

# Health authority audit interference was outrageous

State officials went to great lengths to stymie an audit of the Oregon Health Authority.

That is the most troubling aspect of the audit, which state auditors were able to complete after Gov. Kate Brown appointed a new director for the beleaguered agency.

The audit report, which Secretary of State Dennis Richardson delivered last Wednesday in a highly politicized announcement, found that the agency inadvertently misspent millions of state and federal dollars. That is not a big surprise, as news about the agency's missteps has dribbled out for months. However, the audit also showed that the health authority is above average nationally for its handling of federal Medicaid money.

In that sense, the audit report contained both bad and good news regarding Oregon's \$9.3 billion-a-year Medicaid program. New Oregon Health Authority Director Patrick Allen, who on Friday marked his 90th day on the job, agreed with the auditors' recommendations and said the agency already was implementing some of them.

The report states that the health authority previously had impeded the auditors' work but goes on to say, "OHA's new management has been more proactive and transparent in addressing these issues."

Audits are an integral part of cost-effective governance. Brown ousted former health authority Director Lynne Saxton this summer; but it's disconcerting that until

then, the agency aggressively interfered with what could be considered a routine audit.

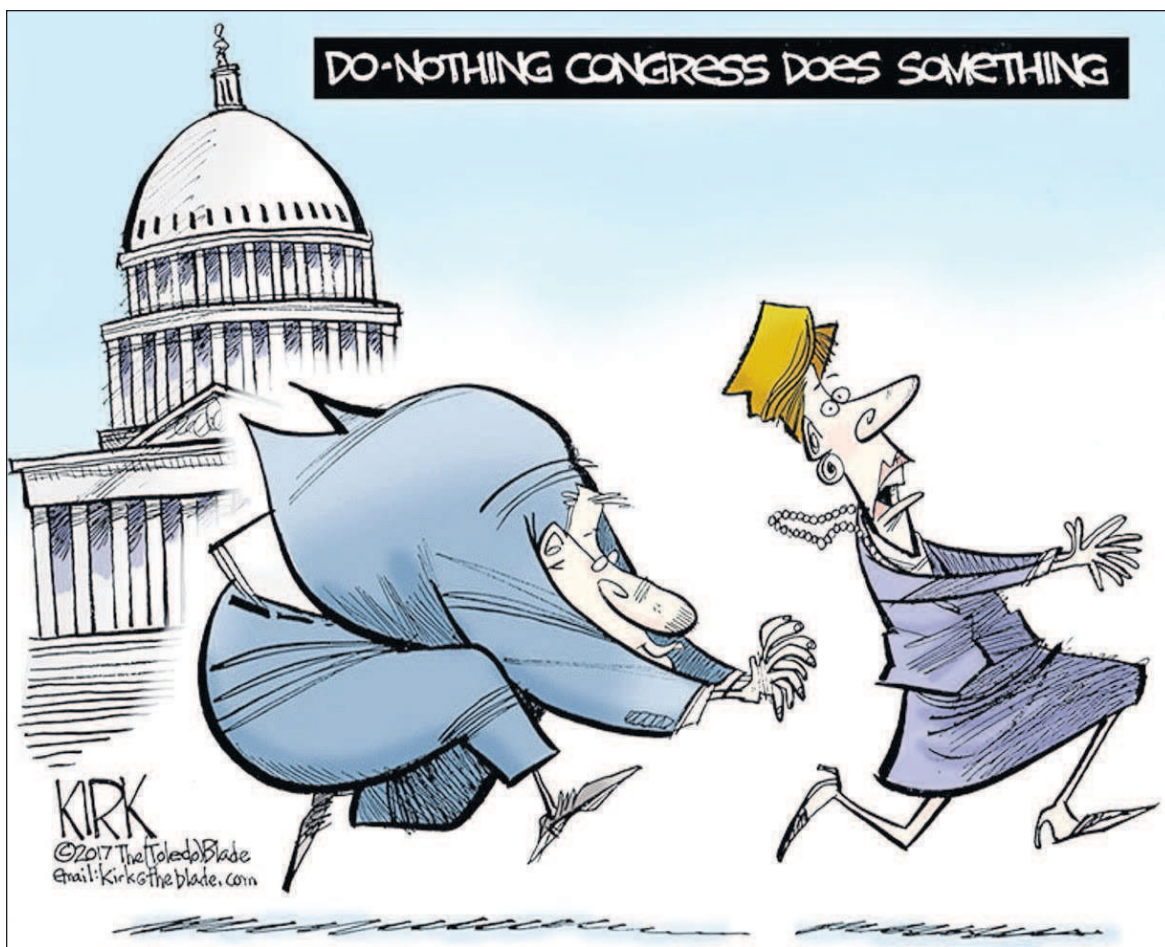
That interference included hiring an outside auditing firm as an intermediary between the health authority and the state Audits Division. That seems unprecedented in state government. Allen said he canceled the outside firm's \$200,000 contract as soon as he learned about it.

According to the audit report, the health authority also had monitored what its staff was telling auditors, potentially creating a chilling effect, and ordered front-line workers to go through management instead of communicating with auditors.

"Preventing direct follow-up slowed our work, potentially limited our access, and created a bottleneck for both us and OHA. We had questions that staff could answer in minutes, but were instead required to ask managers, who sometimes provided incorrect information because they lacked the same level of familiarity as staff," the report says. In addition, "OHA delayed answering requests and at times provided incomplete or erroneous information."

Such interference, regardless of where it occurs in government, is outrageous. Republican Richardson, who oversees the Audits Division, and Democrat Brown, who oversees the Oregon Health Authority and other agencies in the executive branch, should have known about the problems and promptly worked together to ensure a thorough, forthright audit.

Their failure to do so creates a stain on state government.



## FARMER'S FATE

# Fifty shades of hay

By Brianna Walker  
To the Blue Mountain Eagle



Brianna Walker

"Uh-oooooooooh," my toddler sing-songed as he picked up his little green toy man with suction cup hands and feet and stuck him back up on the swather window. The toy would soon start sliding down, then lose all suction and fall. "Uh-oooooooooh," my toddler laughed and scooped up the toy again.

This game went on for hours — which was good because we were hot and heavy into second cutting.

My toddler does a lot of jabbering, but the only words he says are "Keeg" (for his brother) and "Bama" (which means food — any kind of food: dog food, cat food, sheep food, baby food, etc.). So this new addition of "Uh-oh" seemed pretty cute — that is until it became apropos.

Farming is like playing five-card poker with four cards — and this week was no exception. It seemed that instead of moving from hour to hour, the week was passing from one calamity to the next.

The swather lost a bearing, bent a roller, plugged up and found a broken mainline — buried it up to its axles in unexpected mud. "Uh-oooooooooh."

The baler broke all six knotters at once, and then twisted the safety linkage. "Uh-oooooooooh." The stack truck blew a front tire, and the four-wheeler a back one. "Uh-oooooooooh." The hydraulics on the straw swather refused to work, the rake lost a wheel and I cracked the screen on my phone. "Uh-oooooooooh."

It felt like we were playing a round of the Farming Game, where you draw operating expenses for each crop but without receiving your harvest check. Someone needs to throw that card away and slip in an extra couple "double all your corn harvests this year" squares or at least an extra O.T.B. or two.

You can't tell how good a man or a watermelon is until they get thumped, and I'm starting to feel punky with a hint of "Uh-oooooooooh."

The higher the mercury gets, the more temperamental my swather becomes. After plugging up badly — the hay wrapped tightly around the full-contact rollers — I climbed back into the cab like a damsel in distress, waiting for someone to come bail me out of my predicament. My toddler sat on my lap and pointed at the lifted flaps on my head. "Uh-oooooooooh," he crooned.

"Yep, 'Uh-Oh' is right," I replied, wiping some of the dirt off of his cheeks. "Kind of reminds me of a nursery rhyme," I told his upturned little face. I changed some of the words to fit this particular scenario, as I recited: "There was a little swather, who had a little crack, right in the middle of it's windshield. And when it was good, it was very, very good, and when it was bad — it was horrid!" OK, so Henry Wadsworth Longfellow it is not, but that's how I felt. When it was working it

worked beautifully — and the rest of the time was just a series of "Uh-ohs."

Ever wonder what happens when you cut the opening rounds of a field and have a breakdown, and then a few inside passes and a breakdown and a few more passes and another breakdown? You get "50 shades of hay." It's a lot more "stemmy" than its "steamy" counterpart, and isn't nearly as profitable!

The little green man fell from the window again, breaking my thoughts. "Uh-oooooooooh," my little guy laughed as he scooped up the toy.

I sure hope he learns a new word soon. I don't know how much more we can afford this one. Perhaps with just a little tweaking on his pronunciation his "Uh-oooooooooh" can say "Ua Pou."

Maybe that's actually what he's been getting at all along — with every breakdown, he just wanted us to think about a beautiful tropical island in French Polynesia.

If we're going to spend a ton of money, while sweating profusely, at least we can do it in swim suits on a white sandy beach — not in work boots, ordering parts for a persnickety swather while rivulets of sweaty mud drizzle into your eyes and your nails get torn by pulling out clumps of alfalfa between obstinate rollers.

Next time I hear "Uh-oooooooooh," I'm going to envision "Ua-Pooooou."

Brianna Walker occasionally writes about the Farmer's Fate for the Blue Mountain Eagle.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Officials should uphold the Constitution

To the Editor:

I was very happy and relieved to hear that Sheriff Palmer was cleared of all charges.

As a taxpayer and an American, I expect our law enforcement people and elected officials to meet with any group who comes into our great county to find out their intentions and then make a plan to fight them if it is in any way threatening the citizens of the county, and these officials should be expected to know and uphold the Constitution.

Joe Clarke  
Long Creek

### Victims of sexual harassment should report it

To the Editor:

When I was a 25-year-old college student back in the 1970s, I was very badly sexually harassed by a female college professor who had a lot of power over me. It finally ended when another female college professor insisted that I tell her what had obviously been bothering me. It ended when she confronted my harasser and told her that she would report her to the authorities if she did not stop.

Like most of my "fellow victims and survivors," I have been too ashamed and embarrassed to tell anyone about it for the past 40 years aside from my wife — until now. I have recently found out that a lot of people

do not take the sexual harassment of a male by a female seriously.

Recently, I have sometimes been mocked, teased, bullied and insulted about it. And, as many others find out, I have sometimes been called a "liar" and that "you made the whole thing up just to get attention, publicity, pity and sympathy from others." I want to urge all victims of sexual harassment to immediately report it to someone in a position of authority. One of the biggest regrets of my life is that I did not. Please do not repeat my mistake. These perpetrators need to be stopped. And please do not repeat my mistake of blaming myself for it. You did not do anything to bring on that predatory behavior or to encourage it. It was not your fault.

Stewart Epstein  
Rochester, New York

Letters policy: Letters to the Editor is a forum for Blue Mountain Eagle readers to express themselves on local, state, national or world issues. Brevity is good, but longer letters will be asked to be contained to 350 words. No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. No thank-you letters. Submissions to this page become property of the Eagle. The Eagle reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content. Letters must be original and signed by the writer. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. We must limit all contributors to one letter per person per month. Deadline is 5 p.m. Friday. Send letters to editor@bmeagle.com, or Blue Mountain Eagle, 195 N. Canyon Blvd., John Day, OR 97845; or fax to 541-575-1244.



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- **Monument** — P.O. Box 426, Monument 97864. Phone and fax: 541-934-2025. Email: cityofmonument@centurytel.net.
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- **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.
- **State Sen. Ted Ferrioli, R** — (District 30) Room S-223, State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-986-1950. Email: sen.tedferrioli@state.or.us. Email: TFER2@aol.com. Phone: 541-490-6528. Website: www.leg.state.or.us/ferrioli.

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