

# Opinion

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## OUR VIEW

# Child care bill has promise

State Reps. Jack Zika, R-Redmond, and Cheri Helt, R-Bend, are asking Oregon lawmakers to approve a measure that should make a dent in the state's damaging lack of child care. House Bill 4096 may undergo tweaking, to be sure, but the pair's approach to the problem is both thoughtful and likely to be successful.

Now it's up to the full Legislature to make the measure law.

Oregon's child care problems may change from county to county, but they're statewide and they make life tough for both employees and the companies they work for. Consider: According to the Economic Policy Institute, an Oregonian with an infant will spend, on average, \$13,616 a year on care, well above the \$9,165 they'd pay in tuition at the University of Oregon or Oregon State, and more than the average cost of rent in the state.

Worse, even at those prices there's not enough to go around. In fact, according to an Oregon State University study released in 2019, all 36 counties in Oregon are child care deserts, with three or more children in need of care for each slot available.

HB 4096 seeks to change those numbers in several ways. It proposes grants to a child care provider with a contract to provide child care for large employers. It would make several tax credits available, to landlords leasing to child care facilities, to care providers whose staff members got 18 hours of training per year, and so on.

And, it would make child care facilities an outright use on land zoned for residential or commercial use.

More controversial is a proposal to allow child care centers as a conditional use on land zoned for exclusive farm use. There's opposition to the idea and it could be dropped with minimal harm to the rest of the bill.

Child care is expensive to provide and, for landlords, a business with built-in liabilities. Pay is low, and turnover is high. HB 4096 seeks to address those problems in a concrete way. It should be approved.

*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.*

## 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.
- 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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## Your views

### Better cell coverage important for rural residents

I attended the Planning Commission meeting of Jan. 21 to try and understand what is going on with putting a cell tower in town, and also the extent of the coverage to the Baker Valley outside the city limits. I personally do not see any problem where it was intended, being quite some distance from private housing. From my take, this cell tower is intended for use by the interstate travelers as the location is nearest to I-84. My view on this and to Verizon, AT&T and others, is why not build a tower or two, maybe more, a bit farther out in the country on open fields, or hills surrounding the town, to access the people who

have trouble using cellphones while living out in the country. Northeastern Oregon is one of the least accessible areas for cell service to a lot of people on both sides of the freeway corridor. Most of the hill country to the west of Baker City, including Sumpter and points eastward, southward and northward, are not very compatible to cell service. On the eastern side of the freeway to the western edge of the Wallows is another dead spot. I was hoping to get information at the meeting on how to get better access to any of these carriers' services. There is more than an abundance of open land, both public and private, that can accommodate these towers, and for public safety would be greatly appreci-

ated.

As I travel I-84 between Baker City and Boise there never seems to be a lack of cell coverage. And the closer one gets to Boise, cell towers become more frequent. So, the few of us who do enjoy the sparsely populated areas, our cell coverage becomes non-existent when traveling outside the city limits. It's not too terrible unless one happens to have an accident.

As for the cell "tree" at 70 feet, it didn't look that bad to me. Our home in Baker Valley has a landline which works most of the time, but we also rely on cell-phones, and that is not always available.

**Phillip Reindl**  
Baker City

## OTHER VIEWS

# What is our goal in Afghanistan?

### Editorial from The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette:

The U.S. military marked its 18th year in Afghanistan last year and, in the process, set a depressing new record by dropping 7,423 bombs in the country, the highest number since U.S. Air Forces Central Command began tracking the figures in 2006.

This number comes on the heels of the December publication of internal government documents by the Washington Post. These documents, which came from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, confirmed what millions of Americans already knew: The war in Afghanistan, costing more than \$1 trillion in taxpayer dollars

as well as the lives of thousands of U.S. soldiers, is a war without a mission. The upper echelons of the federal government don't know what purpose a U.S. military presence in Afghanistan serves.

So why, then, does the U.S. government continue to drop nearly 7,500 bombs on Afghanistan, killing hundreds of civilians each year? Who are the targets supposed to be? What purpose does the destruction serve? What is the objective?

Getting answers to such questions is practically impossible. Those responsible for U.S. policy in Afghanistan will not explain their decisions. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Acting Secretary of Defense Mark Esper refused to attend a

Congressional hearing on the war in Afghanistan last month. President Donald Trump has long said he wants to wind down the conflict, yet it persists.

The American people deserve to know why the war in Afghanistan continues, in spite of what is plainly obvious to most citizens, soldiers and veterans. This conflict has gone on unabated for nearly two decades. Children born just after the initial invasion are now old enough to fight the same battle. Who can justify the unjustifiable?

Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., may have said it best: "Our young men and women that we send to war, our best and our brightest, they deserve better." An explanation is the least we are owed.

# From union support to Marxism?

### Editorial from The New York Daily News:

What on earth was director Julia Reichert thinking at Sunday night's Oscars?

"American Factory" is a very good documentary, backed by Barack and Michelle Obama, about the growing and shrinking pains that result when a Chinese company takes over a former General Motors manufacturing plant in Ohio. Its lesson, to the extent there is a clear one, is that in a tough global economy, employees must find new ways to bridge cultural divides, save their unions and protect their jobs.

When Reichert and her team took the stage to accept the statuette for best

documentary, she said a few smart-enough things about it being tough out there for workers in a world of multinational corporations and rising automation.

She then ended her remarks with this sentence: "Workers of the world, unite!"

Remedial education alert: This is, word for word, the call to action made famous by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in their Communist Manifesto. Anyone who says it uncritically is either utterly ignorant of its unmistakable context or actually urging the overthrow of free markets and capitalist economies across the planet via a worldwide revolution of workers

against those who control the means of production.

For an Academy Award-winning director to cap her acceptance speech with those words, at a moment when Republicans breathlessly and in most cases baselessly warn of socialists taking over the Democratic Party, is a caricature straight out of right-wing dreams.

Reichert is a believer in unions, as are we. She clearly believes that, at the plant in question, workers have lost valuable leverage because management is hostile to unionization. She's right to be upset about that.

But she cannot possibly be leaping from that to a call for global Marxist revolution. Can she?

## 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](http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact).

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**Oregon Gov. Kate Brown:** 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; [www.governor.oregon.gov](http://www.governor.oregon.gov).

**Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read:** [oregon.treasurer@ost.state.or.us](mailto: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](http://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: Rep. 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, Larry Morrison 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; Greg Baxter, district attorney; Alice Durlinger, county treasurer; Stefanie Kirby, county clerk; Kerry Savage, county assessor.