

# Legislature should pass records bills

The resignation of Oregon's former public records advocate, Ginger McCall, still echoes with consequences.

First, over the holidays, The Oregonian reported on an investigation from Gov. Kate Brown's office. It concluded that a member of the governor's staff did not pressure McCall to take the governor's side. An attorney hired by the governor's office authored the report. McCall has challenged it.

Second, a related bill is on the Oregon Legislature's agenda for the 2021 session. Legislative Concept 1478 attempts to make it clear that Oregon's Public Records Advocate is to be an independent office. The governor would no longer get to appoint the advocate. The state's Public Records Advisory Council would.

Oregon actually has good laws that are supposed to ensure the public gets access to government records and government meetings. But sometimes because of lack of training of government employees or a desire for secrecy, it can be hard for the public to get access. The public records advocate is supposed to help with both.

The advocate position is relatively new. With any new position there can be a lack of clarity how it should work.

McCall resigned, in part,

when she believed Misha Isaak — now the former general counsel to the governor — was using his political power to exert pressure on her to pursue the governor's agenda on public records but to tell no one.

LC 1478 will not settle every question about how the advocate is supposed to operate. It should help. The purpose of the public records advocate should be to improve understanding of the existing law, help mediate public records disputes, point out walls blocking transparency and recommend fixes.

Another bill for the 2021 session, Legislative Concept 2036, is one of those fixes. It would mean the Public Records Advisory Council would do a survey every even-numbered year.

The existing law just says the surveys should be done "periodically." The survey would be used to determine how state agencies and other public bodies are complying with the public records law — what fees they are charging, what decisions they have made about records that are exempt from disclosure and other questions the council deems appropriate.

Oregonians can't know how the public records law is working without information like that.

We urge the 2021 Legislature to pass both of these proposals.



## OFF THE BEATEN PATH

# Lost and (hopefully) found

I don't wish to brag, but I possess a special talent. I have the propensity, the ability, the skill, the knack for getting lost.

Some people possess a sharp sense of direction. They hike deep into the woods, get clunked on the head by falling tree branches and nabbed by Big-foot who blindfolds them and spins them around several times. These directionally fortunate people remove their blindfolds and locate their vehicle within 15 minutes.

I dash into a grocery store for bread and milk and spend 15 minutes lost in the parking lot trying to locate my car.

My gift for getting lost manifested itself at age 4. Mother, with her attention diverted by a new baby, didn't notice that I boosted my younger brother into my red wagon and started off on an adventure.

I was an obedient child. Parents taught that I should never cross the street without an adult. I obeyed. I calculated that if I stayed on the sidewalk I would circle the block and end up back home. I couldn't find home, so I turned and headed back. Back and forth I went, lost in our neighborhood.

A neighbor spotted me and called my mother.

New rule: Stay in the yard. After Dad got home, my red wagon mysteriously disappeared.

As an adult, taking directions was fraught with misguidance. Pre-GPS, the family installed a compass in my car. Even that wasn't always helpful.

Over-the-phone directions I received:

"Go out Grizzly Paw Lane and

turn left at Wolf Breath Hollow. Then a right at McGuzzle's machine shed. Don't miss that turn-off or you'll end up on a dead-end dirt road too narrow to turn around on and no cell service."

Much later — me returning a call, a sharpness in my voice. "Did you mean McGuzzle's machine shed that burned down five years ago?"

"That's what happens when you give a woman direc..."

Phone disconnect. Overseas travel gives me additional opportunities to "get lost."

The phrase, "Old Town," has two meanings. 1. Unique shopping. 2. Place for tourists to get lost.

Take Tallin, Estonia, for example. Easy day trip by boat from Helsinki, Finland. Old Town shopping draw — a stall selling reasonably priced, hand-knit wool sweaters. The map showing the sweater location looked like the equivalent of a 10-acre Iowa corn maize designed by a computer in which several dozen tourists are still missing two weeks after it closed.

Even I with my talent for getting lost found this challenge daunting.

"Turn left at the corner near the town square," instructed a Tallin local.

At the corner, there were several turn-left options: sorta left, left with slight south hook, left with gusto (dead-end), lefty left, etc. Impressive.

I spent the day lost in Tallin's Old Town, and it was only when I heard the boat whistle from the dock shriek a warning that passengers needed to board for their trip back to Helsinki that I stumbled onto the

sweater stall. In five minutes, I'd purchased two armloads of sweaters.

I exited Old Town, surprised to see that I'd actually been within a few feet of the sweater stall when I'd arrived that morning, which people with the "Ability to Get Lost" DNA gene frequently find.

Another favorite "get lost" trick of mine occurred in Vienna, Austria. Our tour leader announced that shortly the magnificent Lipizzaner stallions would be practicing at the Spanish Riding School and the public was invited at no cost.

A map showed the way, which looped through the town. On foot, I'd never make it in time. No problem. I employed the "shortcut" method, a favorite of those talented for getting lost.

I drew a straight line to the venue and headed out. I ended up at the "Happy Needle Tattoo Parlor." I did not employ their services but took off on one of those last-minute dashes utilized by those of us who fall for the "shortcut" route.

Once, finding myself lost in deep woods, I shot off three quick shouts. "I'm lost! I'm lost! I'm lost!"

"Don't panic," advised the survival manual. "Stay put."

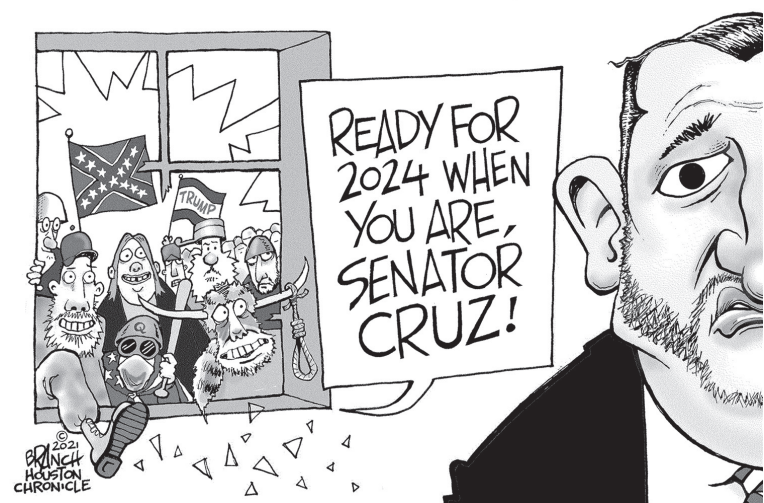
I was able to hyperventilate in place. I heard a mechanical whop, whop and knew the rescue crew was on its way.

The driver of the golf cart gave me a ride, and that is how I was rescued on the ninth hole of the rural golf course.

*Jean Moultrie is a freelance writer from Grant County. She advises that if one visits China to collect plants and uses a local map, it's prudent not to mistake a military installation for a tree-filled arboretum.*



Jean Ann Moultrie



## WHERE TO WRITE

### GRANT COUNTY

- **Grant County Courthouse** — 201 S. Humbolt St., Suite 280, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0059. Fax: 541-575-2248.
- **Canyon City** — P.O. Box 276, Canyon City 97820. Phone: 541-575-0509. Fax: 541-575-0515. Email: tocc1862@centurylink.net.
- **Dayville** — P.O. Box 321, Dayville 97825. Phone: 541-987-2188. Fax: 541-987-2187. Email: dville@ortelco.net
- **John Day** — 450 E. Main St, John Day, 97845. Phone: 541-575-0028. Fax: 541-575-1721. Email: cityjd@centurytel.net.
- **Long Creek** — P.O. Box 489, Long Creek 97856. Phone: 541-421-3601. Fax: 541-421-3075. Email: info@cityoflongcreek.com.
- **Monument** — P.O. Box 426, Monument 97864. Phone and fax: 541-934-2025. Email: cityofmonument@centurytel.net.

- **Mt. Vernon** — P.O. Box 647, Mt. Vernon 97865. Phone: 541-932-4688. Fax: 541-932-4222. Email: cmtyv@ortelco.net.
  - **Prairie City** — P.O. Box 370, Prairie City 97869. Phone: 541-820-3605. Fax: 820-3566. Email: pchall@ortelco.net.
  - **Seneca** — P.O. Box 208, Seneca 97873. Phone and fax: 541-542-2161. Email: senecaoregon@gmail.com.
- SALEM**
- **Gov. Kate Brown, D** — 254 State Capitol, Salem 97310. Phone: 503-378-3111. Fax: 503-378-6827. Website: governor.state.or.us/governor.html.
  - **Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: (503) 986-1180. Website: leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).
  - **Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### 'Peace be with you'

To the Editor:

This is to the person who seems to take some kind of pleasure in writing letters to this newspaper in an attempt to insult the people who support our President Donald Trump. Referring to the latest letter, he called us "thugs" among other derogatory things. He insinuates that anyone who supports the President could not be a Christian and we are all evil. For one, I am very surprised this paper would give this person the audience he so craves in his attempt to shame the people who live in this county and country — 77.28% of the voting population in

Grant County voted for Trump. I'm not sure how many are Christians, but I would guess at least 77.28%. I don't know you personally. All I do know is what you seem to be trying to do is start something that is not positive. Well I do not believe you will succeed because God is love, and we are all good people that honor our Lord and savior and law and order. You seem to be quite divisive. Hate will get you nowhere. Take a drive. God's gifts are everywhere. You live in the most beautiful place there is. Peace be with you.

Sandra Rue  
Prairie City

### 'Those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it'

To the Editor:

"It doesn't matter who votes, it matters who counts the votes," attributed to Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, the infamous mass murderer responsible for the deaths of 20 million Russians through deliberate starvation or murder. Those who ignore history are doomed to repeat it.

Dave Traylor  
John Day

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