

The remodeling continues on public records law

Just how public are Oregon's public records? Public records and open meetings are two of the foundational elements of democracy. Oregonians like to believe that we have an open system of government. That is not entirely true.

The crash-and-burn ending of the John Kitzhaber administration opened our eyes to what our governor wasn't telling us. Within his own office there was a subsidiary operation run by his companion, Cylvia Hayes, who was styled as first lady to heighten her political currency.

Kitzhaber's successor Gov. Kate Brown immediately grasped the need for Oregon state government to come clean. In her inaugural address, the principal topic was ethics reform.

Last week the state Senate passed Senate Bill 9, one element of Gov. Brown's package. Assuming enactment by the House, this law will set in motion an audit of all state agencies' response to public records requests.

Promoting her legislation, Brown told a Senate committee: "Oregon's public records law is like a Victorian house that has been remodeled one room at a time by multiple owners over the

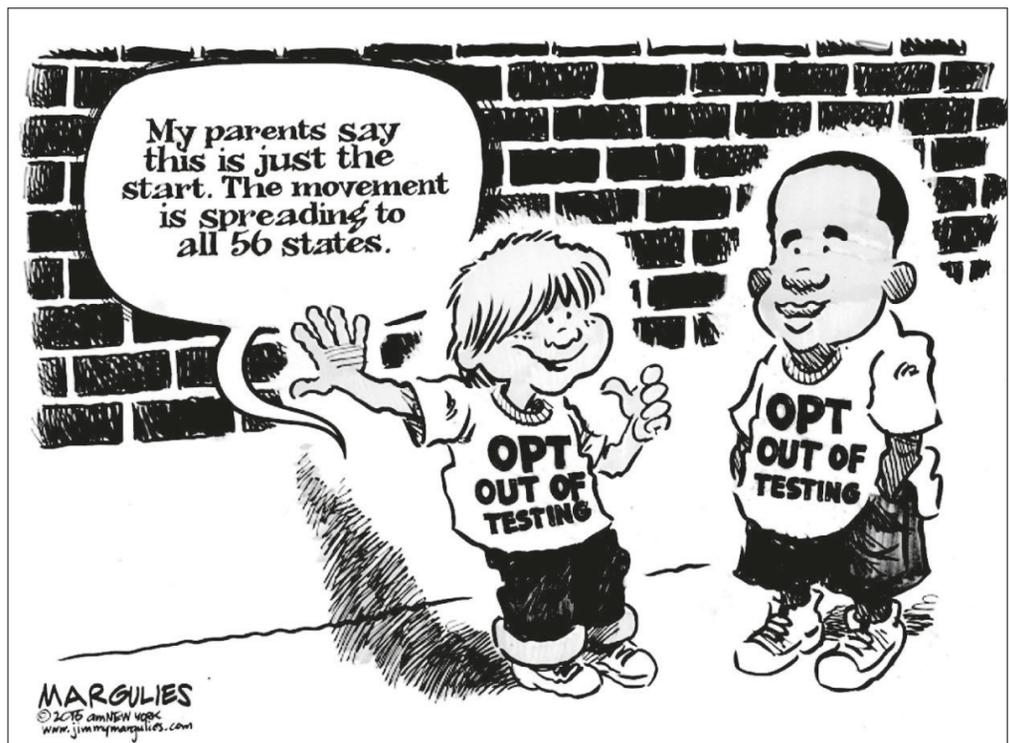
course of several decades. There are currently over 400 exemptions in Oregon law, spread throughout our 838 chapters of Oregon Revised Statutes."

We in the media understand exactly what Gov. Brown was saying. We deal with those myriad exemptions to the public records law.

The other two elements of the governor's ethics package are about the state Ethics Commission. They would do three things: shorten the amount of time the commission has to take action, increase penalties for using public office for personal gain and change how commission members are appointed.

To some lawmakers, this ethics package might seem like niggling, bothersome concerns — not the sort of votes for which PACs will reward them. But they represent the essence of democracy. Ethics also has a lot to do with how efficiently the massive business of state government operates.

We in the private sector know candor is the smartest way to deal with our customers. A measure of candor is what state government's customers — the voters and taxpayers — have a right to expect.



EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

A new stage — retirement — beckons Eagle editor

By **Scotta Callister**
Blue Mountain Eagle

Years ago I had an editor who defined a full life as one lived in three parts: education, vocation, and avocation.

My younger, career-oriented self couldn't quite envision a transition to that third stage. Even today, it's a little mysterious to me.

Ask me about it in a couple of months.

I plan to retire at the end of June, after 42 years in the newspaper business. It's been a smorgasbord of experiences — My jobs have taken me across the state, and I've worked in newspaper offices large and small.

I've spent the last eight-plus years as editor of the Eagle. I was drawn to Grant County by two undeniable lures: the opportunity to live on the jewel of a ranch my husband Les and I bought in 2004, and the opportunity to continue working in my chosen field, community journalism. Neither has disappointed.

For an unabashed news hound like me, the county has offered a rich vein of news stories to mine: elections, recall elections, mill closures, mill resurrections, economic upheaval, catastrophic fires, grazing challenges, wild horses, wolves, and — who could forget them? — the Ary-

an Nations interlopers we booed out of town back in 2010.

Today, the county remains at the crossroads of a number of public lands issues, and much of what is happening here will chart a course for natural resources-based economies across the land. While such change may stir angst and frustration at times, this has been — and will continue to be — an exciting place to live.

My successor has not yet been chosen, but I hope the community will put out the welcome mat as that lucky person tackles the job. Meanwhile, I expect the Eagle will continue to play an important role, empowering the community through information and providing a forum for the people who live and work here.

I've had the pleasure of working with a great crew at the Eagle, folks who are truly dedicated to the community and quite simply work their hearts out to make it a better place. Marissa, Cheryl, Angel, Kim, Lindsay, Kristina, Gary — You rock.

Before I step away from the keyboard, I also have to recognize the kinship I've felt with another important group of people: you, the readers. Supportive, critical, demanding, generous, opinionated and full of heart — you are what makes Grant

County tick, and I've been honored to get to get to know you, and to call many of you friends.

I will miss our spirited conversations — well, let's be honest, almost all of them. And I hope the final analysis will show I helped in some way to provide a voice for you and this community, and a path toward solutions for the challenges we face.

As for that avocation stage, I'm not entering it with any illusions about loitering in the hammock or lazy naps by the fire. My plate seems to be filling up already.

I plan to continue supporting groups I've been involved in — the county library board, the New Hope animal rescue group, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Boulder Creek Ranch Pie Social planning committee, to name a few.

And then there are the ranch chores — the dogs to civilize, the horses to spoil, the goats to contain, the weeds to kill, the trees to plant ... After years of finding my "honey-do" lists taped to the fridge and the computer screen, I'm sure Les is looking forward to returning the favor.

As for the rest of you, I'm just retiring, not leaving. See you at the grocery store.

Scotta Callister joined the Eagle staff as editor in January 2007.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Kudos to CC duo

To the Editor:

I am writing to offer credit to Canyon City's maintenance men, Lester and Tim. These fine guys have gone above and beyond their regular duties in so many ways.

They take time out of their busy days to pay special attention to my 10-year-old grandson, who is captivated with any kind of heavy equipment. They allow him to watch as they perform their tasks, engaging with him in his enthusiasm. If you live on or around Humboldt Street in Canyon City, you have mostly likely seen us walking, and Lester and Tim always wave at us, which piques Rocco's curiosity and excitement. When the chain on his go-cart comes off occasionally, these wonderful guys are right there to get us "back on the road."

It is a pleasure and a privilege to live in a community where people truly do care and take time to show it! Kudos to Tim and Lester — You are appreciated.

Debbie Bloom
Canyon City

Still saying no to pot

To the Editor:

While traveling through Prairie City I stopped by a mini-market to buy a few things, including the May 6 Blue Mountain Eagle. I see from the letter "Pot's healing powers" that what's ailing Ontario has affected your fine communities as well.

The use of marijuana is nothing new; it was in the public schools I attended well over 40 years ago. The arguments for its use were old then, and sound even older now. Only now they've added "medical" to marijuana to make it sound more appealing.

Oregon's government officials must be beside themselves for allowing Washington and Colorado to beat them in legalizing recreational use of marijuana first. But what did these states find out?

The increase in tax revenue promised by Washington's politicians did not materialize. Seems a drug that was previously black marketed is now sold by people who know how to get around the tax laws (i.e. "bundling").

Colorado, Denver in particular, found that the number of people living on the streets increased, especially young college-age men. In other words, the number of people who simply wanted to be stoned went up.

California found that the number of vehicle accidents went up because of people driving under in the influence of "medical" marijuana.

In truth, about 9 percent of marijuana users become addicted to it. And, yes, for some it is a gateway drug leading to greater addictions. And the younger a person starts using it, the more detrimental effect it has on them and their development.

As for the Internet being full of sites proclaiming marijuana's positive benefits, well consider the source. The pro-marijuana groups have a lot of money and resources for putting up misleading sites and information.

Our state may have medical marijuana now and recreational marijuana in its future, but there will be a price to pay.

Bill Williams
Ontario

WHERE TO WRITE

Washington, D.C.
The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20500; Phone-comments: 202-456-1111; Switchboard: 202-456-1414.

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden, D — 516 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. Phone: 202-224-5244. Email: wayne_kinney@wyden.senate.gov Website: http://wyden.senate.gov Fax: 202-228-2717.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley,

D — 313 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510?. Phone: 202-224-3753. Email: senator@merkleysenate.gov. Fax: 202-228-3997. Oregon offices include One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St., Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; and 310 S.E. Second St., Suite 105, Pendleton, OR 97801. Phone: 503-326-3386; 541-278-1129. Fax: 503-326-2990.

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden, R — (Second District) 1404 Longworth Building, Wash-

ington D.C. 20515. Phone: 202-225-6730. No direct e-mail because of spam. Website: www.walden.house.gov Fax: 202-225-5774. Medford office: 14 North Central, Suite 112, Medford, OR 97501. Phone: 541-776-4646. Fax: 541-779-0204.

Salem

Gov. Kate Brown, D — 254 State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-378-3111. Fax: 503-378-6827. Website: www.governor.

state.or.us/governor.html. Oregon Legislature — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: www.leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes). State Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario (District: 60), Room H-475, State Capitol, 900 Court St. N.E., Salem OR 97301. Phone: 503-986-1460. Email: rep.cliffbentz@state.or.us Website: www.leg.state.or.us/bentz/home.htm.



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 |
| ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT | Kristina Kreger, kristina@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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