

Opinion

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EDITORIAL

DHS tries to hide its failures

So much for the idea that the Oregon Legislature could spur improvements in the state's failing child protection system by passing a law.

Lawmakers did their part in 2017 when they passed Senate Bill 819. It requires the state Department of Human Services to investigate the death of any child who'd had contact with child protective services in the previous year, if the death might have resulted from abuse or neglect. The law requires the state to write a report of the investigation and to make it public.

The state hasn't complied with the new law.

And as a recent story in *The Oregonian* shows, failures are far more common than successes.

The Portland newspaper reported that the Department of Human Services this summer finished just 11 percent of child welfare investigations within the prescribed time frame. Federal standards call for a 90-percent compliance rate.

But rather than concede their failings, state officials contend that so long as they're working on an internal review of a child's death, the 2017 law gives them an indefinite amount of time to make reports available to the public.

State Sen. Sara Gelser, D-Corvallis, who supported the 2017 law, said officials who interpret the law in that way are ignoring one of its main purposes, which is to ensure the public can track the child welfare system's progress.

"Without publishing those (reports), there is no way for the public to know the department is following the statute," Gelser said.

The state's sluggish response could have financial motivations, as well. Families who want to file a wrongful death lawsuit against the state generally have to do so within one year of a child's death, but if investigation reports aren't available it could be difficult for a potential plaintiff to determine whether there is a legal basis for such a suit.

DHS has a difficult job. But it's also a vital job, and state officials have a moral and legal obligation to conduct their work, with reasonable exceptions to protect individuals' privacy, in the public's purview.

—Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

GUEST EDITORIAL

Unions should be fair with workers who try to quit

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

Quit cable and the cable company doesn't force you to keep paying for months on end. Quit a job and your employer can't force you to keep working. Quit college and the school can't force you to pay for classes you won't attend.

But just try to quit a public employee union in Oregon, and the union can keep making the employee pay for membership — sometimes for months on end.

Fair treatment for workers should be more than a slogan for Oregon's public employee unions. When workers want to quit two of the state's largest public employee unions — AFSCME Local 75 and the Service Employ-

ees International Union 503 — the unions shouldn't have schemes to compel them to pay, anyway.

The Freedom Foundation and the National Right to Work Foundation have filed suit against the two unions in federal court.

The suit comes after the U.S. Supreme Court's Janus decision, which ruled on what are called "fair-share" payments. Fair-share payments allowed unions of public employees to collect fees from people whom the union represented in labor negotiations — even if they weren't members of the union and didn't want to be represented by the union. The justification for fair-share payments is that people who benefit from union repre-

sentation must pay for it even if they want nothing to do with the union.

The Supreme Court ruled in Janus that the practice is a violation of free speech rights. Why should anyone be compelled to support the activities of a group they don't want to?

A previous lawsuit has called on Oregon unions to pay back employees for fair-share fees paid before Janus. The new lawsuits are an effort to stop the practice of not allowing members of a union to cancel their membership immediately.

For instance, when an employee at Western Oregon University notified SEIU that she was quitting on Nov. 1, SEIU wrote her

back saying she had signed an agreement as part of her membership that she could not quit except during a special membership period. In her case, she would have to wait until Aug. 19. Her union dues would continue to be deducted from her paycheck until that time.

The plaintiffs argue that practice is illegal. Because of the Janus decision, they argue workers must give their consent before fees are deducted. These workers are trying to stop paying and the union won't let them.

The unions should immediately stop seizing the money from the workers' paychecks and pay back what they have already taken. That's the only fair way to treat the workers.

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.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown: 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; www.governor.oregon.gov.

Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read: oregon.treasurer@ost.state.or.us; 350 Winter St. NE, Suite 100, Salem OR 97301-3896; 503-378-4000.

Oregon Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum: Justice Building, Salem, OR 97301-4096; 503-378-4400.

Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

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

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, 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; John Clark, fire chief; Michelle Owen, public works director.

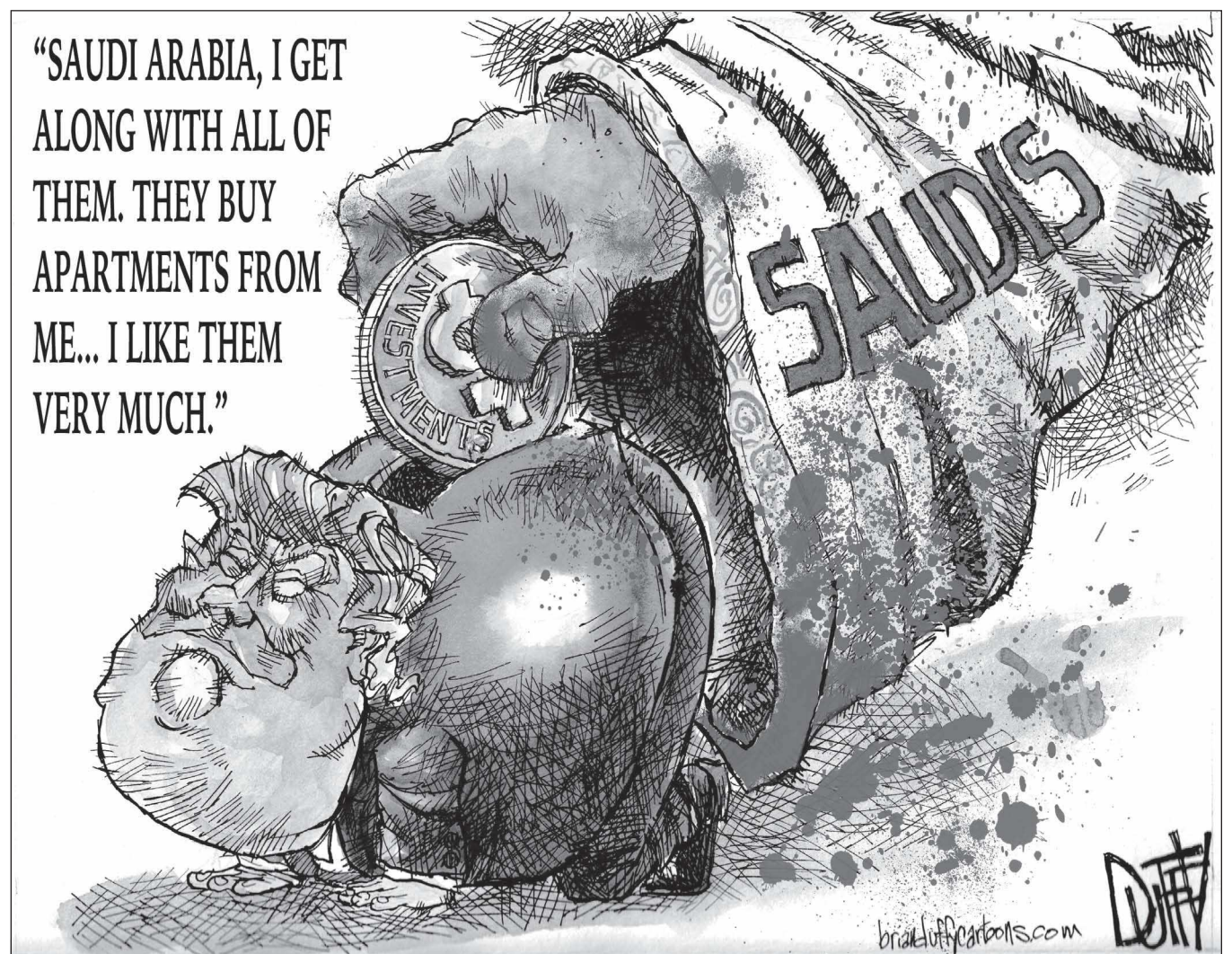
Baker County Commission: Baker County Courthouse 1995 3rd St., Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-8200. Meets the first and third Wednesdays at 9 a.m.: Bill Harvey (chair), Mark Bennett, Bruce Nichols.

Baker County departments: 541-523-8200. Travis Ash, sheriff; Jeff Smith, roadmaster; Matt Shirtcliff, district attorney; Alice Durlinger, county treasurer; Shindy Carpenter, county clerk; Kerry Savage, county assessor.

Baker School District: 2090 4th Street, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-524-2260; fax 541-524-2564. Superintendent: Mark Witty. Board meets the third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m., Baker School District 5J office boardroom; Andrew Bryan, Kevin Cassidy, Chris Hawkins, Katie Lamb and Julie Huntington.



"SAUDI ARABIA, I GET ALONG WITH ALL OF THEM. THEY BUY APARTMENTS FROM ME... I LIKE THEM VERY MUCH."



Your views

'Civil Cold War' could heat up in super blue Oregon

CNN's Fareed Zakaria's show on Sunday, Nov. 25, was about the left's favorite topic, gun control. The video of Australia's destruction of 600,000 semi-auto loading rifles and pump action shotguns was enough to make the far left want to saddle up their unicorns and take a ride over the rainbow. Get on with disarmament and there will be peace, love and harmony. All you have to do to believe that is ignore all of world history.

Hillary Clinton says she will run again. She lost for several reasons but two come to mind. First, she loves Australia's gun control laws and secondly, she thinks that in this overpopulated country we need to build bridges instead of walls and let in more illegal aliens — sorry "undocumented workers."

I have heard the term, "civil cold war" to describe the urban-rural divide over guns and borders. The time is coming when it won't be so civil or cold if the

left keeps pushing. Oregon being super blue just might illustrate that point during the next legislative session.

Steve Culley
Baker City

Column highlights media hypocrisy on Trump

I recently read a column in the Herald from a writer in Texas named John Crisp. He starts out saying that Trump has a picture in the White House that is in bad taste. He uses a couple of big words to impress people, as some writers do. He goes on to say that we have probably seen the picture. I don't care to see the picture, or Washington, D.C., or Texas for that matter. By the way, does this guy have a habit of telling people what and where they can hang their pictures?

The column goes on to say that Trump was not in the military so he may not be right to lead the armed forces. Anyone remember Franklin Roosevelt? He was not a soldier and was dealing with the Japanese while

their warships were heading to Hawaii that cost 2,400 lives at first strike. How about Bill Clinton, the draft dodger among other things. The Clintons sent 900 government people down to Waco, Texas, killed around 80 people, including 24 kids, for nothing. No Democrat B.S. excuses. Makes a guy proud of the party. How about Kennedy? He was a serviceman but took a beating in Cuba. Then we have brave Obama drawing the red line warning in Syria which Putin trampled and joined up with Syria. Obama did nothing.

This writer also mentions that he served in the military for modest pay. I am sorry about that. I have three grandsons and nephews in the service and all making over \$50,000 per year. Some people would cry if hung with a new rope. If you want to know what Hillary would be like as president just read the Cathy O'Brien story. Anything else the writer would like to catch up on?

Grover Mann
Baker City

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.

- Letters are limited to 350 words; longer letters will be edited for length. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.
- The writer must sign the letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do not include this information cannot be published.

- Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

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