

# Opinion

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## OUR VIEW

# State's money mistakes

The Oregon Secretary of State's Office audits tell us what we know but need to be reminded about: State government makes mistakes with money.

Every year there's a roundup of these mistakes. And it's clear it's necessary. For the fiscal year 2020, state auditors found \$6.4 billion in accounting errors. That's right, \$6.4 billion.

Those were unintentional mistakes. It's not like somebody was trying to abscond with \$6.4 billion. They were mistakes. Basically, numbers were put in the wrong column and later caught thanks to state audits. It does make you wonder what wasn't caught.

What can be more important is when the audits uncover weaknesses in the policies for handling money.

For instance, the Department of Consumer and Business Services is a state agency dedicated to consumer protection and business regulation. It failed to properly follow new accounting rules required for fiscal year 2020. Other state agencies got it right. The department misinterpreted the new rules and reported about \$400 million incorrectly. That department also failed to have required documentation explaining how it made decisions about handling money in two areas, such as determining what is uncollectible money.

And there's more. When state auditors tested some spending to ensure proper procedures are followed so federal funds may be used to pay for them, it found mistakes. The biggest problem was in the child care and development fund. That is a federal grant program that helps provide child care services for low-income families and improve child care overall. Auditors found \$4.2 million in errors. Numbers were miscalculated, provider copays were off, there was a lack of documentation to back up payments and more.

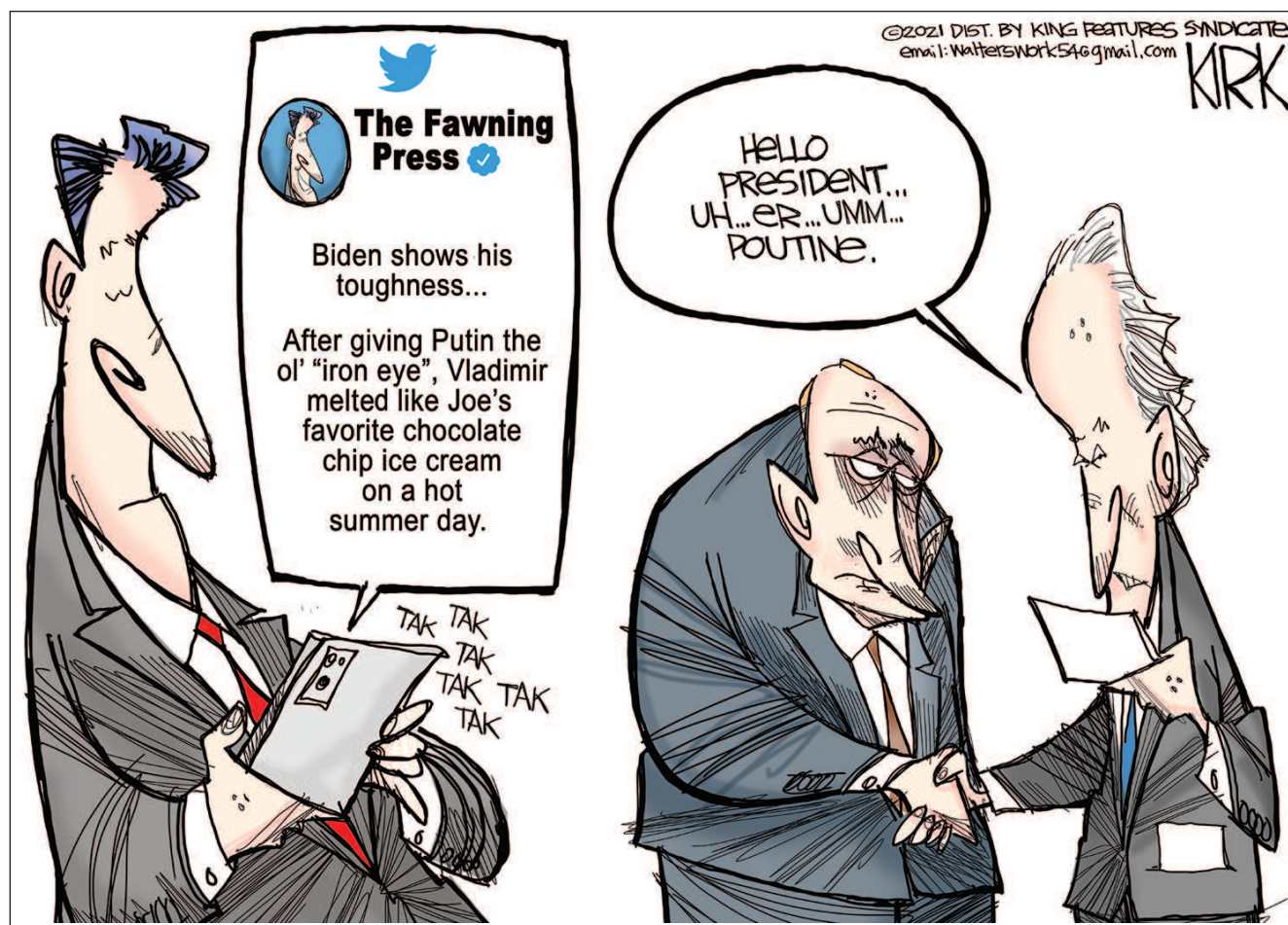
New report. Similar conclusions. Without state auditors peering over the shoulders of other state agencies, even more mistakes would be made.

*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.
- 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

### Governing failures at the state, city, federal levels

Are you liking your new "governors?"

Living in a democracy we are privileged to routinely elect those individuals who are tasked to govern us. Hmmm, governing. What does that entail? The primary responsibility of those who govern is to protect the safety and livability of its citizenry. How are they doing in Oregon, and nationally?

We have a governor who has unilaterally decided to continue her emergency powers, although no emergency presently exists. One who home cloisters, pays and protects her "non-essential public workers" while storekeepers, restaurateurs, elder care workers etc. (often without benefits) must face the "pandemic" daily. A governor who

will not release her chokehold on her constituents, until she coerces enough citizens to get the vaccine. In doing so she continues her pattern of economic, social and spiritual destruction upon the work, finances, and dreams of many private businesses and entrepreneurs who make Oregon what it is.

Portlanders are governed by those who defund the police, and denigrate heroes and peacekeepers, while enabling roving gangs of "stimulus-funded" thugs and miscreants who refuse work, and nightly burn the dreams of others. In doing so, they have turned the city into a physical and economic wasteland, and a pariah for conference destinations. Homicide is up 800%, as street gangs compete for turf. A once beautiful city looks like a Third World landfill, but Ted's going to "fix it." Really

... are you holding your breath?

On the federal level ... hello? Why work when you get paid for sleeping? Close the borders to law abiders, open it to aliens. Debt? What's that? Indoctrinate our children that they are oppressors or victims dependent on skin color, not character. Keep sleeping, Joe, your path of national destruction is now spontaneous.

I have defined governor. Webster defines a despot as: "A ruler with absolute power and authority and rules tyrannically, in a brutal or oppressive way." Are we governed by benevolent leaders or by despots, (whether by ineptitude or intent?) Have you had enough? Answer that question at the ballot boxes, (if they still exist), in 2022.

**Don Williams**  
Baker City

## OTHER VIEWS

# DeSantis is outtrumping Trump

### Editorial from The Miami Herald:

It was Donald Trump who called for "law and order" following Black Lives Matter protests last summer.

But it was Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis who successfully pushed through an "anti-riot" bill that chills civil disobedience and that civil liberties groups say is likely to put peaceful protesters behind bars.

It was Trump who cast doubts and told lies about mail-in ballots and the safety of U.S. elections.

It was DeSantis (with help from the Republican-controlled Legislature) who made it harder for Floridians to vote by mail.

It was Trump who picked a fight with tech companies after he was banned from Twitter and Facebook for inciting violence in the wake of the Capitol attacks on Jan. 6.

It was DeSantis who signed a law that fines social-media platforms that ban political candidates without warning up to \$250,000 per day.

To DeSantis' unsuspecting critics, these actions might seem like an attempt to air grievances on behalf of the former president, whose endorsement catapulted DeSantis from an unknown congressman three years ago to governor of the nation's third-largest state.

But DeSantis has proven he's more than a faithful disciple.

In the 2 1/2 years he's been in office, DeSantis has advanced the Trump

brand more successfully than Trump. That's largely because DeSantis works with a Legislature that's also in lock-step with his agenda while the former president dealt with the constraints of a deadlocked Congress.

The 42-year-old governor finished ahead of Trump himself in a straw poll of 30 potential 2024 presidential candidates taken at the Western Conservative Summit in Denver over the weekend. Respondents were asked to choose all the candidates of whom they approve for president. Of the 371 answers, 74% favored DeSantis and 71% chose Trump. DeSantis also polled far ahead of third-place U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (43%), former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (39%) and Donald Trump Jr. (25%).

Straw polls are far from being scientific, but these results offer a glimpse at the effectiveness of DeSantis' strategy ever since Trump carried the Sunshine State in 2020 by a larger margin than in 2016.

DeSantis has carefully orchestrated his official actions this year — from signing the elections law on Fox News while prohibiting other media outlets from attending, to his announcement last week that he will send Florida law enforcement officers to the southern border — as a dog and pony show for conservative media.

To the benefit of DeSantis' potential presidential aspirations — and to the detriment of Florida — it's working. He

deserves credit for his political astuteness but he also reaps the benefits from the lack of an organized Democratic opposition in a state that's still considered "purple" but often acts as deep red.

While Democrats try to figure out why they can't win statewide elections and spend energy fighting within their own ranks (as happened in the Florida Senate when they ousted Minority Leader Gary Farmer three days before the end of the legislative session), DeSantis and the rest of the GOP are in lockstep. They have been disciplined in fighting culture wars (i.e. the recent ban on Critical Race Theory at public schools) and passing laws that don't address Florida's pressing needs, but that play well on Fox News and far-right online platforms such as One America News Network (i.e., the ban on transgender female athletes). They have also passed laws that are good sound bites for DeSantis but haven't done much. An example is the bill passed last year that requires governments and their contractors to use E-Verify to screen for undocumented workers but has little teeth and hasn't generated penalties, the Orlando Sentinel reported last week.

Could DeSantis' Trump 2.0 brand — same inflammatory policies minus the inflammatory tweets — be the future of the Republican Party? We have three years to find out. Until then, Florida will continue to be DeSantis' experimentation lab.

## CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

**President Joe Biden:** The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1111; to send comments, go to www.whitehouse.gov.

**U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley:** D.C. office: 313 Hart Senate Office Building, 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. Baker City office, 1705 Main St., Suite 504, 541-278-1129; merklej.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. Cliff Bentz** (2nd District): D.C. office: 2182 Rayburn Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515, 202-225-6730; 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. Lynn Findley (R-Ontario):** Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., S-403, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1730. Email: Sen. LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov

**State Rep. Mark Owens (R-Crane):** Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., H-475, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1460. Email: Rep. MarkOwens@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. Councilors Lynette Perry, Jason Spriet, Kerry McQuisten, Shane

Alderson, Joanna Dixon, Heather Sells and Johnny Waggoner Sr.

**Baker City administration:** 541-523-6541. Jonathan Cannon, city manager; Ray Duman, police chief; Sean Lee, 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; Noodle Perkins, roadmaster; Greg Kirby, 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.