

# Opinion

BAKER CITY  
**Herald**  
Serving Baker County since 1870

Write a letter  
news@bakercityherald.com

## GUEST EDITORIAL

# State's wasteful spending

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

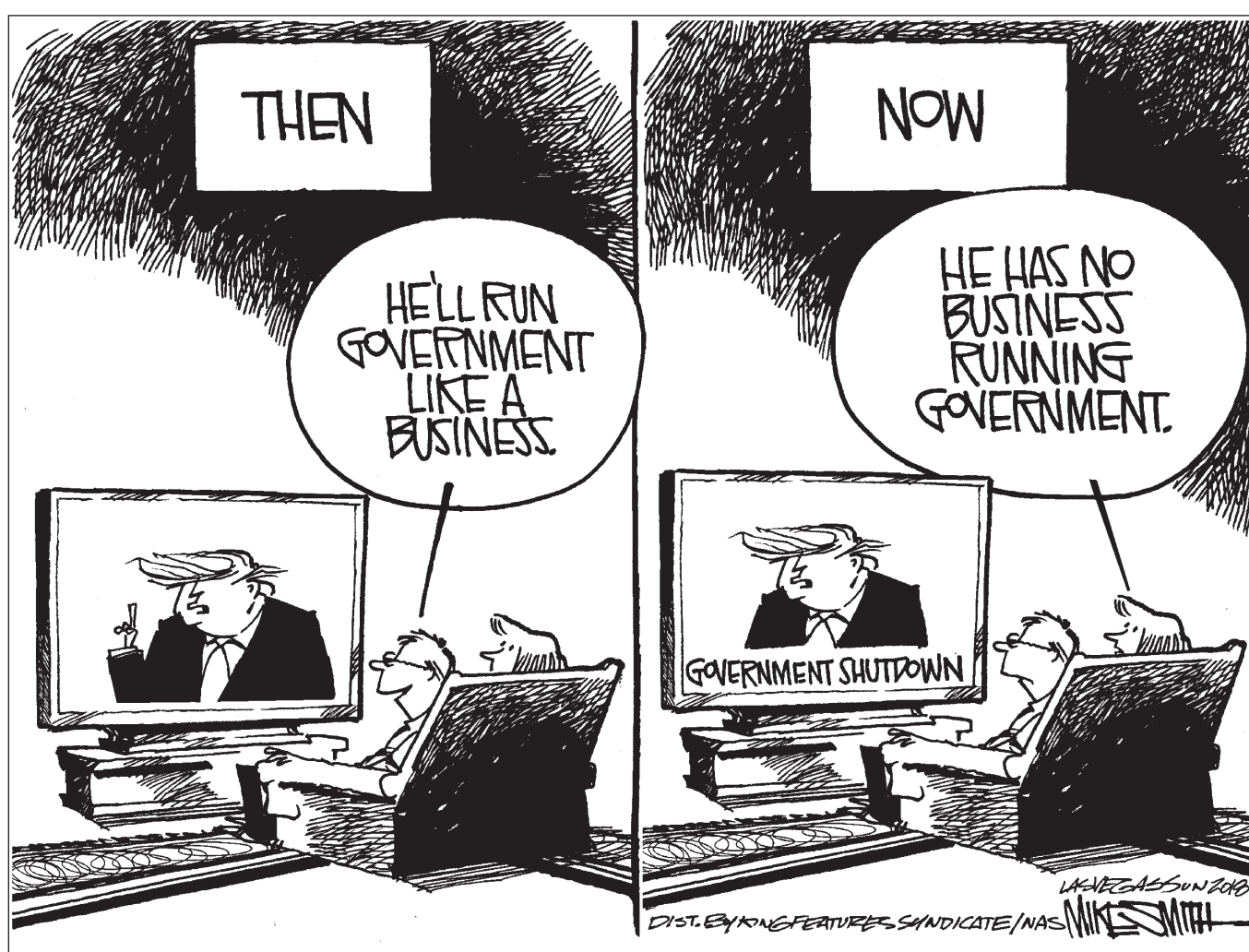
The most recent audit from Oregon's secretary of state was released Dec. 19. In case you missed it, auditors believe that if the state had fully updated its purchasing systems, it could have saved between \$400 million and \$1.6 billion in the 2015-17 biennium.

Savings of that magnitude going forward could fill or nearly fill the \$623 million budget shortfall predicted for the 2019-21 biennium. There's a problem, though. The state Department of Administrative Services — effectively the state's business office — doesn't expect to get the job done until 2021.

A key problem auditors found is that the outdated processes and machinery the state uses to track and analyze purchases are not up to the task. They do not give the state the ability to collect good data and use it well. A market intelligence group estimates that with better tools in place, the state could cut procurement costs by between 5 percent and 20 percent.

It's that lack of modernity that is at the heart of the state's purchasing problems. It's led to things such as the state buying 91 Ricoh multifunction printers in the last biennium at prices varying by as much as \$1,720. Overall, the state paid 17 different prices for the printers. DAS does seek money from the 2019 Legislature to make improvements.

The audit noted that overall, Oregon ranks 11th among the states for its procurement practices, according to the Governing Institute. Apparently, lack of careful use of taxpayer dollars is the norm.



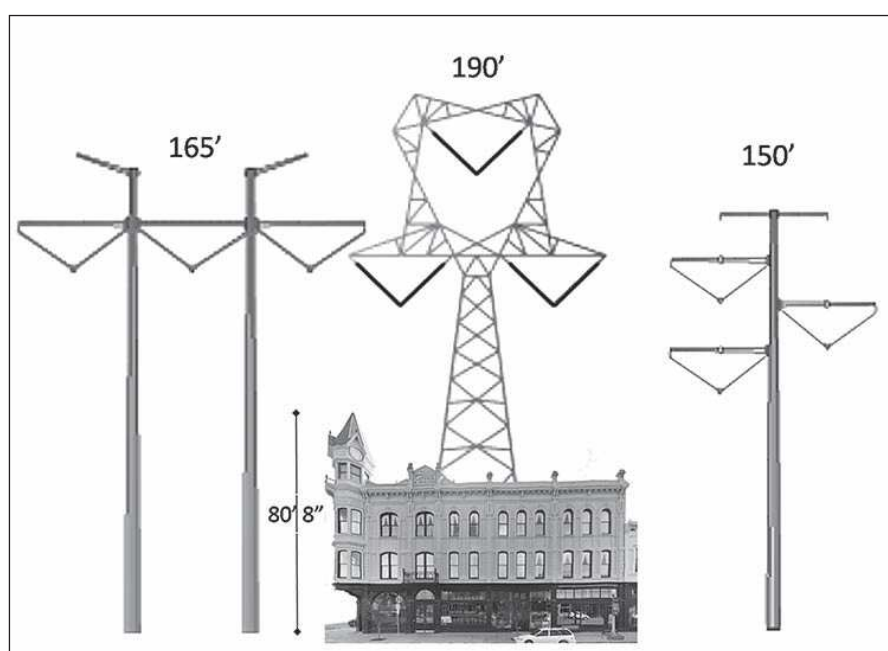
## Your views

### Putting proposed power poles into perspective

Don't let Idaho Power fool anyone. These are not Christmas trees that they plan to erect, not just blatantly in front of the BLM's Oregon Trail Interpretive Center, but cutting through the entire Baker Valley, County and the rest of Eastern Oregon.

To give you an idea of how intrusive these towers are this is an exact comparison with the Geiser Grand. The towers in front of the Interpretive Center will be the 190-foot ones.

Whit Deschner  
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.

**Mail:** To the Editor, Baker City Herald,  
P.O. Box 807, Baker City, OR 97814  
**Email:** news@bakercityherald.com

## 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.

**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; waldeen.house.gov.

**Oregon Gov. Kate Brown:** 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; [www.governor.oregon.gov](http://www.governor.oregon.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](mailto: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 Shirliff, district attorney; Alice Durlinger, county treasurer; Cindy 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.

# Old school music serenades awards ceremony

I went to an elementary school awards assembly recently and was surprised, and pleasantly so, by the range of emotions the hour-long event evoked.

I felt, as I always feel when I visit a school whose students are still some years short of such milestones as first dates and driver's licenses, the simultaneously sweet and sad tug of nostalgia.

The school in this case was South Baker Elementary, where my daughter, Olivia, is a sixth-grader.

I attended public schools in Stayton, a town not terribly dissimilar from Baker, and it seems to me that nothing of importance has changed in small rural schools in three decades since I last roamed the halls as a pupil rather than an interloper.

There are obvious superficial differences, of course. The boards at the front of classrooms are white instead of black and the writing implement of choice a felt marker rather than a piece of chalk, and the students bear their burdens in backpacks rather than the duffel-type bags we favored in my bygone era. There are of course many more color screens, in a variety of sizes,



JAYSON JACOBY

than in my day.

But very much else feels familiar, hence the nostalgia.

The boys, many of them, still prefer T-shirts with numbers emblazoned on the chest, athletic jersey-style. My older brother and I would have gone bare-chested much of the time without these garments.

The chairs are the same solid constructions of metal and plastic, so adept at inflicting bruises on clumsy knees and shins, so slippery as you try to sit still.

But it was the atmosphere of the school that so effortlessly cast aside all the intervening years, that so utterly refuted the notion that the march of time erases the traces as completely as a high tide resets the history of a beach twice a day.

The squeak of 350 pairs of sneakers on the polished gym floor is the same squeak, the murmur of 350 voices the same murmur.

The voices of the adults are rendered as inaudible as ever by acoustics that would cause an architect of concert halls to thrust his thumbs deeply into his ears.

I was gratified by the sense of community that pervaded the proceedings. Even though I'm something of an outsider I had no trouble recognizing that everyone in the room was involved in a common endeavor, one that extends well beyond adults imparting knowledge to malleable brains.

I am prone to cynicism, to dismissing events in which I am not directly involved as exercises in banality.

But even the most dedicated cynic, it seems to me, would have to exert himself to ignore the sincerity, the simple joy, in the smiles of the students as they walked between the rows of their classmates to accept their awards.

(Most used that rapid shambling gait, rather like a race-walker, that children adopt when they hope to quickly finish a difficult task before a large audience. This trait, like the affinity for number T-shirts, seems especially venerable.)

I was affected especially by one boy who, on his way back to his chair, walked past the line of adults sitting at the back of the gym. He paused for the obligatory photograph — cellphone rather than Kodak, but this is of no consequence — clutching his certificate to his chest. I don't recall what he had been recognized for — perhaps it was perfect attendance — but I will not soon forget his smile. It was the smile of a boy who is still thrilled, and probably a trifle embarrassed, to be recognized for any achievement, even one that might seem a minor thing to an adult.

Indeed if I was asked to define the assembly, and why it made such an impression on me, these are the ideas I would try to convey — that there is no such thing as a minor achievement, that all goals are worthy of pursuing, and of celebrating when they are accomplished.

On a more lighthearted note I was also surprised, and gratified, by the choice of songs that accompanied a slide show of scenes from the first quarter at South Baker.

I was more surprised still by the students' enthusiasm for the tunes,

since they are from my generation rather than theirs.

Journey's "Don't Stop Believing" is from the band's 1981 album, "Escape"; "Footloose" by Kenny Loggins is from the 1984 film of the same name; and the Bee Gees' "Staying Alive" is older still, dating to 1977 and the epic (by disco standards anyway; I'm not convinced anything from the disco era is epic that wasn't sung by Donna Summer) soundtrack from "Saturday Night Fever."

Yet archaic though the music is, a considerable number of students sang along with each song. I asked Olivia about this later but she couldn't explain her classmates' knowledge of songs that were recorded, in some cases, before their own parents were born.

Still and all, as I listened to the students belting out the chorus to "Don't Stop Believing" along with Steve Perry, the haze of 37 years seemed suddenly to dissipate, and I felt clearly the queer sensation of not being quite sure who was the student and who was the parent.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.