

Opinion

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Bill went to the right place — in the trash

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

There was nothing to admire about the bill with which former state Rep. Deborah Boone, D-Cannon Beach, sought to tighten public records requests. Now there is: It's dead.

Requesters of public records already face unreasonable delays and denials. Often, they are billed so much that they can't afford to get the records. And they are sometimes sued by the agency from which they requested the records.

Boone's Senate Bill 609 would have done two things to make requesting public records even more difficult.

First, it would have required requesters to include a description of the public records being sought. That's problematic. Requesters often don't know how to describe what they seek because they don't know what is out there. Are there important emails, text messages, a file or a report? When it's a touchy subject, public officials don't give requesters a road map to uncover what they did wrong.

Second, Boone's bill would have required a requester to include "a statement of how the requester intends to use the requested records."

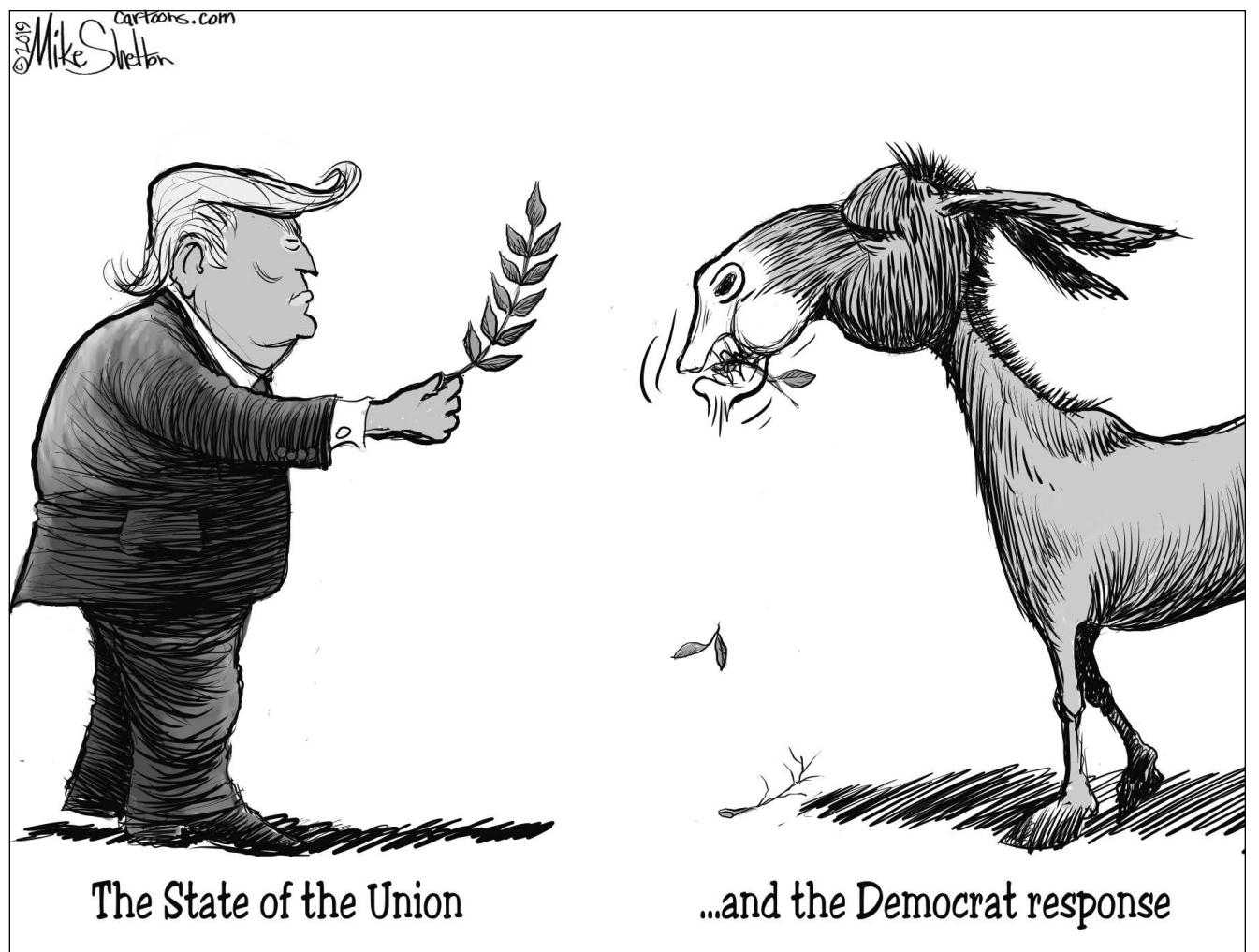
That's none of the government's business. A public record is the public's information. The right to access is not dependent on the reason it was requested. Of course, a requester is free to disclose that information if he or she wishes, but there should be no obligation to do so. It would just give agencies another reason to delay or deny a request, or be selective about what they release.

Oregon doesn't need new laws to make it harder on requesters. It needs public agencies to commit to the idea that every person has the right to access any public record of any public body in Oregon. That is the law.

Letters to the editor guidelines

- 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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Trump delivers decent speech

He's been driving in reverse, never even glancing at the rearview mirror. But last Tuesday night, President Donald Trump stopped and put the car in drive. He hit some big bumps, of course, but his State of the Union speech was more than passable. It was well-delivered, made splendid points, afforded moments of heart-warming drama in balcony visits and was in many respect nearly the opposite of his shutdown.

That maneuver negotiating by not negotiating but punishing the innocent — to no avail except to punish himself and diminish the republic. In the speech, he reminded us of the best he has done and it did not bother me that modesty was not his calling card. Go ahead and brag, for instance, about reversing Obama-style regulatory madness and banishing tax rates thwarting an economy eager to boom.

Trump spoke proudly of the consequences, the jobs created, the rising wages, the unemployment records that have especially benefited the down-and-out. More and more what it used to be, this economy of ours has been afire, No. 1, for instance, in oil and gas production with manufacturing taking off again.

Of course, there are Democrats who fume at capitalist enthusiasm, such as Sen. Bernie Sanders whose face, unnervingly viewable on TV, writhed as he slunk in his chair, apparently hating it, too, when Venezuela came up.

Millions are fleeing that once wealthy country and others are starving as dictatorial socialists get revenge on

JAY AMBROSE

the poor as well as the rich, on liberty and on toilet paper no longer available. Socialism is increasingly praised as the solution for what — America's capitalist prosperity? — and Trump brought it up, saying we would never be a socialist country.

Trump made reference, too, to an unexpected side of him, a side that worked with both Democrats and Republicans to take important steps in reforming our prisons. Here's a way to lower crime through teaching people skills they can employ in jobs when released and a means of beginning to depopulate the most populated prisons in the world.

The president also got cheers from Democrats as well as Republicans when he talked about the economic empowerment of women, now at their highest job rate ever. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez jumped to her feet when that was mentioned but seemed less certain when Trump asked an ICE officer to stand up in the balcony as he reported on human trafficking.

After all, Cortez wants to abolish ICE, the law enforcement agency dealing with illegal immigration and such matters as sneaking girls and young women across the southern border for enslavement as prostitutes and the like. As Trump pointed out, the hero in the balcony and his colleagues have rescued 300 of these females. Taking

perfectly reputable steps to deal further with such evils — a 240-mile barrier, technology, legal reforms, more security guards and new strategies — is itself evil, at least the barrier, according to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

For what appear to be reasons as political as any Trump harbors, she is a persistent obstacle to moving forward. And let's consider the evil, or at least the shabbiness, of that. Especially given the way the law works — step on our soil and you are usually free to wander and disappear — we now essentially have open borders facilitating misery and multitudinous deaths even as there also happen to be orderly, safe ways of providing legal immigration, including asylum.

Trump did not bring up global warming, but there's a human factor in Democratic solutions of the moment and they could be catastrophic. Some of his trade policies are bad mistakes. Debt is our biggest domestic issue and it escaped his attention. The call for political unity was needed but not the hint of another shutdown. Getting troops out of the Middle East? Maybe, if there is a reasonable fallback. I think Trump is right in wanting to rebuild the military and I loved his honoring old soldiers.

It was overall a decent speech and we should thank Pelosi for allowing it.

Jay Ambrose is an op-ed columnist for Tribune News Service. Readers may email him at speaktoday@aol.com.

Your views

School issue raises questions

Editor's Note: The Herald learned Sunday that the writer had died on Friday.

I've been stewing over this new school building that the School Board is hot to build, and the plane finally landed. This generation has brought a whole new way of life. We attended a 5th birthday party for a grandkid the other day, and my wife brought me home in a strait-jacket! Good grief, the kid got everything but a Mercedes. I guess you still have to be 16 before driving — who knows. The kid received presents that won't be used until after he's married, and chances are his future wife will not know how to

cook anyway I gave the kid my \$5 bill that I had saved all week for coffee at McDonald's. That was my first mistake. 5 bucks will hardly cover the tip where they have coffee. This high-steeping generation doesn't realize that we paid for schools when we were young and working, and now the School Board seems to think the retirees should start all over with high taxes and more debt. Anyone living here for several years has to know that half of the jobs in Baker are government jobs. We are talking about jobs that pay \$5,000 to \$7,000 per month plus benefits compared to retirees and small businessmen who are slowly starving out. Anyone who knows construction knows that a \$48

million project is going to wind up a mile above that. Let's hear how much the taxes will be on an average home. Let's hear how much the interest will be every year, and how many years to pay it off — if ever. These should be common questions for a school teacher. I graduated from Churchill in 1941. We had no fancies, but we loved it. I certainly don't have anything against education. But in fact there is a college professor in Portland who draws a pension of \$79,000 per month... that says a lot for the educational system and also for the taxpaying working man in small business.

Grover Mann
Baker City

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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: 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, Lynette Perry,

Arvid Andersen, Ken Gross and Doni Bruland.

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; 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. Council Chambers, Baker City Hall, 1655 First St.; Andrew Bryan, Kevin Cassidy, Chris Hawkins, Katie Lamb and Julie Huntington.