

## OUR VIEW

Record fee  
unjustified

It's hard not to believe there's something wrong going on in Douglas County. The district attorney there rejected a request last week by The Oregonian to reduce a roughly \$2,000 fee the county proposes to charge the newspaper for 170 pages of financial records. The DA argued the newspaper's owner, Advance Publications, can well afford the charge, and thus, The Oregonian should be required to pay it.

But Oregon law says fees for public records should be reduced or eliminated if releasing the records is in the public interest. That's clearly true in this case.

The Oregonian seeks records about how the Douglas County Commission has spent more than \$75,000 in federal funds over the last five years. It's clear that more than half that money was used for travel to Washington, D.C., and there are indications the balance may have been spent that way, as well.

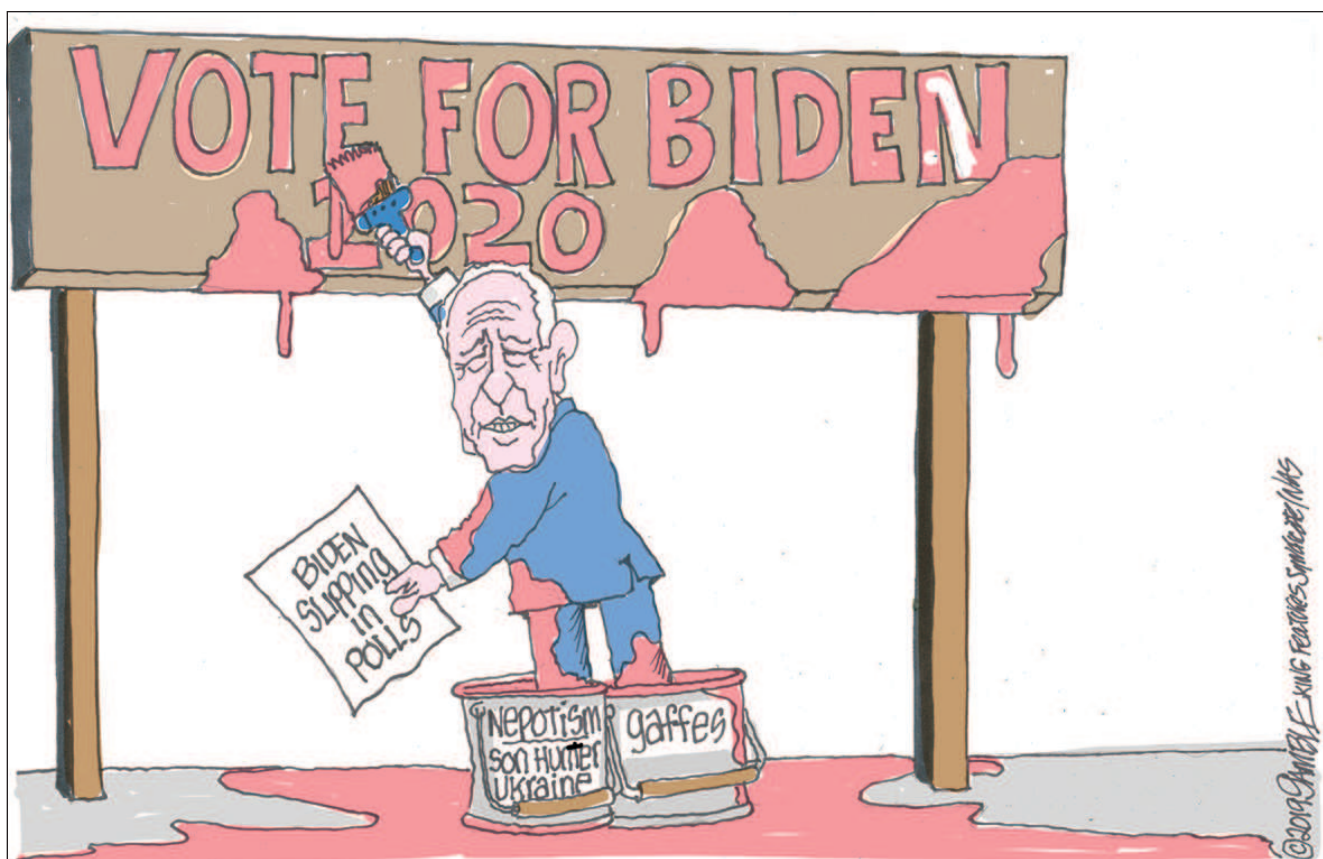
What is less clear is whether or not commissioners in a county so broke it closed its public libraries in 2017, flew first class to Washington, D.C., to lobby lawmakers. Or whether they stayed in fancy hotels or dined in expensive restaurants, and the like.

The funds came to the county through the Secure Rural Schools Act, which aimed to ease the pain caused by the major decline in federal lands logging that's occurred since the 1990s. Using them as a travel fund for lobbying trips doesn't help efforts to keep the program afloat, says U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Eugene.

Oregon's first public records advocate, Ginger McCall, in her final report to the governor before she left Oct. 11, called high fees for filling public records requests the single most pressing issue facing Oregonians with regard to public records. The current law is ambiguous, and as a result, she said, too often media requesters — in this case, The Oregonian — are charged high fees, "even for requests that will clearly forward legitimate public interests."

Knowing how local governments spending tax dollars is clearly a legitimate public interest. Douglas County District Attorney Richard Wesenberg should read McCall's report and reconsider.

*Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the Baker City Herald. Columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the Baker City Herald.*



## Honoring Vietnam veterans

On Nov. 11, 1969, Operation Fulton Square in the Quang Tri Province was in full force with the assistance of the 1st Marine Division, 101st Airborne Division and the 5th Infantry Division. This was one of 20 operations active throughout Vietnam. There were over 500,000 United States military personnel assigned to the Vietnam War Zone.

Yes, Veterans Day 50 years ago was very different than this year. While today we have troops assigned to operations in the Middle East, we must realize that in 1969, the Vietnam War was raging. Identified as the second most deadly year of the Vietnam Era, 11,780 United States warriors were killed in action.

All totaled, over 58,000 of our troops died in Vietnam; 710 were from Oregon.

Those who survived the war and returned home were never welcomed or treated with respect or honor. Most of these dedicated soldiers never heard the words "thank you" or "welcome home." As a result, when it came to Veterans Day in 1969 and subsequent years, most Vietnam veterans did not wish to participate. These warriors did their duty, served our country and were rebuked because of that unpopular war.

"We were not supported in the field, we were not supported by our government, we were not supported by the people and many of us were treated poorly when we came home," said former Oregon legislator and Vietnam veteran Sal Esquivel.

When you look around our capital city of Salem, you can find memorials



STEVE BATES

built to honor the veterans of every war and conflict with the exception of Operation Desert Storm and the Vietnam War. Once again, there is evidence of the poor treatment of our Vietnam veterans.

Oregon can do better. There are Oregonians who want everyone to remember our Vietnam veterans. A Vietnam War memorial on the Oregon State Capitol grounds to the south of the World War II Memorial is proposed. Over the past two years, dozens of volunteers have attended meetings and performed research. The end result of these efforts is a viable design for a Vietnam Memorial on the capitol grounds.

The proposed Vietnam War memorial on the Oregon State Capitol grounds will remember the Oregonians who gave the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam. It will honor the four Oregon families who lost two sons to that war. In addition to historic accounts of the Vietnam War, the design includes a memorial to the six Oregonians who died in Operation Desert Storm.

Just as Oregon saluted the Greatest Generation with a World War II memorial on the Oregon State Capitol grounds, it is time for Oregon to do the same for the Vietnam War veterans.

The Vietnam veterans are the sons and daughters of the Greatest Genera-

tion. The Vietnam veterans went to war to serve as their fathers and mothers did. It is fitting that our Oregon State Capitol grounds would honor these two generations. With the completion of the Vietnam War memorial, these two memorials will honor over 75% of Oregon's war dead. But, memorials do not just honor those who died. Memorials honor all who served.

Veterans Day is designated to honor our military veterans who are still with us.

The average age of our Vietnam veterans is now over 70. We are slowly losing our Vietnam veterans. To show our Vietnam veterans the esteem they deserve, a goal has been established to honor our Vietnam veterans with a Vietnam War memorial on the Oregon State Capitol grounds by Veterans Day 2022.

Will you join this effort? Please send your contribution by check to: Vietnam War Memorial Fund, P.O. Box 1448, Boring, OR 97009. You can donate by credit card on the secure website at: [www.vietnamwarmemorialfund.org](http://www.vietnamwarmemorialfund.org) On Veterans Day, we should thank all of our veterans for their service. Especially our Vietnam veterans.

*Steve Bates has resided in Boring for 42 years and is a life member of the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America. He serves as chair of the Committee on Memorials & Remembrance and as president of the Vietnam War Memorial Fund. He can be reached by email at [vietnamwarmem@aol.com](mailto:vietnamwarmem@aol.com)*

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• 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 (verification only).

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## Halloween happiness, and a baby's sweet smile

I hadn't thought of trick-or-treating as a particularly poignant event until I went to Meadowbrook Place and saw the smiles of residents as they dropped candy bars and lollipops into kids' bags.

I smiled too.

I suspect, though, that it looked like a forced smile, or at least a saccharine one. I never passed in front of a mirror to gauge for myself whether my grin appeared more sincere than it felt.

It's not that I had to muster ersatz enthusiasm to mask my indifference.

Nor was I bored or tired or feeling any of the other ways that sometimes prompt fake smiles.

Quite the opposite.

As my wife Lisa and I strolled the halls of the assisted living facility on Halloween evening, escorting our son, Max, who's 8, while he made his sugary rounds, I felt the sort of emotional overload that makes your throat seem constricted and your eyes heavy with moisture.

The feeling that if someone asked you a question at that moment, you wouldn't trust that you could



JAYSON JACOBY

answer without your voice cracking and giving away the reality behind the plastered on facial facade.

I did not expect the experience would affect me so profoundly.

Although in retrospect I suppose I ought not have been especially surprised.

Visiting such a facility — what we used to call a retirement or nursing home, although it seems to me that these days, with our increasing reliance on euphemisms, that those terms, however accurate, are no longer favored — strikes me as something inherently fraught with emotion.

For me this has always been a curious mixture. It is a concoction that includes sadness, as when I wonder whether some residents often feel lonely or confused. But there is also joy, when I consider that for others this home, the last home they might

ever know, is a place where they needn't worry about cooking dinner or digging leaves from the gutters but where they can instead focus on whatever pursuits bring them happiness.

What I felt on Halloween was like this — but it was also different.

I watched Max walk into apartments where TVs were tuned to the evening news and the walls were plastered with photographs of relatives. I watched women, and a few men, pluck fistfuls of sweets and deposit them into Max's pumpkin made of soft cloth.

I saw them smile and exclaim at his costume — Captain Jack Sparrow from the "Pirates of the Caribbean" film series — and I heard his soft "thank you" and their slightly quavering "you're welcome."

And as I watched these brief scenes I couldn't help but hope that many of these residents were, in those moments, recalling Halloweens from years and decades past. Halloweens when they sat in their living rooms, a bowl of treats at hand, and waited for the knock on their front doors.

I wondered too whether those residents who are themselves parents were also reminiscing, perhaps for the first time in many years, about distant days when their kids donned costumes and ventured out into the autumn twilight to fill their bags and their bellies.

As I stood in the doorways and looked into those rooms at Meadowbrook I felt the great weight of all the years those residents have experienced, and all the memories of Halloweens and other holidays and milestones.

And I hoped that at least some of those residents who shared a minute or two with Max were able to reclaim, in those moments, one of the things they cherished but maybe believed they had lost forever when they left their homes.

I hoped that it meant as much to them as it did to me.

My grandson Caden is a little over 3 months old and he's reached the stage when I can convince myself that he recognizes me.

It's a pleasant thought, anyway.

When Caden fixes his gaze on you, and his tiny face suddenly stretches into an obvious smile, you can't help but feel immensely fortunate, as you might when you see, for instance, a sunrise of intense but ephemeral beauty.

It is a unique experience, watching a child's development. And a miraculous one.

A newborn for the first month or two can't be said to have much of a personality, to be sure — no matter how cute and how precious we inevitably think them to be.

But then comes the day when, as you're holding the child and cooing in the way that otherwise sober adults do at such times, the baby grins at you, his eyes boring in on yours, and you start yelling at everyone in the room to come quick, and to see what Caden just did. He smiled, you exult, and not only that, but he smiled at me.

Which is to say, he smiled for me. And no smile is quite so sweet as that one.

*Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.*