

Impeachment more potent than recall

In the wake of Gov. John Kitzhaber's resignation, Oregonians learned we are the only state without an impeachment clause in our Constitution. Our state representatives rightly responded by approving a measure to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot, allowing Oregon voters to enact an impeachment clause.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the ballot. Senate President Peter Courtney blocked the amendment, ruling that he would not bring it to the Senate floor for a vote.

Courtney's stated excuse was that Oregon voters have the recourse of recalling a governor and that should be sufficient. (Translation: Shut up and eat it.)

Courtney's rationale is evasive. His excuse for inaction allows legislators to escape responsibility for a governor whose actions warrant removal from office.

Here is the essential distinction between recalling a governor and impeaching him. Recall elections become re-election campaigns. Impeachment requires a legislative body to be specific about the chief executive's malfeasance and to hold focused debate beyond the level of sound-bite politics.

As president of the Senate and a creature of the statehouse for almost three decades, Peter Courtney epitomizes Oregon's one-party government. Shielding our governors from what is common in every other state is effectively a Democratic Governor Protection Act. It is good for the axis of longtime legislators, lobbyists and public employee unions who define our state's one-party politics.

Considering the alarms raised by Kitzhaber's untrustworthiness, it is appalling that Courtney is so tone deaf.

Financial shenanigans afoot in state government

Oregon state government is a vast enterprise — larger than giant private employers. But if you read the recent articles from EO Media Group's Capital Bureau, you notice a theme. There seems to be no common standard among state agencies for enforcing financial control over your tax dollars.

Moreover, a governor was allowed to operate in what an accountant would call a capricious manner.

Hillary Borrud's recent story concerned tax credits given to investors in green energy projects. Borrud reported that "... around 2011, the Oregon Department of Energy scaled back its oversight of the tax credit sales. The department quietly stopped enforcing pricing and other rules, which allowed private brokers to strike deals in which the prices were never verified by the state."

When auditors in the Department of Revenue raised an alarm about this disparity, Gov. John Kitzhaber effectively told them to back off.

An earlier story from the Capital Bureau concerned the Department of Geology and Mineral Industries. Employees of that agency struggled to track the many grants and other types of funding the agency receives. And the executive director spent down funds in one account that was meant for another purpose. As a consequence, the agency risked running out of funding altogether.

Why aren't financial controls in force to forestall that kind of capricious behavior?

Like state government's history of botching large computer software projects, this matter of building and enforcing financial controls is the unglamorous work of the state Legislature. And that is probably why it simply doesn't get done.



EDITORIAL
The voice of the Chieftain

Dreading the irrigation chore

Now that the CJD Ranch Rodeo for 2015 is history I can return to my normal routine, whatever that is. Since the rodeo has gone international and had two Canadians on the winning team, I may suggest that they sing "O Canada" at the next one.

After eight years and several changes it seems that the committee has come up with the right format and events. If they run next year's with no changes it will be the first year without rule changes or event changes. Thank you to all the people that worked so hard on the event and to the generosity of all the sponsors. If Congress could accomplish as much in the same amount of time they could go home for Presidents' Day and stay there.

Back to my routine, when I moved here I swore I would stay out of the cattle business. Too much risk, too much work, too little return on investment. I didn't mind running cattle in California where you didn't have to feed any hay or in Saskatchewan where they were all bought in the spring and all sold in the fall. I did weaken and take in some pasture cattle the last two years.

This involved renting more ground and therefore more irrigating. I hate moving pipe and now I have to move a lot of it. Aluminum pipe doesn't agree with me. It's heavier than it should be, especially when



OPEN RANGE

Barrie Qualle

it is full of water, and it is an excellent conductor of electricity. This was brought home to me when I occasioned to touch the electrified top wire on the fence with a 40-foot pipe.

I pretty much ruin the early morning while drinking my coffee by dreading the next couple of hours of pipe moving. This not only ruins the time actually moving pipe, but also the time dreading the job, which I count at time and one half. To add to the agony I find myself stopping to catch my breath while moving pipe and losing track of time all the while dreading finishing the job.

This extends the time of misery. To add to the misery, when all the pipe is moved and it is time to turn on the water, I usually find a pipe that didn't latch and all the pipe from the end of the line has to be unlatched to re-connect the one that failed to latch.

Back to the routine. I usually can't sleep past about 5:30 a.m., probably because I go to bed around 8 p.m. The coffee is turned on and the morning news also. I then wait

patiently for the wife to waken and fix breakfast, all the while dreading the irrigation demands. I do know several fit, trim and beautiful wives that have recognized the exercise benefits of pipe moving. It is imperative to have the pipes moved by 9:30 to shower and attend the morning update at the coffee shop. It is important for any civic-minded citizen to be a part of this update. Your contribution could solve county or even world problems.

The update is over in time for me to go home and eat lunch, followed by one of Mexico's greatest contributions to society, the siesta. It is imperative to turn your phone off for the siesta or it could be interrupted by a neighbor imagining it is of great concern that you have 10 steers on them and they want the fence fixed.

A lot of people have accused me of being lazy. In the past I have pretty much agreed with them. I pretty much hate work. I have thought a little bit about this condition and come to the conclusion that in fact I am not lazy or an under-achiever. It is just that work is boring and I am too far advanced and delicate to put up with it along with the additional discomfort of sweat and sore muscles.

Open Range columnist Barrie Qualle is an occasionally working cowboy in Wallowa County.

Despite high danger, no fires

To the Editor:

As the Unit Forester of the Oregon Department of Forestry, I have much to be thankful for above and beyond celebrating our independence this past 4th of July weekend. For this time of year, this was the driest July 4th I have experienced and I was certain our fire crews would be responding to a human caused wildfire caused by fireworks. I am happy to report that our fire crews had a quiet weekend due to the fact that the residents and visitors in Wallowa County over the weekend did not start any wildland fires. My thanks to all of you as you celebrated your independence responsibly.

The forests and rangelands in Wallowa County are critically dry for so early in the summer. The indices in which we measure fire severity are setting new records for fire danger everyday. What is worrisome for me is this the first week of July and we have over two months of critical fire danger ahead of us. I urge all who live and play in Wallowa County to be extra cautious this summer.

As a reminder, there is a coordinated county wide burn ban in effect prohibiting all debris burning. In addition, public use restrictions are in place for forest and rangeland protected by the U.S. Forest Service and the Oregon Department of Forestry. These restrictions will be enforced in order to protect Wallowa County from destructive fire. Individuals who are found to be willful, malicious or negligent in the cause of a wildland fire may be responsible for all suppression costs and any resulting damages. The restrictions in place are not meant to inhibit use but rather to prescribe conditions in which a person can live, work and play in our forests and rangelands safely.

Living amongst you, there is a group of men and women that proudly call themselves firefighters. They serve the Oregon Department of Forestry, US Forest Service, city and structural fire departments and our wildland fire contracting community. All have seasoned veterans and rookie firefighters alike. They train hard and they work hard at protecting Wallowa County's treasured natural resources. They are skillful and masterful in their profession. They are a contingent of proud firefighters who are not boastful in what they do but are appreciative of the support they are given from the landowners and community in which they serve.

I urge you to help our firefighters have a safe summer. Collectively, we all have much to lose from human caused wildfires. Please continue to spread the word and help us prevent wildfires from occurring.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Matt Howard

Unit Forester

Oregon Department of Forestry

A start on Senior Living answers

To the Editor:

In regard to your editorial of 24 June 2015, I would like to answer some of your questions. But before that, I need to state that my husband, Jim Buckles, is one of the three residents at Wallowa Senior Living who was given a purge/eviction notice. At the Health Care District Board meeting, it was agreed beforehand that Annette Lathrop spoke for all three of us, not just for herself.

Now to the questions: The deciding factor in rescinding the eviction notices was that the ombudsman and the state official were in agreement that the reasons given for the notices were not valid. None of the three had changed greatly health-wise. One reason in the letter from the facility was an outright lie: that my husband could not feed himself. Without having access to the other two letters, I believe the reasons given were copied verbatim from one letter to the others.

No one from the sate argued outright that the facility bore a kind of grandfathering obligation, but an oral promise was given by a Marathon employee and repeated as ArtEgan took over that those grandfathered in would be kept "in their homes." The promise was not given by an unnamed employee as stated by Nick Lunde, President of the Health Care Board, but by Judy Jackson, the Marathon employee who was to be the director.

Individual assessments have been done by people who were not qualified to do them at the time of the notices. Assessments were done by a nurse, Glenda Cummins, and each individual's doctor at the time of the move from the old care center. The assessments done recently have not been done on any measurable scale that I know of and have been subjective more than objective. All three residents do need a higher level of care than most residents of regular assisted living facilities, but not appreciably higher than the residents at Wallowa Valley Senior Living. Two of the three are in the rooms for bariatric residents,

those who weigh over 300 pounds none of whom have applied for residency, but which we were promised the new facility would be able to care for. If the facility can care for bariatric residents who would need special lifting, why cannot it care for these three, as well as several others, who need special lifting equipment?

One other item, which you did not mention, is the inordinate lack of good scheduling and turnover of staff. People who would start work one week have not been around two weeks later. People who were willing to work short shifts, when the need for staff was most critical (i.e. from 7:00 AM - 10:00 AM or from 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM) were let go and told they were not needed. Several of the aides and med aides, and they are doing their best, have been double shifted several times during a week. I wonder who does and oversees the scheduling.

Also, although this was not part of either the editorial or the questions put to the Health Care Board, when is the contract with ArtEgan up? Was the contract with Marathon sold to ArtEgan or was a new contract signed? What does the contract cover and who is overseeing the ultimate management of the Senior Living facility? It should be the Health Care District.

Frances Buckles
Joseph

Wallowa lost second suitor

To the Editor:

I'll try to be nice, but wasn't there something pretty important missing from The Chieftain's July 1 front page article entitled 'Repairs begin on compound?'

I read the story once, thought to myself "this cannot be" and read it a second time without ever encountering the words Divide Camp.

I don't want to choose sides and point fingers, but I don't believe Gwen Trice was the only one who had problems trying to negotiate a lease with the City of Wallowa for that former forest service property. Wasn't there a group with the potential, in time, of helping veterans now dying more frequently from suicide than from enemy fire who expressed an interest as well?

Rocky Wilson
Wallowa

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