

# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

# Voters should decide on executions

Former Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber didn't always respect voters' opinions regarding the imposition of the death penalty, but at least he recognized that voters should ultimately have a say on the issue.

Although Kitzhaber, in a well-publicized announcement in November 2011, decided he would not allow the state to carry out executions as allowed under Oregon law and endorsed by voters, most recently in 1984, the governor also supported a bill that would have brought the matter to voters in November 2014.

The bill didn't pass.

Kitzhaber's successor, Kate Brown, has maintained the moratorium on executions, and voters continue to be left out.

Now a pair of bills in the Legislature would formalize this disenfranchisement.

Both House Bill 3268 and Senate Bill 1013 would change the definition of "aggravated murder" — the only crime that includes the potential for a death sentence in Oregon.

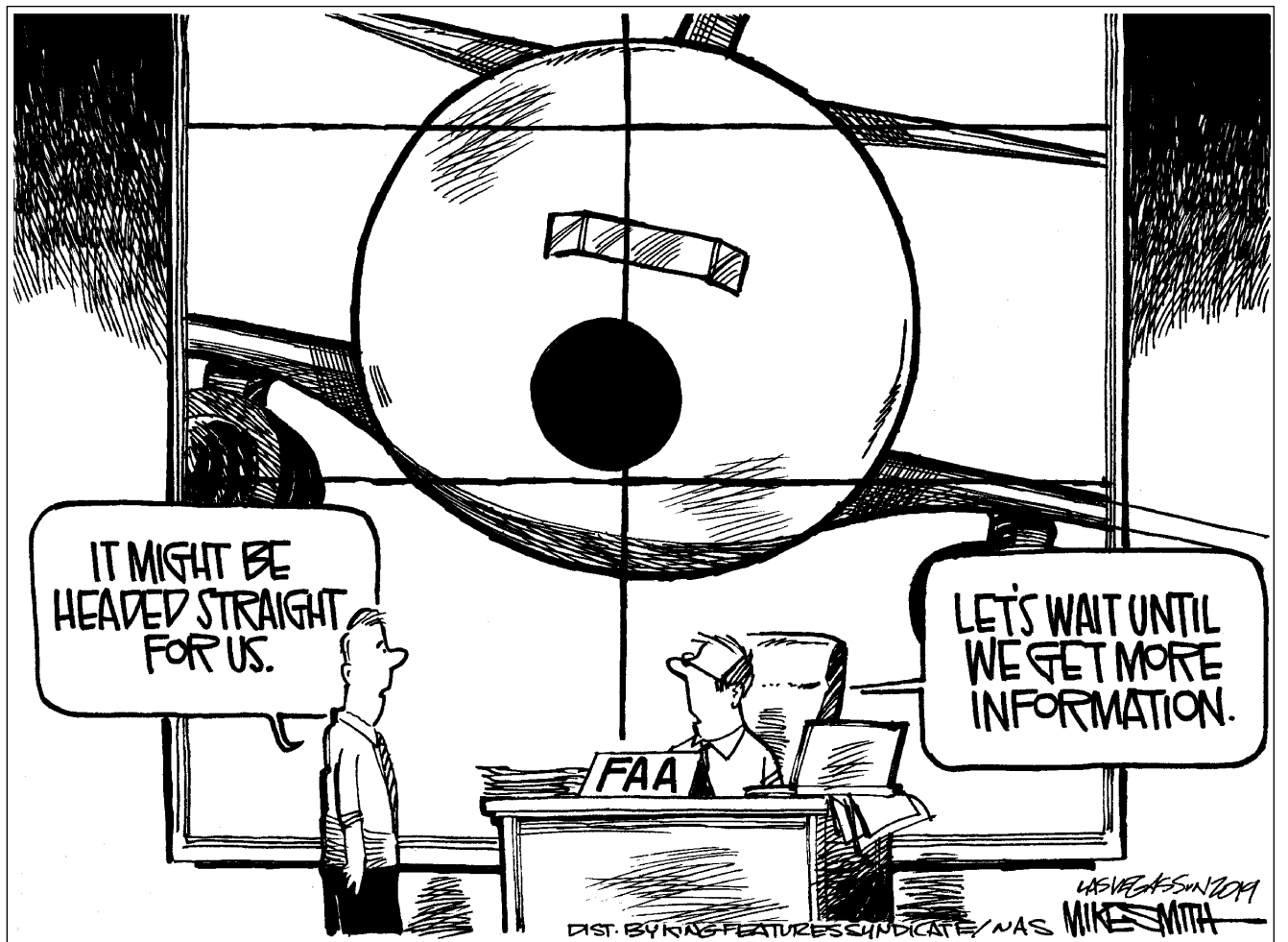
The bills would define aggravated murder to include only acts of terrorism that kill at least two people. If either bill becomes law, the inmates on death row would have their sentences commuted to life in prison without parole.

The question of whether to execute convicted murderers reflects societal values, and as such the answer should be left to voters, not to their elected representatives. That's how we've done it for more than a century in Oregon, and it's allowed the state's law to reflect changes in voters' attitudes, of which there have been several.

Oregon voters approved capital punishment in 1864, outlawed it in 1914, reinstated it in 1920, and repealed it in 1964. Voters reinstated the death penalty in 1978 and, after the state's Supreme Court overturned that decision, voters again, in 1984, decided to make execution a legal option.

After 35 years, and with the moratorium in effect for eight years, it's reasonable to give voters a chance to reconsider. Lawmakers should do so.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



# Insincere apologies: Worthless

Apologies are like diamonds: When they're authentic, their value is incalculable.

Lately, though, society has gotten used to the reflexive mea culpa, the one triggered not by a real sense of remorse but rather by the fear of being ostracized. It's the idea that unless we do that politically correct course correction, we will be persona non grata among the people with the power.

We've seen those examples of forced apology over and over again, even when the initial offense was completely innocent and unintended.

Take, for example, Terry Crews. The actor and former athlete had made an astute observation about the importance of black fathers in the lives of their sons. Somehow, his comments were seen as offensive to LGBTQ followers, who didn't like the fact that Crews was "othering" people who came from nontraditional families (translation: families with two mommies, two daddies, or variations thereof). When I saw his initial tweet and then the fact that he was getting grief over it, I started counting down in my head the hours it would take for him to apologize. And of course, he did:

"Had a great talk with @iamsteph-beatz this morning on set that shed a lot of light on why the LBGQTQ community were hurt by my comments. I want to apologize for anyone who was triggered or felt targeted. I was speaking out of my very personal experiences as a Black Father."

## CHRISTINE M. FLOWERS

I believe Crews' apology was sincere. He seemed to be genuinely upset that he might have inadvertently hurt someone's feelings.

The problem is not the authenticity of the apology. It's the fact that Crews felt it necessary to apologize in the first place. The social pressure that allows one group of people to coerce another group of people into making amends for upsetting them has been building to dangerous levels with the advent of identity politics. You said something that offended me? You better apologize, or else!

That's toxic. An article in Psychology Today put it this way: "Don't say you're sorry if you don't think you have anything to apologize for. That doesn't mean you don't have something to apologize for; it just means that a real apology is sincere."

Sadly, it's rare when people are able to withstand that social coercion these days, because too many of us care about being liked more than we care about being honest. This brings me to Tucker Carlson.

I haven't watched the Fox host regularly since he was still wearing those preppy bow ties and annoying the liberals on MSNBC. But he floated back into my consciousness when Media Matters, a left-wing media outlet,

published some years-old comments Carlson made about women, underage sex, Martha Stewart's daughter, and a whole host of other disgusting things. They were no worse than Jimmy Kimmel inviting women to guess what was in his pants, Whoopi Goldberg saying that Roman Polanski wasn't guilty of "rape rape," or the sleazy things said by David Letterman about Sarah Palin's daughters.

Letterman apologized. Kimmel and Goldberg didn't, at least not as far as Google is concerned. And guess what? I'm fine with the fact that Jimmy and Whoopi haven't said "I'm sorry," because I wouldn't have believed them. Frankly, I didn't believe Letterman. And I'm glad that Carlson is standing his ground.

I find the things he said pretty disgusting, especially the part where he suggested that female teachers having sex with underage boys is a rite of passage. No, idiot, it's rape.

But if Carlson came out and asked for forgiveness, it would be farcical, because he probably has few, if any, regrets about acting like a slimeball on a shock-jock radio show called "Bubba the Love Sponge" in the pre-Twitter age.

I'd rather an honest, unrepentant jerk than one who is forced into fake, insincere submission.

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## GUEST EDITORIAL

# Legislature: reject mortgage interest deduction bill

### Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

Oregon lawmakers continue to look for new and creative ways to reach into taxpayers' pockets. The latest: House Bill 3349. It would eliminate the mortgage interest deduction on second homes and means test it on primary ones, beginning with the tax year that started Jan. 1, 2019, no matter when a home was purchased. It should be defeated outright, or, at the least, changed dramatically.

There's a case to be made for removing the tax deduction on second-home mortgage interest. Most people don't need more than one place to live. Second homes are often used for

recreational purposes. If they're also doubling as vacation rentals, owners are legally obligated to pay transient room taxes on rental income, and if they're rented for longer periods, they're generally treated as businesses, with a variety of deductions available.

Means testing the mortgage interest tax deduction is another matter. HB 3349 would phase out the deduction on first homes for people making more than \$200,000 annually. There are problems with that, however. Means testing takes the assumptions used when affected homeowners bought their homes and turns them upside down. Homes are bought

assuming owners would be able to deduct the interest they paid on mortgages from their taxable income. The homes they chose were ones they could afford, using that calculation. Under this bill, their adjusted income would rise, and with it their tax bills. What was an affordable house could easily become unaffordable.

The wealthiest Oregonians are already paying far more than their less well-off counterparts, even in a state that is not at the top of the chart when it comes to the progressiveness of its income tax requirements.

Thus, the top 5 percent of Oregon taxpayers, those with adjusted gross income of \$185,000

and above, accounted for 39.6 percent of income tax revenue in 2016, according to the Oregon Department of Revenue.

Too, Oregon has one of the highest income-tax rates in the United States, and income and cost of living are not the same things. The state should not assume that all upper-end taxpayers have money to spare, as this legislation does.

Oregon must not "fix" its homelessness and other problems just by soaking business and those who lawmakers assume are rich. We need a well thought out and fair approach to taxes, and HB 3349 isn't it.

## CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

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**Oregon Legislature:** Legislative documents and information are available online at [www.leg.state.or.us](http://www.leg.state.or.us).

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**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.