely more engaging places for learning when I have students from across the state from different economic backgrounds and with diverse political opinions.

By supporting the Oregon Opportunity Grant you can make my job as a writing teacher even better by sending more of Eastern Oregon's amazing high school graduates to college.

**Stephen Rust**  
Eugene

#### LETTERS

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citizens. Letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published.

#### EDITORIALS

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cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

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