

Looking for leadership, not more excuses

Bad news keeps rolling out from the Oregon Health Authority. But instead of taking responsibility, Gov. Kate Brown not only ducked it but also tried to spin it as positive news.

The issue is that OHA paid too much to regional health-care organizations, collected too much money from the feds as a result, and might have to repay all of it.

EDITORIAL

Voice of the Chieftain

Brown announced the issue in a roundabout way last week, issuing a press release headlined, “New OHA Leadership Takes Action to Resolve Overpayments Made in Wake of Cover Oregon Failure.” It praised new OHA director Patrick Allen “and his team for acting quickly to bring stability and transparency to OHA’s work on behalf of Oregonians. After just two months leading OHA, Allen has directed staff to resolve yet another consequence of the Cover Oregon technology failure. Governor Brown appreciates that Allen is making the resolution of these issues the top priority and looks forward to monthly updates on his team’s progress in resolving them.”

The overpayments were made to coordinated care organizations for patients who were eligible for both Medicaid and Medicare. This occurred from 2014 through mid-2016.

Brown is the state’s CEO. She is responsible what happens on her watch after becoming governor in February 2015.

Mistakes happen. Still, it is disappointing that OHA apparently overpaid \$74 million to 16 coordinated care organizations. It is disconcerting that, according to the governor’s office, Brown only learned of the problem when Allen took over as OHA director. It is disturbing that Brown, through her press release, tried to spin the snafu instead of accepting her share of the responsibility.

Indeed, this does sound like Cover Oregon, but not in the way Brown suggested. The Cover Oregon fiasco stemmed from Gov. John Kitzhaber appointing the wrong people to key jobs, not keeping close tabs on the project and accepting dubious progress reports. That also sounds like this new OHA fiasco.

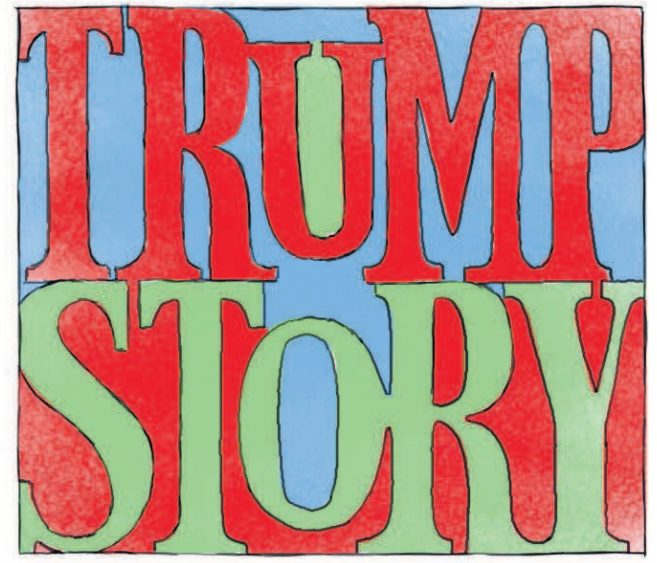
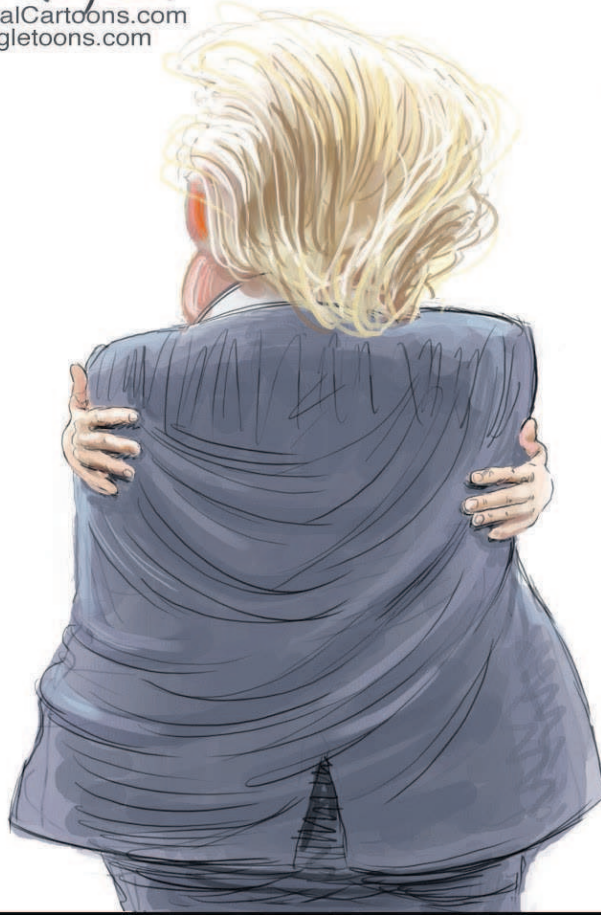
As governor, Brown is CEO of a multi-billion-dollar organization with tens of thousands of employees. A good CEO develops a solid record of hiring the right people, giving them freedom to do their jobs while also staying on top of their work.

In that regard, Brown has a decidedly mixed record, although she did eventually oust Lynne Saxton as OHA director and bring in the well-regarded Allen.

It’s notable that Saxton was forced to resign in the wake of another failure of leadership at OHA, as the department sought to undermine the credibility of a Portland health care provider that was questioning the state’s rate-making process. Saxton denied any active role in the plan, but stepped down anyway.

No one, especially a politician, likes to look bad. But a good CEO builds confidence, trust and respect by taking responsibility when things go awry.

Ed Waffler
PoliticalCartoons.com
Cagletoons.com



Trump means never ever EVER having to say you're sorry -

Traveling is great, and often coming home is even better

I attended an editor’s gathering in Portland on Oct. 26 and spent some time at the newspaper’s corporate headquarters in Salem the following day. My wife came along, and we finished our journey with a visit to my sister and her family in Lincoln City.

No matter how you slice it, it’s a long slog to the coast and back, a couple dozen or so miles short of a complete trek across Oregon. It dawned on both of us that seven months in Wallowa County had changed our attitude a bit about the hustle and bustle and the traffic of places like Portland in particular.

Thursday evening, we drove from Portland to Salem, 60 miles so we estimated it would take an hour. Well over two hours later, and driving through indescribable traffic congestion, we arrived.

Sunday morning coming back through Portland was also nightmarish with many slowdowns and more than a few episodes of sitting at a standstill. On a Sunday morning, I could only imagine what those



WAHL TO WALL

Paul Wahl

roads are like on a weekday morning.

Now we’ve been hearing forever how sophisticated Portland residents are, they bike everywhere they go, they take public transportation in large numbers and they’re just overall green folks.

Pish-posh. They’re out there in gas-eating automobiles at rates as high or higher than most urban areas by our recollection. Portland is a long way from abandoning the automobile culture that prevails in the West.

On top of that, there are an inordinate number of nasty drivers who use their horn and middle finger at the slightest provocation. We were so not impressed.

The coast, of course, is beautiful ... even when the fog is so thick you can only

hear the ocean waves.

We drove through the Columbia Gorge in the dark Wednesday night but had a chance to see the fire damage in the daylight on Sunday. Several roads leading off the freeway remain closed. It’s difficult to imagine what it must have been like to travel through the area when the fires were at their peak.

We made a quick stop in The Dalles area to see if we could find fresh apples and pears since it was so late in the season. We found one orchard still in operation — all the apples and pears you could handle for 50 cents a pound. Needless to say, we were in hog heaven. The fruit was amazing.

While both of us enjoy getting away on occasion, we’re beginning to reach that age and stage in life when the thought of being in our own home, in our own beds is inviting. That doesn’t mean we will stop traveling whenever possible. It’s still healthy to get out and see how other folks live on occasion.

Library facilities details a work in progress

In the Oct. 25 edition, the Chieftain reported on a City of Enterprise Council meeting about the proposed library district. This letter addresses the reference to the proposed use of the city’s library facilities by the library district.

One of the main goals of library foundation in recent months has been to determine what the lowest possible tax rate would be in order to provide library services throughout Wallowa County.

The recommended tax rate of 65 cents per thousand dollars of evaluation is possible only if the cities and the county agree to allow the district to use their library buildings without charge.

The library district would pay for annual operations: personnel, library materials and other operational expenses, including janitorial and telecommunications.

This type of shared responsibility for funding libraries is not unusual. Tillamook County in Oregon and Timberland Library District in Washington have such arrangements. The specifics of these arrangements are stated in intergovernmental agreements between the library district and the local governments that own their facilities.

The agreements could be updated annually as the district board and the cities and county gain experience with district revenues, operations and expenditures.

An intergovernmental agreement cannot be made before the district exists. However, knowledge and understanding can be gained as a pathway to laying out an arrangement that jurisdictions

LETTERS to the EDITOR

could support and that the district budget and tax rate would also support.

This month, the foundation will be organizing a facilities committee, inviting representatives from the city councils of Enterprise, Joseph and Wallowa and the Wallowa County Commission to sort out the facilities issues.

The Foundation appreciates that all of these partners are taking a leap of faith in creating the district, all have a vested interest in its success, and all stand to be able to provide efficient, effective and sustainable library services to our communities.

Mike Crawford

Troy

Crawford is a member of the Library Foundation Board and chairman of the foundation’s facilities committee.

A different sort of analogy suggested

I’ve heard it said that city dwellers would think differently about cougars and wolves if they roamed in their area. What is more often left unsaid is that city dwellers wouldn’t like those predators anymore than some rural folks do.

I think the analogy is different.

City dwellers deal with threats that folks in rural areas typically don’t. Or, not to the same extent. Like, shootings, robbery, theft, muggings and the like.

Which got me to thinking,

what if city dwellers left keys in their ignitions, their houses unlocked or watched their big screen TV from their front yard, and they woke up to find those possessions gone. Most likely most folks might say, “What did you expect?”

If city dwellers took an approach similar to what some folks do in response to wolf predation, we’d be working to rid our community of its “undesirables.”

Maybe that strategy might feel like the only right response to some folks. Aside from obvious ethical issues, it most likely wouldn’t prove to be a very successful way of dealing with the problem.

What happens instead is we lock doors, remove keys from cars, install alarm systems and take other similar measures. In other words, we take steps to secure what we consider valuable.

We all have something to learn from each other.

Bob Procter
Portland

Kudos to stars in ‘Murder’ play

Wallowa County residents would be missing a great opportunity to experience a wonderful night of entertainment if they missed the Mid-Valley Theatre’s performance of the Agatha Christie play, “A murder is announced.”

This who-dunnit is impeccably played by local people who are the actors and actresses. The play itself is crafted to keep challenging the audience as they try to deduce which character is the guilty person. I changed my mind several times and never really

figured out who it was until the end.

Under the brilliant direction of Kate Loftus, a real genius at bringing out the best in the players, you will be mesmerized by the entire production. Jennifer Hobbs, Gwen Menton, and Stuart Vencill cannot be surpassed, even by the actors my wife Jean and I saw in performances in New York City two weeks ago.

Sebastian Hobbs, Carol Vencill, Jeff Fields, Ame Leggett, Paige Lattin, Andy Martin, Steve Kliever, Bryce Leggett and Anna Moholt also did outstanding jobs.

David Cook and Bill Kost deserve credit for building a clean and efficient set. Ingrid Cook and Eleanor Terry earned a round of applause for resetting the stage between scenes; this is one of Kate’s trademarks.

Clem Falbo
Joseph

Remembering the stalwart ladies

Great article about the Soroptimist Thrift Store in the Nov. 1 edition, but you neglected to mention the elderly ladies who ran the store when I first arrived: Alice Lessman, Marjorie Martin and Mable Osborn.

According to The History of Wallowa County, the name “thrift store” was suggested by Rowena Adey.

When these ladies were not working at their regular jobs, they were found at the thrift shop. These are names that are disappearing. I just thought they needed to be mentioned.

Cathryn Paterson
Enterprise

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Letters to the Editor are subject to editing and should be limited to 275 words. Writers should also include a phone number with their signature so we can call to verify identity. The Chieftain does not run anonymous letters.

In terms of content, writers should refrain from personal attacks. It’s acceptable, however, to attack (or support) another party’s ideas.

We do not routinely run thank-you letters, a policy we’ll

consider waiving only in unusual situations where reason compels the exception.

You can submit a letter to the Wallowa County Chieftain in person; by mail to P.O. Box 338, Enterprise, OR 97828; by email to editor@wallowa.com; or via the submission form at the newspaper’s website, located at wallowa.com. (Drop down the “Opinion” menu on the navigation bar to see the relevant link).