

Opinion

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Your views

PEN America opposed Obama administration as well

Thank you for your editorial on PEN America's lawsuit against President Trump, asking the court to address the President's threatened and actual actions of retaliation against journalists and media outlets for their coverage of him.

While it is clear from your editorial that there is a lot on which we agree, I wanted to address your claim that PEN America did not pursue litigation against the Obama Administration and that we were comparatively silent in responding to Obama-era developments that hurt press freedom in the U.S.

In fact, PEN America has engaged in litigation under Obama. In 2008, PEN America brought suit — along with several other organizations — against the expansion of the NSA surveillance program. While this occurred shortly before President Obama took office, the great majority of this litigation occurred under — and against — the Obama Administration. When the case was dismissed and then appealed by the ACLU, PEN America filed an amicus brief before the 2nd Circuit in order to make sure that our objections remained on-the-record.

In the lawsuit FAQs on our website, you can read a bit more about our decades-long history of filing suits, and of spearheading or joining amicus briefs, before the courts on issues related to our mandate.

We agree with you entirely that it is deeply distressing how President Obama dramatically escalated whistleblower prosecution. Which is why we did a full-length research report on the subject — “Secret Sources: Whistleblowers, National Security, and Free Expression” — in November 2015. You'll also find our analysis of the James Risen case within the report, as well as our policy recommendation regarding journalists' call records. You may also wish to read the 2013 Foreign Policy article from our CEO Suzanne Nossel, “Freedom Begins at Home,” which additionally addresses the exact developments in press freedom that you identify as such deeply problematic behavior under the Obama Administration.

Summer Lopez

PEN America Senior Director of Free Expression Programs

Now is the time to invest in our school facilities

Can you imagine what it was like for residents to consider the future of our public school facilities back in 1948? Maybe you benefited from that leadership's wisdom. Our elders built to that day's health and safety code, instructional standards and micro/macro economies. Here we are today, with a “tin can” at our feet — public facility ownership and investment. Do we still require that our facilities shelter students together in safe, healthy and purposeful environments, or shall we kick our tin can down the road again, more dents, more rust and even more holes?

With fresh eyes as new, retired residents, we toured the school facilities this month. We read school district and other documents, learned history and questioned everyone we met. We also observed a fantastic, creative school staff making “lemonade out of lemons” for students, so that they can share space each day — in our leaky tin can. It became obvious to us that retrofitting the current configuration of facilities would be short-sighted. We would rather spend our annual operating dollars to engage student learning, than waste it on fragmented, risk-managing, duplicative and time-wasting procedures required daily to keep our current doors open — due to worn out, separated and outdated school facilities.

Even after receiving our tax statement, we are choosing to afford financing a school bond — a Yes vote — hard to do on a fixed income. Let's conjoin a junior and high school location to efficiently use our curriculum spaces and staff, install facility safeguards for emotional and physical security, merge our elementary spaces and staff as our new neighborhood school, and initiate learning success during early childhood years. It's our turn to invest and recycle that tin can!

Mike and Beth Quinn

Baker City

Passing school bond will help teachers focus on education

I don't think anybody denies that Measure 1-88 will be an expensive investment, but I find it painful for our publicly funded school district to carry on paying utility costs on energy inefficient buildings and to continue sinking money and resources to repair crumbling foundations. I think every individual, corporation, or community has a handful of pivotal moments that really define that individual or group and I think this bond measure is one of those decisive moments for the people of Baker County. Do we settle for the history and accomplishments of the past, or do we continue to develop as a community? Without a significant financial investment in our school buildings this community will likely lose more and more of the unique events that not only make Baker special but also support our shops, restaurants, and lodging.

We are lucky to have such dedicated, talented teachers in our district. Unfortunately, many of those teachers are spending time trying to figure out where to put small groups, where to plug in computers, how to get all the kids fed, and how to keep our kids safe. Wouldn't their time be better spent helping our children grow and expand their knowledge and intellectual curiosity? If you are still undecided about how to vote on Measure 1-88 I hope you consider the future cost savings — both monetary and otherwise, and join me in voting yes for kids.

Neil Carroll

Baker City

Democrats, states in debt and the lime plant property

Just a few things for thought. Anyone hear of Russia interfering in our election? How about Bill Clinton sending James Carville to Israel to screw up their election in 1995? Democrats fight Trump over the southern wall every day. I wonder how this turns out when the crowd arrives.

How about Democratic California? A trillion dollars in debt, 830,000 unemployed and 4 million on food stamps. Nancy Pelosi worth \$129 million and so on. Washington state in debt up to their eyeballs. Then we have Oregon, also in heavy debt. State received \$145 million from marijuana tax last year and still wants more taxes.

Ever notice that politicians are always telling us how we need more education? Running for office doesn't require education, just votes.

Anyone remember when Hillary Clinton left the White House broke and with some of the furniture, which she had to return. Remember how upset some people got because Trump gave a tax break to big business? So maybe McDonald's and Walmart should close up to keep everyone happy. This would only shut off 2 million jobs in the U.S.

Abortion seems to be the thing now. There used to be an old saying, “If you are going to dance then you have to pay the fiddler.” In case you haven't heard of stupid laws, the one that takes the cake is this — women can have an abortion paid for by tax money but if you spank your kid here comes the police, you go to jail and the kid goes to a foster home.

Last is local. The Herald says that the county has an offer or two on the old lime plant property. There is over half a million dollars invested in the property plus 20 years of back taxes. This property should be sold in one parcel only and put back on the tax rolls as such.

Grover Mann

Baker City

I trust Walden's fiscal conservatism

Jamie McLeod-Skinner has claimed that if elected she can cross political party lines and find common ground. My question is simple. She was the Phoenix, Oregon, city manager from November 2016 until March 2017, and then was fired by the City Council because she didn't get along with people. Obviously this is a contradiction. During her campaign she claims that she is a socially progressive and fiscally conservative. I would really be surprised if she could pull this off as most other politicians have failed on this count. Vote for Walden ... he has proven that he gets

along with people and is fiscally conservative.

Konnie McManus

Baker City

Paper may have been scammed by letter writers

Oh, the irony of last Friday's editorial! Especially when it appears some of the Letters to the Editor published on Friday were authored by people who do not exist, or at least don't exist in Baker City as stated.

Were the fake letters written by a candidate or campaign? Or was the paper scammed by locals too gutless to spew their hate under their real names? At any rate the Baker City Herald did not adequately verify the authors before print, and I hope they'll put a stronger process in place from here on.

These cowardly authors believe they are hurting the individuals they targeted and skewing an election. But Baker County is too small to not know who is legit and who isn't.

I was first made aware of the nasty letter by “Amy Bird,” which targeted me, and I am not even running for office. She encouraged people to vote against local Republicans. I looked her up in the current registered voters' database. She does not exist — and is definitely not registered to vote in Baker County. I looked her up on the County's property search. Not there either. Then I did an Internet search of various kinds, and she does not come up anywhere, nor does she have a social media account. I had other people research as well to double-check me, and they also struck out.

Then I thought about the writing style and tone of two other LTEs, which appeared on the same day, and sounded very similar with their over-the-top nastiness against the Bill Harvey campaign. Guess what? Mike House, Ed Green and Darcy Green are not registered to vote in Baker County either, do not own property in Baker County, have no social media footprint, and don't exist in a Google search.

(For the record, the Baker County Republican Party has not endorsed anyone in the Commissioner race because both candidates running are registered Republicans. Our bylaws for this election cycle did not allow the party to take sides.)

In just minutes a person can set up a temporary email account online, get a temporary phone number, and be set to do their dirty work! This is in the Dems/Libs playbook on campaigns. Technology can be a blessing, and also a curse. We have several people working on finding the people who wrote the three letters, and we believe we do know who they are.

If by some miracle, Amy, Mike, Ed and Darcy really do exist, I would like to meet with you. I bet Mr. Harvey would as well. But please have identification, because everything else says you just don't exist. Baker voters, stay tuned. Please vote Republican, and let's see a red wave.

Suzan Ellis Jones

Chair, Baker County Republican Party Bridgeport

Pass school bond, keep Baker's future bright

Here in Baker Valley, it's obvious that we know how to stretch a dollar — and perhaps there is no better example than in education, where staff has been doing more with less for quite some time. I am especially proud of the teachers, parents, and community partners who embody Baker's reputation as a community with a “can-do” attitude.

At Brooklyn Primary, the newest of four schools built when the visionaries of this valley passed the last school bond in 1948, the school counselor works out of the old shower room. The cafeteria and gymnasium operate out of one shared space. At an overcrowded school like Brooklyn, that means the daily schedule must operate with exact precision to ensure that all 465 kids have physical education each day, as well as access to adequate nutrition at breakfast and lunch.

Our kids and staff do their best, but the reality is that the schools Baker built in the post-World War II era have been struggling to meet the needs of Baker's kids today. Safety and security improvements like key-card systems, cameras, and secure entries

don't happen simply by adjusting schedules or maintaining an upbeat attitude. I believe in the hard work that our long-range facilities planning committee has done over the course of a year, which led to Measure 1-88. This effort has helped our community see the need for updated and improved facilities.

Baker's kids deserve the same access to opportunity as their peers in other communities across this state.

Community pride will keep Baker's future bright — vote Yes on Measure 1-88.

Susan Townsend

Baker City

Passing school bond would move 5J district forward

The passing of Measure 1-88 is an incredible step forward for the Baker 5J Schools as we continue to set the stage for progress in a number of areas throughout the district and community. The district's vision, adopted by the board, identifies our school system as existing at the center of community vitality, and is exemplified in our goal to “Develop and implement a facility review process that engages multiple stakeholders to consider how our facilities can best support quality education for students, provide a rewarding environment for teachers and staff, and serve the broader community.” This goal, through a thorough and thoughtful process, is specifically what led to Measure 1-88 being placed on the ballot. We as a board have committed to moving the district and community forward by authorizing this bond. The following bond related projects will contribute to the continued success of today's students.

- Safety and security improvements at all schools, including secure entries and key card systems to better control access

- Energy efficiency improvements at all schools, such as upgrading the heating and ventilation systems, installing double pane windows and adding controls on all energy systems

- New elementary school for Grades 1-6 on land the district owns north of Baker High School. This would address capacity issues, provide safe drop off and pick up areas, and create a modern learning environment with classrooms that have room for hands-on, collaborative learning.

- Capital improvements at Baker High School to accommodate seventh- and eighth-graders, with separation between grades 7-8 and 9-12. This would address middle school enrollment levels and use existing space at the high school. Seventh- and eighth-graders would gain access to vocational programs and advanced coursework.

In pursuit of fostering current student growth and that of future generations, we, as school board members, fully support Measure 1-88, and ask for your Yes vote, knowing this strategic investment in our schools will impact both the success of students and the quality of life we all desire for our families and community.

Chris Hawkins, chair

Katie Lamb, vice chair

Andrew Bryan

Kevin Cassidy

Julie Huntington

Parents and business owners, we support school bond

As parents, business owners and proud members of Baker City, we are happy to support Measure 1-88. The expected improvements in quality, safety and efficiency of our structures in combination with continued and improved access to technical, career-oriented training make it a great choice for the betterment of future generations. It is important to recognize that the vitality of a community like Baker depends largely on our desirability to future business owners, health care providers, and community members. With our schools in such disrepair it is critical that we take it upon ourselves to help contribute to this change. We have allowed our schools to get to the point that they are by not taking action in the past. Our hope is that we, as a community, have the foresight to see the benefits this will provide for our future.

Dr. Logan Mitchell and family

Baker City

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.

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.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden: D.C. office: 221 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.

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden (2nd District): D.C. office: 2182 Rayburn Office Building, Washington, 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.

State Sen. Cliff Bentz (R-Ontario): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., S-301, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1730. District office: P.O. Box 1027, Ontario, OR 97914; 541-889-8866.

State Rep. Lynn Findley (R-Vale): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., H-475, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1460. Email: Rep.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov
Oregon Gov. Kate Brown: 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; www.governor.oregon.gov.

Letters to the editor

- We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.

- The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot verify the accuracy of all statements in letters to the editor.

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