

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Problems with state accounting, again

The Oregon Secretary of State's Office audits tell us what we know but need to be reminded about: State government makes mistakes with money.

Every year there's a roundup of these mistakes. And it's clear it's necessary. For the fiscal year 2020, state auditors found \$6.4 billion in accounting errors. That's right, \$6.4 billion.

Those were unintentional mistakes. It's not like somebody was trying to abscond with \$6.4 billion. They were mistakes. Basically, numbers were put in the wrong column and later caught thanks to state audits. It does make you wonder what wasn't caught.

What can be more important is when the audits uncover weaknesses in the policies for handling money.

For instance, the Department of Consumer and Business Services is a state agency dedicated to consumer protection and business regulation. It failed to properly follow new accounting rules required for fiscal year 2020. Other state agencies got it right. The department misinterpreted the new rules and reported about \$400 million incorrectly. That department also failed to have required documentation explaining how it made decisions about handling money in two areas, such as determining what is uncollectible money.

And there's more. When state auditors tested some spending to ensure proper procedures are followed so federal funds may be used to pay for them, it found mistakes. The biggest problem was in the child care and development fund. That is a federal grant program that helps provide child care services for low-income families and improve child care overall. Auditors found \$4.2 million in errors. Numbers were miscalculated, provider copays were off, there was a lack of documentation to back up payments and more.

New report. Similar conclusions. Without state auditors peering over the shoulders of other state agencies, even more mistakes would be made.



Are you prepared for wildfire evacuation?



MARY WISTER
EYE TO THE SKY

Picture this: You're sitting at home, enjoying dinner with your family, when you look outside and see smoke billowing from a short distance away. You walk outside and join your neighbors, who are curious about the source of the smoke. The wind has picked up and the sky quickly turns to an ominous gray.

Where's the fire? Fire engines quickly pass by, but it's obvious the firefighters have no time to stop and answer questions. You grab your phone to call 911 when your neighbor states there is a Level 3 Evacuation, and everyone needs to evacuate immediately. A wildfire is heading toward your neighborhood.

Are you ready? The National Weather Service, Emergency Management and first responders frequently discuss the importance of creating emergency kits. You can find graphics on social media with a list of items necessary for an

emergency. In fact, you can probably list at least several of these essential items yourself — flashlights, batteries, cell-phone chargers, important documents and prescription drugs. You also may state that you know exactly where to find these items.

The prescription drugs always are sitting on the bedside table. All the important documents are in the safe along with your valuable items. The flashlight and batteries are stored together in the laundry room. The phone charging station is on the kitchen counter, and there's always food and water in the pantry.

That's great to be organized and know where your belongings are, but can you gather these items in a matter of minutes?

On your next weekend off from work or school, devote that weekend to something so simple but so important that you will wonder why you never did it in the first place. Prepare for a wildfire evacuation.

There are excellent resources available for wildfire preparedness. By simply typing ready.gov into your favorite browser, you can find detailed information for evacuation plans due

to a wildfire. Using these instructions, commit yourself to make a plan and stick to it.

First and foremost, you and your loved ones are on the top of that list. Make sure everyone knows that nothing in that house is more important than their own safety. If they have to leave immediately, then leave.

It shouldn't take more than two full days to prepare your home and family in case of an evacuation. Put this on the top of your list of things to do on your weekend, and you'll be glad you did. That fishing or camping weekend can wait for another time. Does the car really need to be washed on your next day off? Those weeds will just return as fast as you pull them, so why bother? I think you get the point.

Don't put this on the back burner any longer. Make a plan.

Mary Wister is a meteorologist and fire weather program manager at the National Weather Service in Pendleton. Wister serves as an incident meteorologist when large wildfires or other natural hazards necessitate an Incident Management Team's quick response to protect life and property.

YOUR VIEWS

City a contributor to urban blight

Are you familiar with House Bill 3115? That's the one that requires cities and counties to rewrite their laws to allow homeless camping on public lands. Individuals must be allowed to sit, lie, sleep and keep warm and dry on public lands. Warm and dry means tents. Guess who's the largest property owner in Pendleton? Yup, is the city itself. So don't be surprised if you see a tent pop up in your neighborhood.

The city of Pendleton has made a few feeble attempts to rid the city of excess public property. Perhaps this will give our city officials an incentive to really address the issue. An example? How about that old Oregon Driver & Motor Vehicle Services building that was last used as a temporary warming center? It's empty and most likely doesn't even comply with any current building codes, yet there it sits, the city's contribution to urban blight.

Rick Rohde
Pendleton

Scholarship drive builds community

Hats off to the Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation for hosting its annual Drive for Scholarships event on June 11. It was so refreshing to see so many people that I haven't had the opportunity to see for 18 months, or more, while supporting such a worthy cause.

I look forward to many more great events that build community and remind us of the greatness we can accomplish together.

Mark Morgan
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