

Opinion

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Bogquist security measures unnecessary

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

Oregon Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, may be something of a hothead. That doesn't necessarily mean, however, that he's a danger to members of the state Legislature or the men and women who work there.

Boquist got himself into trouble in late June, just as Republican lawmakers were preparing to walk out in an effort to derail a truly awful piece of climate legislation. Gov. Kate Brown made it clear that if that were to happen, she would send state police to round them up and return them to Salem.

Boquist did not take it well. On June 19 he told Sen. President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, "If you send the state police to get me, hell's coming to visit you personally." Later that day, he told a Portland television station that any troopers sent should "be bachelors and come heavily armed."

His language was certainly not politic. He was neither smooth nor tactful, and what he said would have been better left unsaid. Still, it's difficult to believe he was serious.

For one thing, his dealings with Courtney, with whom he used to have a decent relationship, had deteriorated in the last year, according to Willamette Week. Their disagreement centered on the investigation of sexual harassment in the Legislature and pay equity legislation that had a negative impact on Boquist's wife. For another, the 2019 legislative session was a trying one for Republican lawmakers, faced as they were with Democratic supermajorities in both houses and legislative leaders who made it clear they felt little need to consult with their Republican counterparts about much of anything.

The Senate's Special Committee on Conduct met July 8 to deal with Boquist. Its four members, two from each party, couldn't agree on much, and in the end they decided to require Boquist to give 12 hours' written notice before appearing in the Capitol and to have beefed up security when he does appear. The requirements sound more like a waste of taxpayer money than anything else.

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.
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Mail: To the Editor, Baker City Herald, P.O. Box 807, Baker City, OR 97814
Email: news@bakercityherald.com
Fax: 541-523-6426

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Case shines light on true abuse

A few years ago, I wrote a column about Malala Yousafzai, around the time that the young Pakistani activist was shot in the head by the Taliban. She was targeted for death simply because she wanted to help give girls the same educational opportunities as boys.

Instead, Malala survived. She became a symbol of fierce and principled defiance in the face of an oppressive regime, a true patriarchy.

That column garnered a lot of criticism, because my central point was that women in this country did not understand what true persecution looked like. It even got me a spot on The Atlantic's list of 50 Worst Columns of 2012, an honor I proudly shared with luminaries like Peggy Noonan, George Will, David Brooks, Thomas Friedman and Maureen Dowd.

Seven years later, and our gauge of what counts as true abuse against women hasn't gotten any better. I blame #MeToo, which has robbed us of the ability to see things in context. The fratboy antics of Al Franken, Joe Biden, and by then wheelchair-bound George H.W. Bush were condemned as if these men committed aggravated felonies. The mere accusation of date rape is enough to deprive young male college students of due process. Unearthed stories from three decades ago almost scuttled the judicial nomination of a man whose only proven bad behavior is — horror of horrors — liking beer.

This is why the indictment of Jeffrey Epstein for sex trafficking is so important. First and foremost, it begins to introduce justice for the dozens of

CHRISTINE M. FLOWERS

young women he abused. Beyond that, his case provides an opportunity to highlight the overreach of the #MeToo movement — which has morphed into a white, upper middle class crusade that turns outraged women into avenging mohels — and how that movement has hijacked our perspective on sexual assault and abuse.

The majority of the "victims" publicly championed by the movement have been in their 30s, 40s and even senior citizens with sharp memories. Very little outcry has focused on children.

Over 40 years ago, Roman Polanski was convicted of statutory rape, and immediately fled the country to avoid incarceration. Lots of people in Hollywood supported this great "artist" and seemed unsure about what was so wrong about a middle-aged man sleeping with a 13-year-old. Meryl Streep gave him a standing ovation when he was awarded the Oscar in absentia. And Whoopi Goldberg argued that what he had done wasn't really "rape rape."

But guess what? Polanski's actions were "rape rape," as is what Jeffrey Epstein has been credibly accused of doing. It is the type of sex trafficking that normally occurs in third world countries where young women, desperate to escape their impoverished lives, apply for jobs as domestics and au pairs and are instead sold into slavery. It is the type of financial transaction that occurs when the coyote drags a

young Honduran girl across the border and sells her to the highest bidder. It is what happened to the young woman I met from Mali who cried through an asylum hearing last week when she told the judge that her "uncle" made her service his friends until she lost consciousness. And it is a persecution as profound and scarring as the attack on Malala, because it reduces young girls to commodities.

Despite what #MeToo advocates teach, persecution is not being subjected to risqué jokes in the workplace. It's not being interrupted by a man while trying to read a letter on the floor of the Pennsylvania senate. It's not willingly having sex during a date and then convincing yourself it was "non-consensual" the next day. It's not being kissed on the back of your head without your permission. And so on.

The crimes and sins of Jeffrey Epstein, if proven to be true, will ultimately dwarf those of Harvey Weinstein, because they are attacks against the most innocent. Just as the Catholic Church scandal was a reckoning with the most immoral and obscene human violations, so is the corruption of young girls by rich and politically connected men.

This is our chance to stop watering down the meaning of harassment, abuse, and persecution. Let's stop wasting energy on the excesses of #MeToo, and focus on saving the real victims.

Christine M. Flowers is a lawyer and columnist for the Philadelphia Daily News. Readers may send her email at cflowers1961@gmail.com

GUEST EDITORIAL

Editorial from New York Daily News:

Since well before he was a candidate, Donald Trump utilized the @realDonaldTrump Twitter account as a sword and a shield, a tool to taunt and to preen.

Having followed him into the White House, that private-citizen account has morphed into an official communications channel. He routinely announces personnel and policy decisions there. And he does it not only with his own two plump thumbs, but with aid of on-the-clock government staffers.

As such, the federal 2nd Circuit

Court of Appeals rightly ruled, Trump can't willy-nilly block Twitter users who disagree with him.

When an individual is blocked, as one member of this Editorial Board is, he can't even see the president's tweets, short of going through frustrating workarounds. Nor can the blockee reply to the blocker.

When the originating account includes official pronouncements bearing on the future of the country, that adds up to an infringement on constitutional speech rights.

(We sympathize with politicians' need to tune out truly awful trolls who

engage in ad hominem attacks. That can be done through another Twitter tool, called muting, that doesn't effectively stop those individuals from engaging.)

This isn't just about Trump: No sooner did the decision come down than former Assemblyman Dov Hikind (hypocritically, as he blocked followers himself when in office) cited it in his own push to get Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez to stop blocking him.

The rule fits in far less than 280 characters: If an official uses a Twitter account to do public business, everyone gets to see it.

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.
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: 6782 Rayburn Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515; 202-225-6130; fax 202-225-5774. La Grande office: 1211 Washington Ave., La Grande, OR 97850; 541-624-2400, fax, 541-624-2402; walden.house.gov.
Oregon Gov. Kate Brown: 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR

97310; 503-378-3111; www.governor.oregon.gov.

Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read: oregon.treasurer@ost.state.or.us; 350 Winter St. NE, Suite 100, Salem OR 97301-3896; 503-378-4000.

Oregon Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum: Justice Building, Salem, OR 97301-4096; 503-378-4400.

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; Ray Duman, 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; Stefanie Kirby, 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.