

Paulus blazed trails in Oregon politics

Former Secretary of State Norma Paulus was a product of rural Oregon. She exemplified what individuals can do when given a chance — conquering poverty, polio and the lack of a college degree to emerge as one of Oregon's most influential politicians.

And Paulus did so during an era in which she typically was "The Only Woman in the Room," the title of her autobiography.

Paulus died Feb. 28, two days after another Republican secretary of state, Dennis Richardson. U.S. Rep. Greg Walden and state Sen. Betsy Johnson remarked at Richardson's recent funeral that Paulus set the standard for her successors, regardless of political affiliation.

Both were strong, independent, transformative leaders, said Republican Walden, who represents Oregon's 2nd Congressional District.

Democrat Johnson added that Paulus and Richardson placed the needs of Oregon ahead of their own political party. "Norma blazed her own trail and was one tough cookie," Johnson said.

Paulus would have turned 86 on March 13, but hers certainly was a life well-lived. She was the first woman elected to statewide office in Oregon and the last Republican secretary of state until Richardson.

Norma Jean Petersen was born during the Depression to a Nebraska farm family who eventually settled near Burns in Eastern Oregon, seeking a better life.

But the family's poverty kept her from attending college after graduating from Burns High School at age 17. Instead, she became a secretary for the Harney County district attorney. Then polio struck and she endured weeks of treatment in an iron lung. After recovering, she moved to Salem, where she went to work as a legal secretary for Chief Justice Earl Latourette of the Oregon Supreme Court.

She so impressed Latourette that he urged her to

become a lawyer despite not being a college graduate. She studied part-time at the Willamette University law school while still working full-time at the Supreme Court and also being married with a young child. Her husband, Bill Paulus, whom she met at law school, eventually borrowed money from an uncle so she could quit her job and be a full-time law student.

It was a productive investment. In 1962, Norma Paulus graduated from law school with honors. Her marriage to Bill lasted 40 years until his death in 1999. Although Bill Paulus stayed in the background politically, he was a well-regarded lawyer in his own right, known for his work with school districts.

A legislator before being elected secretary of state in 1976, Norma Paulus was fearless. She stood up to the followers of the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, who tried to rig Wasco County elections by busing in homeless people to register as voters, and who contaminated salad bars in The Dalles to sicken other voters.

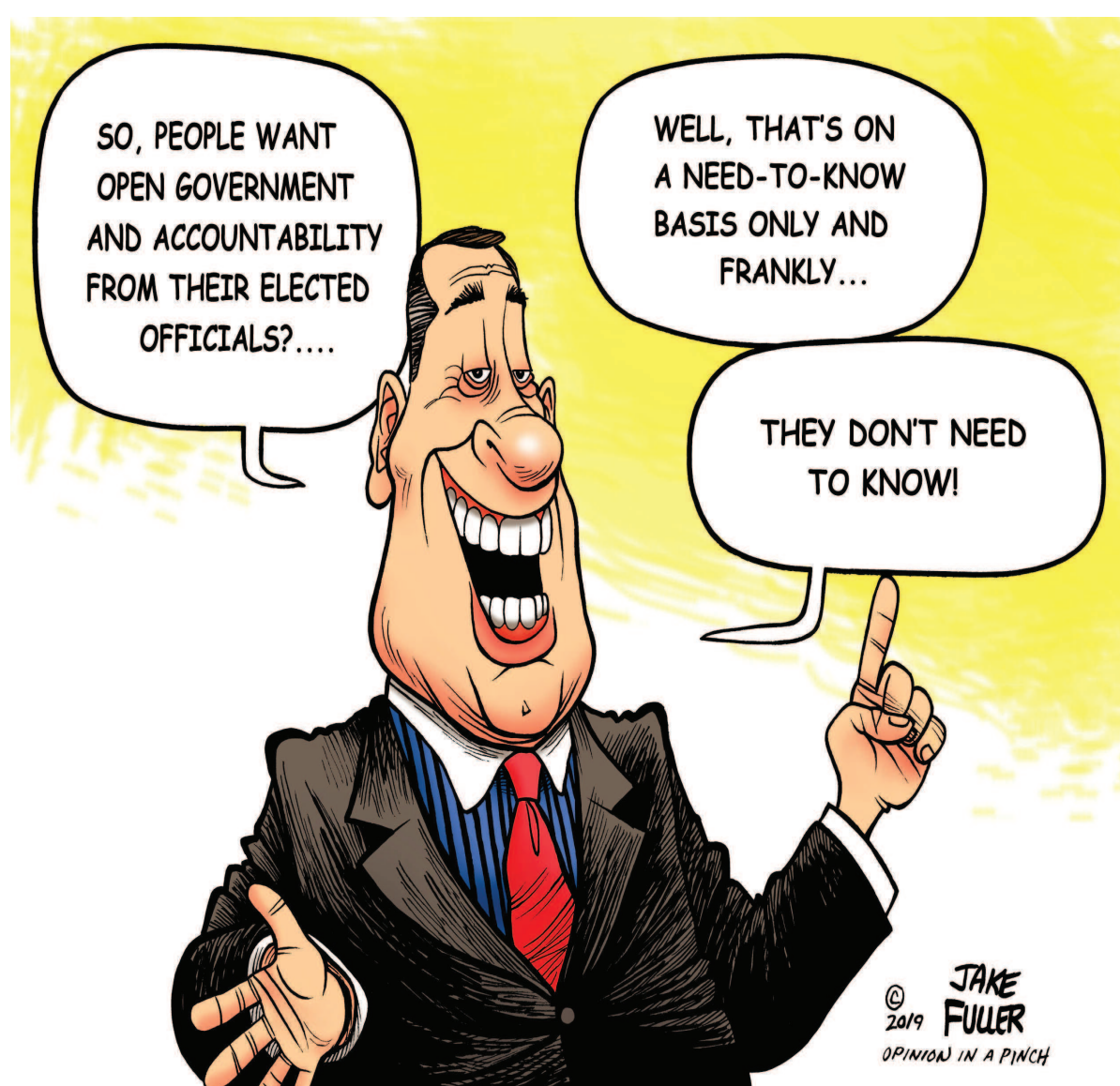
Later as the state's elected superintendent of public instruction, Paulus took on teacher unions and others who questioned her vision for school reform.

All the while, she carried a deep affection for the vastness of her state, from the coast to the mountains and the rangelands of Eastern Oregon. Everywhere she went, people seemed to know her on a first-name basis.

Paulus lost the 1986 election for governor to Democrat Neil Goldschmidt, and the Oregon Republican Party soon moved on from the centrist approach she represented — fiscally conservative and socially liberal.

As her obituary said, "She leaves a legacy of independence, fierce respect for the integrity of democratic institutions and willingness to engage adversaries or even friends in standing up for what she thought right."

Her rural values served all of Oregon.



GUEST COMMENT

Sunshine your fundamental right

By Jim Zachary
Valdosta Daily Times



Jim Zachary

For government to be of, by and for the people it must be out in front of the people.

The theme for Sunshine Week 2019 is simply, "It's your right to know."

The reason it's your right to know is that it's your government.

From the courthouse, to the statehouse to the White House, it is your right to know what government is up to.

Every deliberation by city council, county commission, state legislature or U.S. Congress is the people's business.

Every penny spent by local, state and federal government is your money.

Every document held in the halls of government belongs to you.

Transparency is not, or at least should not be, partisan.

Access to government meetings and public documents should never be arduous or even controversial.

Government derives all of its powers from the public and is answerable to the public.

It is unfortunate state and federal laws are needed to protect the public's right to know.

Of course, we know those laws are needed and more often than not must be leveraged by people requesting even the most basic information from elected and appointed officials.

No branch of government should exempt itself from freedom of information laws, and no person in government should seek to circumvent those laws.

Accessing government information and attending deliberative meetings should simply be viewed as democracy in action and not as an adversarial relationship between the governing and the governed.

Access laws are not media laws.

Every person should have free and open access.

The right to know is not only an American right, it is fundamentally right.

Government secrecy that goes beyond national security is fundamentally wrong.

So records custodians at city hall, the county courthouse, with the public school system or at the state capitol must not bristle when a person asks for public records. The records requestors are simply asking for a copy of what belongs to them already.

Records requestors should not create an unnecessarily hostile relationship when making requests.

A records request and fulfillment should be a basic, and ordinary, transaction between gov-

ernment and the public it serves.

City council, county commission, the board of education, the state legislature and its committees should not balk at the public's right to attend meetings and should not look for every excuse to retreat into an executive session or closed door meeting.

Attending meetings, sitting in on deliberations, understanding not only what decisions are reached but how those decisions are reached are all things which are simply basic American rights, fundamental to living in an open and free society.

In our politically charged, polarized, vitriolic climate there is very little conservatives and progressives can agree on.

The public's right to know is one thing that everyone, both in and out of government, both left and right leaning, and at the local, state and federal levels, should agree on.

We are the government.

The government is us.

It is, therefore, everyone's fundamental right to know what government is, and is not, doing.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

More facts about vaccines

To the Editor:

I would like to add a few facts to the letter "Maybe everyone should rethink vaccines."

Fact: More than 684,000 adverse events following vaccination, including hospitalizations, injuries and deaths, have been reported to the federal government since 1990. This number is estimated to represent less than 1 percent of all vaccine adverse events that have actually occurred.

Fact: The U.S. government now recommends that children

receive 58 doses of 13 vaccines, with 41 doses given by the age of 6.

Fact: Vaccine policy and mandates have helped to create a global vaccine market now projected to bring a staggering \$57 billion dollars to drug companies by 2025.

One of the most politically powerful public-private partnerships in the world today is the lucrative one that has been forged by the pharmaceutical industry with government, mainstream media and wealthy philanthropic foundations with political agendas.

These facts go a long way in explaining why mainstream media outlets have been united in attacking parents and physicians who defend the ethical principal of informed consent, including informed consent to vaccination, and are calling for vaccine exemptions to be severely restricted or eliminated.

The responsibility for the crisis of trust in the global vaccination system lies with those who operate the system and refuse to acknowledge the suffering of the people harmed by vaccines.

Sheila Swaja
Mt. Vernon

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