

Opinion

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Don't suppress crime files

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

When an Oregon governor issues a pardon, it can send a powerful message. It can certify that a convicted felon has truly turned his or her life around.

But a pardon doesn't necessarily mean a crime never occurred. Senate Bill 388 would direct the state to suppress the true, historical record of some felonies. The bill has passed the Senate and is in the House. It should die there.

Oregon governors don't pardon people haphazardly. Gov. Kate Brown has issued only a few. SB 388 comes about, in part, because of a pardon Brown issued to Dondrae "Choo" Fair in 2018. When Fair was 19 in 1992, he carried out a carjacking, according to the governor's office. He pleaded guilty to robbery in the first degree, unauthorized use of a motor vehicle and theft in the first degree. He served a prison sentence and then went right back to a gang life. He was shot in 2000 when he was leaving a funeral for a friend. After that incident, Fair started to change his life.

In 2009, he began volunteering as a mentor for Community Partners Reinvestment Project for Volunteers of America. That program helps men ages 18 to 25 who are returning to the community after prison get on the right track. Fair was hired full time in 2011 and did other work to help people not make the same mistakes he made. He became so well-regarded that when he applied for a pardon, he got support for his application from the officer who arrested him and Multnomah County District Attorney Rod Underhill, whose office prosecuted him.

Fair's attorney wanted to seal the record of his conviction after the pardon. Sealing the record means it would not show up in a criminal background check. But the attorney found there was no normal procedure in Oregon to seal a pardoned criminal's felony record. She was actually able to get a hearing and have Fair's record sealed. Look up Fair in the state's online criminal database, and his felony conviction does not appear.

Having a felony show up on a background check can make finding a job or housing difficult. There is no question about that. But the solution should not be for the state through SB 388 to suppress the accurate, historical record of a crime.

Rosemary Brewer, the executive director of the Oregon Crime Victims Law Center, pointed out in legislative testimony that the law should at least allow victims of crimes to be heard before the record of the harm done to them is sealed. SB 388 doesn't even do that. The Legislature should reject it.



U.S. late to act on airliner issue

Suddenly, on Wednesday morning, the United States was standing alone against a disbelieving, distrusting world.

One by one, every country on the planet had quickly grounded Boeing's new huge 737 Max 8 airliner — after the new aircraft's second tragic crash in five months, on Sunday in Ethiopia.

Except President Donald Trump's USA.

Even worse, Trump's Federal Aviation Administration had issued a statement on Monday certifying, once again, the "airworthiness" of the Boeing 737 Max 8. Keep that in mind. Because, simultaneously, news reports were warning the world that there were chilling similarities in the two tragedies: On Sunday, the Ethiopian Airlines' Max 8's nose suddenly pitched downward shortly after takeoff from Addis Ababa, killing all 157; last October, a Lion Air Max 8's nose also pitched downward shortly after takeoff from Jakarta, killing 189 people.

Boeing had rushed to assure the world its planes were safe, saying it saw no reason for issuing any "new guidance." Keep that in mind, too. Because Trump's transportation officials shockingly supported Boeing's empty safety assurances and were still permitting the three U.S. airlines that bought the Max 8s and Max 9s (the longer version) — Southwest, American and United — to keep flying them, as is.

As I began reporting and writing for this column, I kept thinking that my fingers just can't type fast enough — because any minute now, Trump will surely reverse his policy. Because what his administration was inflicting upon a trusting public was absolutely unacceptable: By keeping those Max 8s and 9s taking off, Trump was requiring U.S. passengers on Southwest, American and United airlines to play what

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amounts to a cruel, white-knuckle game of USA/FAA roulette. Take a chance, the odds are you'll be safe.

Former Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, a lifelong Republican who served in that job in the Democratic Obama administration, instantly got it. He urged Trump's Transportation Secretary Elaine Chou to order the planes grounded immediately. "Those planes should be pulled down and inspected," LaHood said Tuesday. "The flying public is owed that." (Indeed, LaHood grounded Boeing's 787s in 2013, after batteries overheated.) But Secretary Chou took no such action on the Max 8s and 9s.

For three days, Trump's administration allowed Max 8s to takeoff. What if another Max 8 crashed? There are no words. On Monday, Boeing's CEO Dennis Muilenburg spoke privately with Trump. We have no idea if he told the president all the truths we now realize he withheld from us.

But by Monday night, we knew that Boeing's Muilenburg knew there were sensor problems in his Max 8's nose that needed to be fixed. This became clear when the FAA issued a wet-noodle statement saying Boeing would be making "design changes" for the Max 8 — and they'd be completed by April.

April? How could the FAA permit a single Max 8 or 9 to takeoff without those best high tech updates?

Meanwhile, that limited FAA advisory had forced Boeing to issue another statement late Monday night that was far different in tone and content than Boeing's earlier bowl of mush. Boeing said in coming weeks it would be installing software updates in its Max 8s to "make an already safe aircraft even safer." The changes would involve "flight

control law, pilot displays, operation manuals and crew training." Boeing reportedly realized after October's Lion Air crash that there was a problem with having just one sensor in the plane's nose to assure proper pitch.

Yet all day Tuesday, Trump allowed Max 8s and 9s to take off without those seemingly urgent updates — carrying passengers who might have been in peril. Sad.

There is much we still don't know: Was Trump conned by Boeing's CEO on Monday? Or did Trump get the full story — but somehow choose to become part of a con that may have kept potentially perilous planes flying — filled with trusting passengers?

At noon Wednesday, just as I was finishing my original column, Trump indeed materialized on my news screen — and reversed his see-no-peril position. Trump said he was grounding Boeing's 737 Max 8s and 9s until any flaws were detected and fixed.

Belatedly but finally, Trump did the right thing. Today, mercifully, American passengers are not being conned into flying on planes that their government protectors cannot say for certain are as safe as they can be.

America was once looked up to as the world's leader on many things, including aviation safety. As forever-Republican former transportation secretary LaHood said Thursday, America's FAA "should have been the first out of the gate" in grounding Boeing's 737 Max 8s.

Shamefully, last week, America's president, transportation secretary and FAA finished dead last in world safety.

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Editorial from The Fort Worth Star Telegram:

Has anything ever rocked elite colleges, or poached parents to a parboil, quite like the massive college admissions cheating scandal did in its first 24 hours?

And the smoke has only begun to cascade from people's ears.

Parents who've scrimped and saved and cajoled their young to study into the night in hopes of sending them to elite universities have learned a painful lesson: The lifestyles of the rich and famous have been granting children of privilege special, under-the-table, illegal entry to those same colleges.

Those parents of modest means now know their own children may have been wrongfully, cynically denied a seat at such revered and hard-to-enter institutions as Yale, Georgetown and, yes, the University of Texas at Austin. Even well-to-do families who played by the

rules may have been cheated out of a college admission. Yet this mostly hurts those for whom college may be the greatest dream and highest financial hurdle of their lives.

The scandal arrived home with a sudden thud when it was learned that Fort Worth investor Bill McGlashan and former TCU, now UT, tennis coach Michael Center were among some 50 school officials, wealthy parents and others across the country charged by the U.S. Department of Justice.

The alleged perpetrators, the government says, variously cheated on entrance exams or bribed college athletic officials into certifying the wealthy's children as athletic recruits when they were anything but.

In addition to possibly conning other students out of a fair shot at a higher education, any alleged conspirator at a university now is forcing that institution to dig through records to ascertain how many fraudulent admissions

they've doled out.

"It's important for every university to go back and re-evaluate and study their admissions processes," Texas Gov. Greg Abbott told reporters in the shadow of UT.

In other words, more time at UT and other universities taken away from their primary mission — which is to educate students who are there to learn, and who truly deserve to be there.

Unlike actress Lori Loughlin's and husband Massimo Giannulli's two daughters, who reportedly rode a \$500,000 bribe into the University of Southern California on the pretense of being competitive rowers. Daughter Olivia Wade — a well-paid "internet influencer" — proceeded to pitch products from her dorm room while admitting she was only there for "game day" and partying, and that "I don't know how much of school I'm gonna attend."

Whatever amount that is, it's unarguably

more than some other, more deserving student's attendance her presence precluded. It's sickening to see what happens when even priceless commodities such as a college education come decidedly too easy for those of means.

When the scheme's mastermind, William "Rick" Singer, reportedly said in a wiretapped conversation that he'd put McGlashan's son's face on a punter to get him into the University of Southern California, McGlashan allegedly responded, "Pretty funny. The way the world works these days is unbelievable."

Unbelievable yes, funny no. Funny is Rodney Dangerfield's wealthy character in the movie "Back to School," in which he bribes his way into college and then pays author Kurt Vonnegut to write a paper on himself.

This real-life fraud, on the other hand, is a tragic tale with untold numbers of innocent victims.

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