

# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

# The state punishes in secret

As befits the importance of teaching as a profession, Oregon has a public commission that investigates teachers who have allegedly broken state rules.

Actually, though, the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission would be more accurately described as “quasi-public.”

It turns out, as *The Oregonian* recently reported, that sometimes the Commission punishes teachers in private.

An Oregon law, in effect since 2009, allows this secretive discipline.

That law should be changed.

It doesn't serve the interests of students' parents, or the public in general, to allow the Commission to decide which transgressions should be made public and which shouldn't.

According to *The Oregonian*, the Commission has used the secret discipline law 71 times since 2015. The newspaper reported that in one case state investigators determined that a Portland high school teacher had twice drunk alcohol while on school field trips. The Commission put her on probation for two years for unprofessional conduct.

But the case was hidden from the public, and the Commission only sent a letter to the school district and the teacher.

The law doesn't appear to create a yawning loophole that protects the privacy of teachers in egregious situations. It can't be used, for instance, when a teacher has been convicted of a crime.

But the criminal justice system is public, so that concession hardly alleviates our concerns about the confidentiality law. So long as the Commission decides when to use the law, the public is precluded from judging the severity of a case.

We're not suggesting that teachers be held to an unnecessary, and unfair, level of scrutiny.

But when the Commission that is supposed to act on the public's behalf decides a teacher deserves to be disciplined, the public deserves to know what happened.

*From the Baker City Herald editorial board. The board consists of editor Jayson Jacoby and reporter Chris Collins.*

## GUEST EDITORIAL

### Editorial from The San Diego Union-Tribune:

An investigation by NPR and ProPublica discovered something stunning last year: America has a higher rate of women dying of pregnancy-related complications than any other developed country — and only in the U.S. is this death rate rising.

This weekend, the latest report in the series found something no less striking: California — a state where one in eight infants born in the U.S. take their first breaths — has cut its rate of women dying in childbirth by more than half since 2006.

The U.S. has 700 to 900 maternal deaths a year, and the CDC Foundation, an independent nonprofit that supports the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, estimates that 60 percent could be prevented. How? Better problem recognition, medical staff support and emergency planning. In California, the major innovation was the introduction of toolkits that centralize everything from checklists to sponges and pads. Hospitals using the carts lowered by nearly 21 percent the rate of severe maternal morbidity due to hemorrhage. Hospitals without them lowered that rate by 1 percent.

With 3.9 million babies born in the U.S. each year, this problem could be far worse, but American women shouldn't be nearly at the risk that they are. Now the U.S. has a solution: Look to California.

## CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

**President Donald Trump:** The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1414; fax 202-456-2461; to send comments, go to [www.whitehouse.gov/contact](http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact).

**U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley:** D.C. office: 313 Hart Senate Office Building, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-3753; fax 202-228-3997. Portland office: One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; 503-326-3386; fax 503-326-2900. Pendleton

office: 310 S.E. Second St. Suite 105, Pendleton 97801; 541-278-1129; [merkley.senate.gov](mailto:merkley.senate.gov).

**U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden:** D.C. office: 201 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; [wyden.senate.gov](mailto:wyden.senate.gov).

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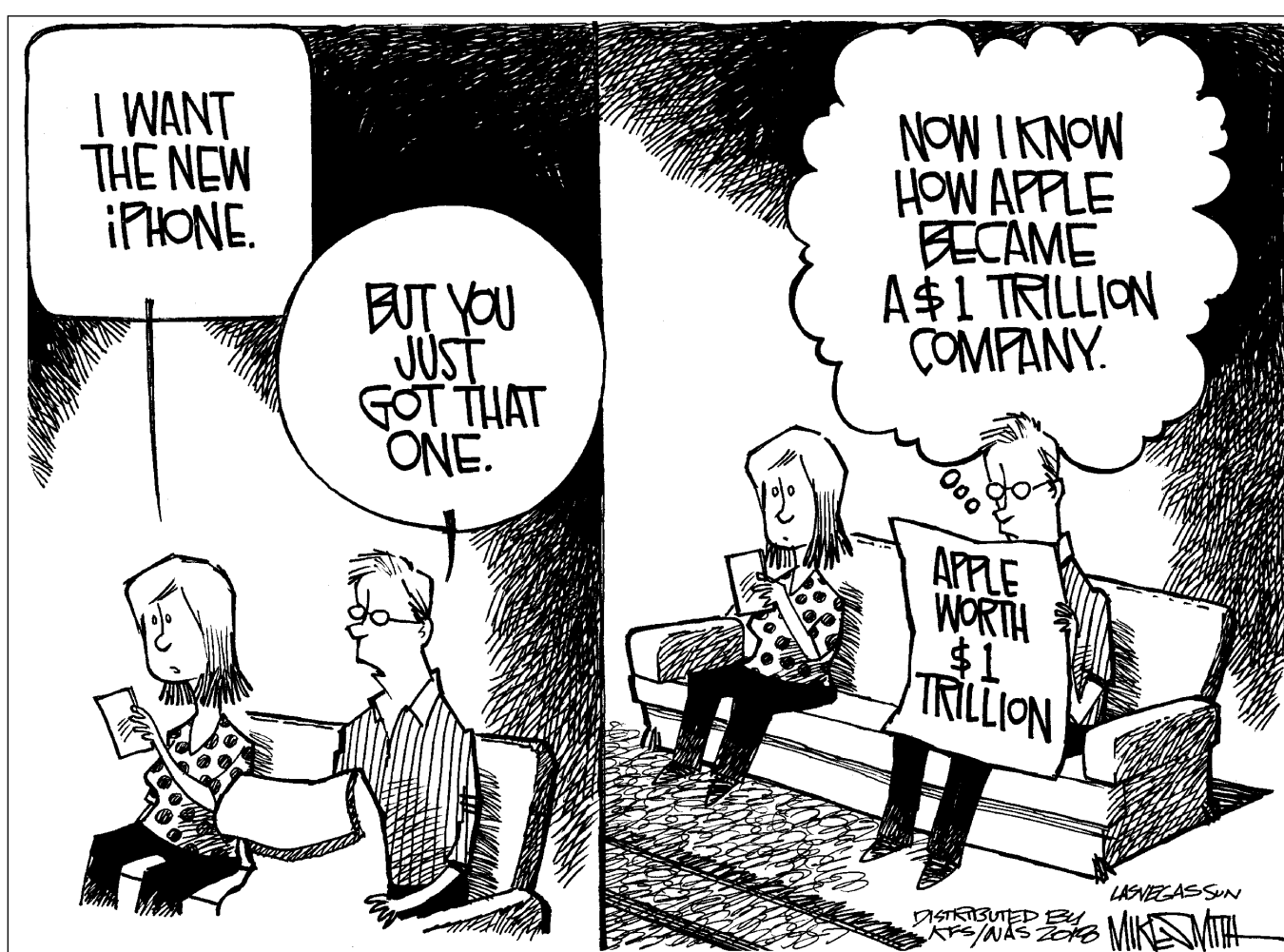
D.C., 20515, 202-225-6730; fax 202-225-5774. La Grande office: 1211 Washington Ave., La Grande, OR 97850; 541-624-2400, fax, 541-624-2402; [walden.house.gov](mailto:walden.house.gov).

**Baker City Hall:** 1655 First Street, P.O. Box 650, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-6541; fax 541-524-2049. City Council meets the second and fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers. Mike Downing, James Thomas, Loran Joseph, Randy Schiewe, Rosemary Abell, Arvid Andersen

and Adam Nilsson.

**Baker City administration:** 541-523-6541. Fred Warner Jr., city manager; Dustin Newman, police chief; Michelle Owen, public works director.

**Baker County Commission:** Baker County Courthouse 1995 3rd St., Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-8200. Meets the first and third Wednesdays at 9 a.m.; Bill Harvey (chair), Mark Bennett, Bruce Nichols.



## Your views

### Plenty of people like to hear roosters crowing

I am writing regarding the City Council's attempt to ban rosters. This is not just about irritating sounds. It's about our city and the people who live here. I submit there are at least as many people who like the crowing of roosters as those who want it stopped. I understand how someone can be annoyed by noise when

they are trying to sleep. I myself have been awakened by the garbage truck and its screeching brakes. But I cannot get it banned.

My father told me that during the time he was living at Washington State in college housing there was a farm on the campus with cows, sheep and chickens. His neighbor lady was always out in her yard at sunrise. She said she got up early

to hear the roosters crow. She had been born and raised in New York City and the sounds of the farm were beautiful to her.

If you make the decision to ban roosters, will you then ban guinea hens, turkeys, peacocks and geese? Will there ever be an end. And will Baker City be more and more like New York City?

**Dan Van Kirk**  
Baker City

# Adding real life lessons to school

As I begin to prepare for next semester's classes, I consider what my students need to learn. What aspects of my class will prepare them for the real world?

The educational system needs to do the same thing.

Every semester I have a week of “math lab” in my college reporting class. The words strike fear in my students. Their eyes roll back in their heads, they foam at the mouth, they sputter the words, “But I'm a liberal arts major.”

It's not that bad, really. We cover things like what property tax changes mean for their rent, how interest rates affect their car or credit card payments, and how a 5 percent raise affects their paychecks.

We seldom get past property taxes before they start realizing that if they own property, they will pay property taxes forever. And it always surprises me that they don't already know this.

It's a failing of our educational system that students don't leave high school with this basic understanding, among other things.

That's why we need to bring back the

### MARTI HARVEY

old home economics class. Call it “Skills for Life” and make it mandatory in high schools. Teach basic economics, budgeting, comparison-shopping, basic cooking skills and time management. Give them a better start in real life than they get now.

How cool would it be if our kids knew how to shop for groceries and stay within a budget? Wouldn't parents feel a sense of relief if their kids understood how interest accrues on their credit cards? And shouldn't everyone have one great go-to meal they could cook if guests pop in?

These are the skills we learned in high school home economics, the skills all kids should have, whether they are college-bound or heading straight into the workforce.

I've heard the argument that young people should learn these things from their parents, but my experience is that they don't, for various reasons.

Some parents don't have time. Some parents don't have the skills. Some par-

ents don't think about it until it's time for their kids to leave home. And, since part of teaching is exposing kids to your own situation, some parents don't think it's any of their kids' business.

But high school is the perfect time to introduce life's basics. Students are beginning to feel like adults. They can see the light at the end of the high school tunnel. They're thinking about what life will be like for them. Home economics signals to them that we know they're growing up and we want to help them along in life's journey.

So our high school curriculum needs to step up for students. Yes, English, history, algebra and science are important. But what good are they if you don't know how to cook dinner or figure out how a FICO score affects interest on credit cards? How impressed would a potential employer be if a young job applicant could discuss killer time management skills?

Knowledge is power. It's time to pass that power on to the next generation.

*Marti Harvey is a lecturer at the University of Texas at Arlington.*

## GUEST EDITORIAL

### Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

A new report from the Oregon High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area reaffirms that the state's marijuana industry is fraught with challenges. The real question is: When is the state going to rise to meet them?

Many of the issues in the report are not new. The report's researchers attempted to quantify them — as best they could.

The state's pot production capacity is estimated to be about 2 million pounds a year. That's much more than the report's estimated demand of as much as 372,000 pounds. It creates an opportunity for the black market shipments across state lines.

There have been additional health care costs believed to be due, in part, to changes in the law. The Oregon Burn Center spent \$9.6 million for initial acute care treating inpatient burn victims from

July 2015 through January 2018 due to cannabinoid extraction accidents.

There are also more thinly supported statements in the report. For instance, it says: “Due to historic use of and the exponential growth of cannabis cultivation, the Rogue River Basin is under acute hydrologic strain.” There's reason to believe it's true, but the report's researchers couldn't come up with actual numbers to demonstrate it.

Oregon's U.S. Attorney Billy Williams told *The Oregonian* the findings confirm concerns that he has already had and discussed with state officials.

What's next?

The state doesn't have enough inspectors. It's been behind on inspections. It has had problems getting the technology to meet licensing requirements. Law enforcement in Deschutes County have also had to reassign or hire new people to

help investigate problems with the crop. The Legislature needs to ensure regulators and law enforcement have adequate resources to do their jobs.

The Legislature also needs to make other changes. The hoops that law enforcement have to jump through to determine what is a legal grow and what is not are ridiculous. Deschutes County Sheriff Shane Nelson, District Attorney John Hummel and county commissioners have complained that the state won't provide a list of legal medical grow sites in the county. Law enforcement have to, instead, go through the unnecessary step of making more specific requests.

Legalizing the sale of a drug that remains illegal on the federal level is going to be problematic. Voters chose it. State government needs to live up to its responsibility to provide reasonable regulation and enforcement.