

# Opinion

## GUEST EDITORIAL

# Fueling secrecy

### Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

When legislators decided in 2015 to remove the sunset date on Oregon's Clean Fuels Program, they heard plenty about its supposed benefits. By reducing the "carbon intensity" of road fuels by 10 percent, they were told, the program would help ameliorate climate change. Meanwhile, supporters argued, it would produce jobs in Oregon. Lots of jobs.

Jana Gastellum, the Oregon Environmental Council's program director for climate protection, assured lawmakers that the program would create "opportunities for Oregon-based clean fuels development, which will create jobs, economic development and add to the tax base."

Graham Noyes, acting executive director of the Low Carbon Fuels Coalition, predicted "the expansion of in-state production of low carbon fuels." He cited a study that claimed the Clean Fuels Program "could provide as many as 29,000 Oregon jobs" by, among other things, "keeping billions of dollars currently spent on imported petroleum fuel in-state through the production of clean fuel production capacity."

At least some of this local economic benefit surely has been realized or will be. The long list of low-carbon fuel providers registered with the Clean Fuels Program contains some in Oregon, including SeQuential Pacific Biodiesel.

Isn't it interesting, though, that the first, and so far only, biofuel company to piggyback on a November lawsuit opposing the release of public records generated under the fuel program hails from the Midwest? Iowa-based Renewable Energy Group Inc. touts itself in its court filings as "the leading provider of cleaner, lower carbon intensity products and services in North America." The company has joined a lawsuit brought by Chevron U.S.A. that seeks to hide from Oregonians the activities of companies buying and selling fuel credits on the state market.

Without knowing which companies are buying and selling credits, and for how much, Oregonians and legislators have no way to know who's pocketing subsidies under the Clean Fuels Program. Such information would help the people who pay for the program gauge its effectiveness as a state economic development engine.

The program requires road-fuel importers like Chevron to reduce the carbon intensity of their products by 10 percent over a decade. Because blending with lower-carbon fuels eventually ceases to become practical, importers eventually generate carbon deficits they may offset by purchasing credits generated by clean-fuel producers like Renewable Energy Group. Since the program went fully into effect in 2016, more than \$22 million worth of credits have been bought and sold secretly on the state's market.

We asked the Department of Environmental Quality, which oversees the fuel program, to release records showing which companies have bought and sold credits, how many they've bought and sold, and for what price. DEQ declined our request, but the Oregon Department of Justice found in our favor on appeal. Chevron U.S.A. promptly sued DEQ, DOJ and, for good measure, the Bulletin editor who'd requested the documents. 'Cause, you know, why not?

Renewable Energy Group soon joined the secrecy crusade, as is its right. But as the parties' motions and legal bills pile up, so do the questions lawmakers and members of the public should be asking. Why, for instance, does an Iowa-based biofuel behemoth not want anyone to see the inner workings of the state credit market?

One possibility is this: Some of the subsidies Oregonians provide through higher fuel prices are going to Oregon-based companies, but a surprising — and, perhaps, shocking — share is being shipped off to Ames, Iowa. So much for those Oregon jobs.

Never fear, though. The Clean Fuels Program seems to be providing an indirect jolt to at least some businesses. These are the law firms whose attorneys serve as foot soldiers in the fuel industry's campaign against government transparency and the journalists who pursue it.



## Editorials on the death of former President George H. W. Bush

### Editorial from Newsday:

It is tempting to dismiss the presidency of George Herbert Walker Bush as a fast-moving blip across the American political stage.

"Bracketed by Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton," The New York Times once wrote, Bush's single term "can seem a little like a sorbet palate cleanser between two rich, complicated, high-calorie dishes."

The real story is considerably more complicated.

While Bush — who died Friday in Houston at age 94, the longest-living former president in U.S. history — served only four years between the reigns of two juggernauts, he was in fact a president of unusual courage and insight.

Start with Bush's controversial decision not to topple Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in 1991 after coalition forces, led by the United States, drove the Iraqi army out of Kuwait. Bush reasoned that "we would have been forced to occupy Baghdad and, in effect, rule Iraq."

It fell to his son, President George W.

Bush, to prove the wisdom of that call 12 years later with his own invasion of Iraq and its long-troubled aftermath.

Or consider the elder Bush's leadership in facing the fiscal abyss of 1990, when he was willing to do something that's all but unheard of today: He was willing to put his presidency on the line by violating his famous 1988 "read my lips" pledge and agreeing to raise taxes.

This was not a decision made in weakness. It was made because Bush held the traditional Republican belief that federal deficits were bad for the economy and that the country couldn't mount an energetic climb from recession until it reduced what it owed.

In the end, Bush was correct. But unfortunately for him, he was not in office to enjoy the long boom that followed. The tax deal, and the third-party candidacy of H. Ross Perot in 1992, cost him a second term.

But if Americans didn't applaud his courage then, we should honor it now. In an age of ceaseless political acrimony, Bush's willingness to compromise on the

big issues and to lead are virtues in short supply.

The most recent presidential campaign was difficult for the genteel Bush. He saw his son, Jeb, and other Republican contenders ridiculed by eventual winner Donald Trump, who also savaged the presidential record of another son, George W. Bush. The elder Bush criticized Trump's behavior and questioned his leadership ability.

But the strongest counterpoint George H.W. Bush offered to the current president was his own long record of service to his country — as a Navy pilot in World War II, a member of the House of Representatives, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, director of Central Intelligence, and vice president under Reagan.

Bush's passing followed closely that of Barbara Bush, his beloved wife for 73 years, who died April 17. His heartbroken devotion to her touched the nation.

He leaves a legacy of leadership and loyalty we hope others will try to meet

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

It's fitting that former President George H.W. Bush, whose diplomacy helped end the short Gulf War and the long Cold War, is being remembered in death for words he uttered in his 1988 nomination speech: "Kinder," "gentler," "1,000 points of light." Bush's graciousness and kindness were on display his entire 94-year life. He himself was a point of light.

He was a former World War II hero, a Texas oil entrepreneur, a congressman, a U.N. ambassador, a CIA director, a two-term vice president, a one-term president and an aging, elder statesman. His kindness was on display beginning with his youth in Connecticut, where he was nicknamed "Have-Half" for constantly offering to share what he had with others. In his late 80s, Bush shaved his head to show solidarity with the 2-year-old son of one of his Secret Service agents who was battling leukemia.

On the job, Bush used this grace at times to extraordinary effect. After the Berlin Wall came down in November 1989, he oversaw the end of the Cold War and the nuclear arms race with great skill, repeatedly reassuring the Soviet Union's last president, Mikhail Gorbachev,

that Washington would help his nation transition into a new era — that Moscow would not be humiliated for Gorbachev's courage in admitting that communism was a failure.

Bush used his diplomatic skills to create a global coalition of 39 nations — with 28 contributing troops — to attack Iraq in 1991 after it had crushed and occupied the neighboring oil-rich nation of Kuwait in a brief war. After Iraq was routed, he refused to march on Baghdad and take over the weakened nation — honoring the promises made to allies that the sole U.S. goal was upholding international law by restoring the legitimate Kuwait government.

On the domestic front, Bush built bipartisan coalitions to enact the Americans with Disabilities Act, the landmark 1990 law that committed the nation to help and protect the physically and mentally challenged. And his 1990 decision to accept new taxes as part of a package imposing restrictions on spending paved the way for more than a decade of responsible budgets — including years of surpluses — that should shame America's present leaders.

That decision, however, broke Bush's 1988 campaign pledge of "no new taxes"

and, along with his awkward campaigning, the fallout from a recession and the appeal of both Democrat Bill Clinton and independent Ross Perot, led to his loss in 1992.

History has been kinder to the 41st president than voters were. Yes, he had flaws. His infamous 1988 campaign ad — Google "Willie Horton" if you must — was racial demagoguery. And his role in the Iran-Contra scandal will always be suspicious. But his lifetime of good outweighs his mistakes.

In an era of cutthroat partisanship, it was inspirational to see Bush's eager willingness in 2005 to partner with the Democrat who beat him — Bill Clinton — on humanitarian relief campaigns after the devastating Southeast Asia tsunami and the heartbreaking destruction of Hurricane Katrina.

"41 got what he wanted without bullying, coercion or threats," former aide Larry Thomas wrote in The San Diego Union-Tribune. "He consulted broadly when facing major decisions, and just as broadly shared credit when the outcome was favorable."

"Have-Half" never stopped sharing — or serving. America could use a president like him today.

## Your views

### Hypocrisy in complaint about pot dispensary ad

In response to Craig and Doni Bruland's letter chastising the newspaper for allowing an advertisement for the dispensary in Sumpter, I want to say, "thank you." Thank you for opening this topic for discussion because it has been a long time coming. Finally, we can address the hypocrisy of this community's demonization of drugs — except alcohol.

Baker City is steeped in the tradition of supporting alcohol consumption. There is an establishment on nearly every block downtown that sells alcohol: bars, growler filling stations, a distillery, and stores that offer wine tasting. The Chamber of Commerce, Baker County Economic Development, and Baker County Tourism all promote events that feature alcohol.

Some examples include: Baker City Downtown's "wine walk"; beer gardens at every event in the summer — now including a "beer corral" at the Baker County Fair; and the upcoming fundraiser for our drug-detecting K-9 is advertising a social hour "with a bar hosted by Barley Brown's."

Shall we talk about the hypocrisy of having a fundraising event for a drug-detecting dog that supports the consumption of alcohol? How about having a "beer corral" at a fair full of kids? Have people forgotten that alcohol is a drug or are people only interested in picking and choosing which drugs are deemed "appropriate" for promotion?

Fact: Alcohol is a dangerous drug. According to the World Health Organization, "alcohol is the leading cause of death

and disability for young males aged 15-24 in nearly every region of the world, and among young females in high-income countries." So, why then is it acceptable to have alcohol served and supported all over town, including fairs and drug-dog fundraisers but it is not acceptable for a newspaper — that I suspect most children who believe in Santa do not read — to feature an ad for a store that sells legal cannabis?

The Baker City Herald and the Sumpter dispensary have no reason to be ashamed. If anyone should be ashamed, it should be those that find it acceptable to market alcohol consumption while stating that they support a drug-free community, because that is blatant hypocrisy.

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