

Oregon needs more auditing capacity

What are the biggest differences between Oregon and Washington? They pump their own gas, and we don't? They have a sales tax and we don't? They have NFL and Major League franchises and we don't? Yes, yes and yes.

There is another significant distinction, which is glaring in the wake of the Cover Oregon fiasco and the departure of Gov. John Kitzhaber. Washington has an independent auditor who carries out aggressive, far-reaching investigations. He is much better funded and staffed than Oregon's.

In Salem you would be hard pressed to find a legislator or state employee who does *not* know that state government's computer systems are largely antiquated. "Our computer systems can't talk to each other," said state Rep. Dennis Richardson during his campaign for governor.

But nowhere will you find a comprehensive written study of state government's cyber readiness or lack of readiness. And nowhere will you find a complete listing of the state's huge computer blunders and what those disasters cost the Treasury.

Every Oregon secretary of state tells us they will use their office's Audit Division to shine a light on state government. But few audits over recent decades have moved debate and discussion within Oregon. When Phil Keisling was secretary of state, the division did conduct an audit of the Department of Motor Vehicles computer mess. A major recommendation of that audit was that the state needed top expertise on its side, to ensure that software vendors didn't overcharge, and were held to the highest of professional standards. If

that recommendation had been heeded, we would not have had the Cover Oregon disaster with Oracle.

So there is a question of institutional memory within state government as well as the state Legislature. An institution that cannot remember things will make the same mistakes over and over.

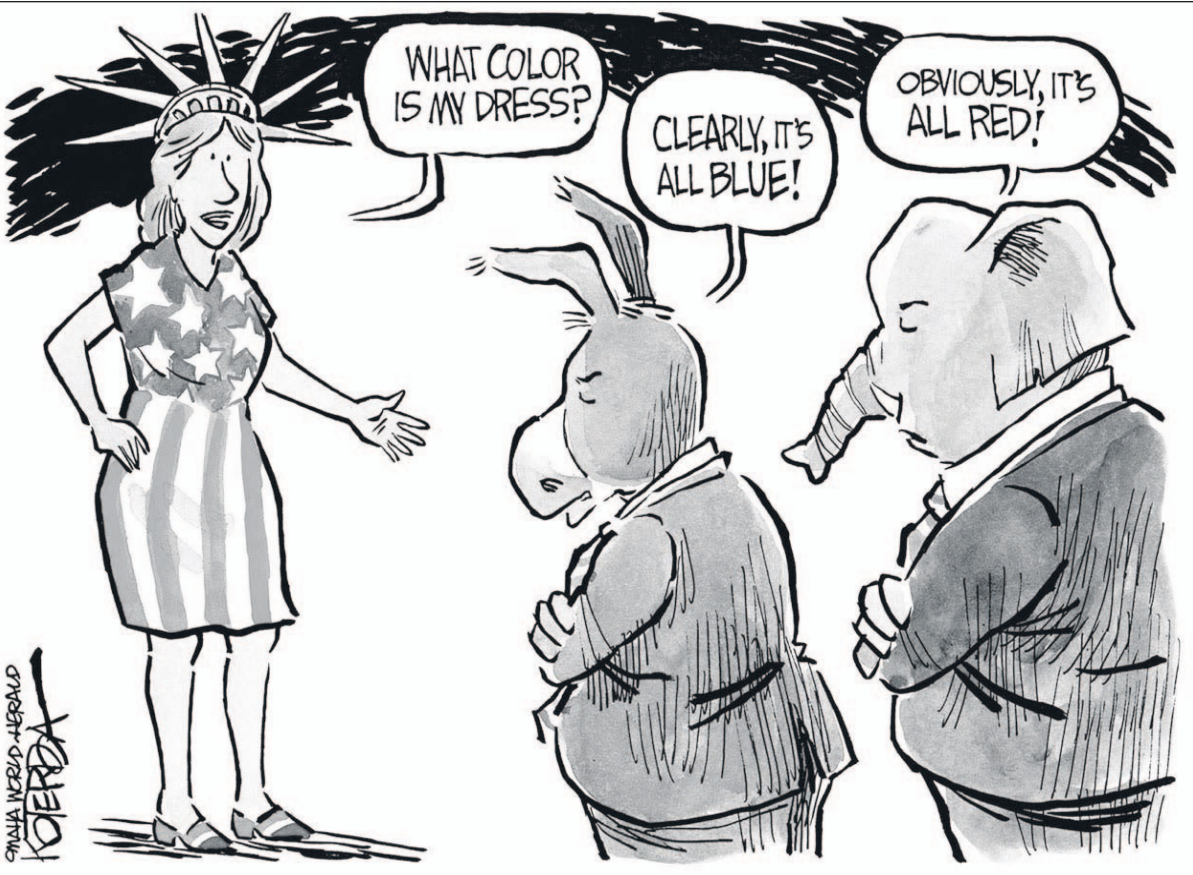
The other question is the capacity of Oregon's Audits Division.

In Oregon, the Audits Division has 35 financial auditors, 27 performance auditors, five IT auditors and two municipal auditor positions. Its 13-15 biennial budget is \$22.8 million. In Washington, the Audit's Office has a total staff of 355 and a 2013-15 budget of \$35.2 million.

Washington state's auditor delivers sharp probes of state, county and local agencies. The auditor is an independent statewide elected official, responsible for making certain government entities comply with rigorous accounting standards, free from outside influence and control. The mere prospect of such oversight might have been enough to curb the types of blurred lines being reported about former Gov. John Kitzhaber and his entrepreneurial fiancée.

States and their many tiers of agencies and smaller jurisdictions are, in effect, giant corporations paid by taxpayers. Professional, independent and appropriately supported auditing is indispensable.

Having an independent auditor could blunt some of the political tug and pull of statehouse politics. And it could help us learn from state and local government's mistakes, and keep from repeating them.



COMMUNITY VOICES

Growing kids benefit from routine health care

By Jenni Workman
To the Blue Mountain Eagle

Adolescence is a crucial period in the lifespan and provides opportunities to influence future health behaviors and health outcomes. In addition, the physical growth and development during this period are significant and young people are beginning to make their own decisions about their health.

According to the Centers For Medicare and Medicaid Services, adolescents, who make up 21 percent of the U.S. population, are generally healthy and they tend to not seek well-care services, where health care needs can be addressed as they emerge. During this transitional stage

in life, adolescents are more likely to engage in activities that risk their overall health and well being including use of alcohol, tobacco, or other harmful substances, unprotected sex, poor eating and little exercise.

Adolescence is also a period in life when many chronic physical, mental health, and substance use conditions first emerge. These conditions may increase the risk for negative behavior which may result in harm to self or others.

Well-care visits decline as children transition into adolescence. Routine preventative care visits provide great opportunities for early detection, identification, and appropriate treatment for conditions and behaviors

that could potentially become serious and progress into adulthood.

The Grant County Health Department, which will be promoting adolescent screening days in the coming months, encourages parents and adolescents to schedule routine checkups and preventative care appointments with their health care provider. It is a great opportunity for adolescents to not only address health care needs but to learn how to navigate through the health care system as they grow into an adult and go out into the world.

Jenni Workman is an RN and public health nurse for the Grant County Health Department. Readers can call 541-575-0429 for more information about adolescent health care.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Progress on grouse
To the Editor:

Backcountry Hunters & Anglers of Oregon is encouraged with current conservation efforts to save the greater sage grouse from a threatened or endangered listing.

The Oregon plan, SageCon, will be released later this spring. And, with ongoing efforts by the BLM, the state, and a wide variety of stakeholders, progress is being made. In a report released recently by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Oregon is leading the way in eliminating encroaching junipers which rob the landscape of sage habitat and provide perching points for birds which prey on the grouse.

Wildfire and invasive weeds are also major threats to the bird.

The BLM will also release reports this summer detailing mitigation plans to help bring the bird population numbers back – just in time for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to make a determination on listing. We are hopeful the bird won't have to be listed and so are many other conservation groups.

Paul Henson, who heads Oregon's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, told us he's "very encouraged" with present conservation efforts. That's notable as Henson was part of the team that in 2010 said the bird was warranted for listing. As an umbrella species, one thing is certain. What's good for the sage grouse is good for all.

Brian Jennings
Bend

easy read. The current forest supervisor has stated he will obey the law. There is some concern the road closure problem may affect the timber harvest. This seems like coercion or extortion, and something we need to avoid.

I do not believe our county sheriff has been consulted on any of these closures, and he is the most important voice in all of this – for no other reason than safety, and search and rescue.

In conclusion: Come on people – get to the table and work these things out. It is not rocket science. It is the law.

Gary Jacobson
Prairie City

research. The Forest Service has ignored all Court missives regardless of Ordinance 2013-01 directives. Members of the board have been subjected to attempted intimidation by members of the Forest Service as well as having barriers placed in the way of public information gathering. So, if you feel a couple improper remarks have been made by board members in the County Court meetings, you need to get a grip on reality. You are right about one thing – the resigned members of the board are no longer required to operate under the auspices of the Court.

Judy Kerr
Canyon City

Board will continue

To the Editor:

I am very disappointed with our County Court.

When I first suggested the Forest Access Board to the Forest Service and the Court, I saw something that would help the people of Grant County have a voice in the Court on forest issues. We, the members of the board, have worked very hard with the people of Grant County, and taken their comments, needs and opinions to the Court.

We have not seen this Court make any decision that is a positive move on the suggestion made by the people of the county. I did not see one member of this Court attend a public meeting held at the Outpost where the people stated what they want done on our forest. It is very clear that the Court did not want any input from the board.

Instead, this Court has farmed out the future use of our forest to people who have no stake in the outcome of these forest issues. This Court is paying one of the groups, and I doubt most of them have ever been to Grant County.

There are people who live in Grant County who would and could do the same job, as they know this forest. These people work, live and play in it, and they could do the job for a lot less money and keep the money in Grant County.

The board is not going to go away. We are going to continue to listen to the people and voice a stronger voice to the Court. I hope that these actions by this Court will wake up more people in the county as to what really is the position of this Court on our forest issues.

The Court needs to rethink these decisions. The people elected this Court to work for them, for the good of the county, and they want a voice on what is done on our forest issues.

Howard Gieger
John Day

Ordinance is a no-brainer


To the Editor:

There is some confusion and debate over the purpose of the Public Access Advisory Board. I must first give credit to all those members who gave their own time, travel expenses and initiative to take on this situation.

I was at the County Court meeting when this was first proposed. Their job was to investigate what roads had been closed by the U.S. Forest Service, and whether these roads were closed before or after the Grant County ordinance prohibiting any closures without the County Court and the county sheriff's consent.

It was soon apparent that in September 2014, former Forest Service Supervisor Teresa Raaf had signed a road closure order for some 214 roads in the southern portion of Grant County, without any notice or correspondence with the Court or the sheriff. This was well after Grant County Ordinance 2013-1 went into effect.

This law is a no-brainer. It is an



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195 N. Canyon Blvd. • John Day, OR 97845
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MEMBER OREGON NEWSPAPER PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

PUBLISHER	Marissa Williams, marissa@bmeagle.com
EDITOR	Scotta Callister, editor@bmeagle.com
EDITORIAL ASSISTANT	Cheryl Hoefler, cheryl@bmeagle.com
COMMUNITY NEWS	Angel Carpenter, angel@bmeagle.com
SPORTS	Angel Carpenter, angel@bmeagle.com
MARKETING REP	Kim Kell, ads@bmeagle.com
CUSTOMER SERVICE REP	Lindsay Bullock office@bmeagle.com

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