

# Commitment to open government should not be half-hearted

Oregon governments, from the governor's office down to library boards, are supposed to be transparent. They are in a number of ways. But they don't always put their heart into it. Sometimes they don't follow the law. So when one part of Oregon government calls out another part of Oregon government for not being transparent, we pay attention.

The Oregon Secretary of State's Office recently released a follow-up to an audit it did in 2019. That original report encouraged the state — and in particular the state's Department of Administrative Services, or DAS — to enhance the transparency in the state's budget.

If it's not easy to find out where the state gets its money or how it spends it, that's a problem.

The department did implement a number of recommended changes since that 2019 audit. It worked with the Legislature to allow additional money to beef up the state's transparency website. And it hired a consultant to compare what Oregon does against some of the best practices of other states. That's good.

But DAS is not monitoring a practice of state agencies to use non-budgeted positions. And it's not using its position on the Transparency Oregon Advisory Commission to encourage the commission meet regularly and release transparency reports required by law in a timely manner, the

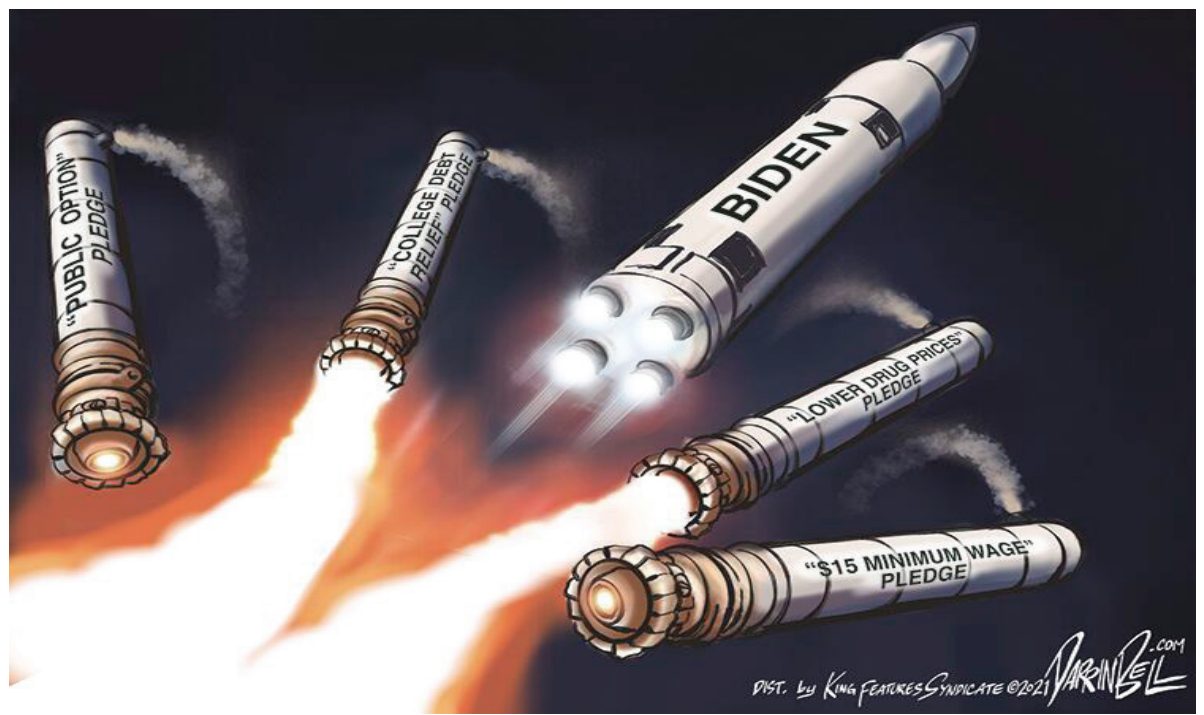
report said. For instance, there's a requirement in state law that the commission shall report to the Legislature on completed improvements to the transparency website and ways to improve it further by Feb. 15 of each odd-numbered year. The Legislative Fiscal Office missed that deadline in 2019. It apparently has missed it again this year. At least, we couldn't find it on the office's website.

EO Media Group emailed last week the two members of the Legislative Fiscal Office assigned to the commission to ask what was going on. No response.

The impact of the pandemic on state staff could have certainly been a reason. There could be other parts of a heavy workload that they chose to prioritize. It would be nice, though, if they were transparent about why they aren't filling a transparency obligation required by state law.

One other thing struck us about the way the Department of Administrative Services — which it is important to note is overseen by Gov. Kate Brown — responded to the audit. DAS chose to respond to some of the audit recommendations with what state auditors called "extraneous responses." DAS declined to even disagree or agree with some of the audit recommendations.

Do some employees at DAS not have a commitment to transparency in their heart? Is Gov. Brown going to insist they act like they do?



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## GUEST COMMENT

# Applauding all teachers



Carrie Sullivan

I think that every teacher deserves some sort of award this year. Our community has been incredibly supportive of our efforts at the schools. I am honored and grateful for working at Dayville School and with educators in Grant County. All of the exciting things that I've accomplished have been made possible through the fantastic support and encouragement of our school board and our Superintendent/principal Kathryn Hedrick. It was encouraging to be recognized by the selection committee and awarded the prize of \$500 from the Oregon Teacher of the Year Program. But it is really about the students. Students may be surprised to know how much we teachers learn from them and their families. All of our most successful learning opportunities from the chick to barbecue and centennial celebration coop projects, to bunnies in the classroom, the school garden and hydroponics were student driven ideas. I believe that when teachers listen to their students, they have great ideas. Student input leads to excitement and engagement (for both my students and me), which is key to meaningful experiences which then leads to long-lasting learning.

One of the greatest lessons that I've learned from the quarantines and distance learning is how important our classroom community is to parents and students for reasons other than academia. I partner with my parents. They know that I also want what is best for their student as a whole person, not just getting them to produce a certain grade or score on a test. Growing confident, caring and resilient people who can think critically is something that we are doing together. My job is to provide meaningful experiences for students to practice the skills that they are learning. These skills are foundational to their success through high school and beyond.

I am fortunate to have students for multiple years, since I teach third through fifth grades. Together we are able to identify students' strengths and weaknesses, passions and challenges. From this, we build a learning community that is unique each year. My students know that I have high expectations for them, and myself. We work (and play) together. They inspire me to bring my best every day, and I am rewarded with their excitement and dedication to learning.

Each year, I set my intention to be sensitive, responsive, flexible and creative in partnering with my students and their parents. This year has really stretched my resiliency, but has also made me a stronger person. When we returned to in-person learning this fall, I was concerned about the major backslide in academic progress. But students were so happy to be back at school! They had an enthusiasm and a hunger for knowledge. I have never seen so much growth from fall to winter term as evidenced by their student progress reports from North West Evaluation Association. NWEA is an association of educators and researchers from Oregon and Washington who created a precise way to measure an individual student's academic level and growth.

In our classroom each student has their own "office cubicle" set up, spaced according to social distancing guidelines. We put tape marks on the floor demarking their walls, entrances and exits. Students created and brought objects from home to decorate their "office." Our first science project was to propagate plants in little pots for each of their desks. Each student has two desks and a milk crate to decorate and display their work, meaningful objects and

inspirational items. I believe that this environment has helped them to be excited to come to "work" every day while enjoying a secure and predictable space all of their own. As things start to go back to "normal" I hope that we remember the lessons learned during the pandemic, specifically of gratitude, self-care, technology and community connections. I hope that we can use what we have learned to create an even better learning environment for our students.

The most rewarding part of my job is building relationships with students and their families that last for years. By the time students leave my classroom we have experienced three years of life together, sometimes more (in the case of families with multiple siblings). A lot can happen in three years. We grow and change as people and a community. We live, laugh and learn together. I love getting letters from students who have moved to new communities but remember our time together and want to keep in touch. It is rewarding to know that somehow our time together has had a positive influence in their lives.

Being selected as Grant County Teacher of the Year is a step toward becoming Oregon Teacher of the Year. I hope to inspire teachers across Oregon to engage with students and communities through innovative teaching methods that capitalize on the uniqueness inherent to each school's geographical and cultural location. I aspire to encourage the development of classroom cultures across the state that foster student engagement, individual growth and civic caring, while representing the excellence that can be found in the community of teachers in rural communities like those in Grant County.

Carrie Sullivan, who teaches third through fifth grades at Dayville School, was named Regional Teacher of the Year.



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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Cyber attack shows danger of ignoring global interconnections

To the Editor:

Last weekend, meatpacking company JBS, which processes almost a quarter of U.S. cattle, was the victim of a ransomware attack. Preparing U.S. ag to defend against cyber attacks is one more burden for ag producers. Unfortunately, costs of not doing so are too high: higher prices, and possible food shortages and tainted food (see June 6, 2021 article, "Cyberattack on food supply followed years of warnings," at Politico.com).

As a high school social studies and electives teacher with classes in both agriculture and cybersecurity, I've seen how these two topics will and now are colliding. Many conserva-

tives highlight personal freedom and the desire to return to simpler times with less government red tape. However, important realities now stare us in the face and require government involvement: climate change (more droughts, early-snowmelt floods and wildfires in Eastern/Southern Oregon), economic trends, worldwide internet and cyber-threats — and pandemics. None respect national, let alone state and county, boundaries.

Since I also teach a national security course, I hope people in Eastern and Southern Oregon will rise to the challenges before us by learning to plan for, adapt to and minimize these threats.

The world is moving — if not forward, at least along. Protecting ourselves and our communities from climate change/extreme weather, economic downturns, pandemics and cyber attacks takes courage;

practice seeing interconnected realities; and humbleness in learning. Luckily, we have our rural Oregon "can-do" attitude to help.

Raz Mason  
The Dalles

### 'It's about protecting one another and ourselves'

To the Editor:

Being vaccinated for COVID-19 isn't about the government. It's about protecting one another and ourselves.

We've done it before: smallpox, DPT, polio. This time it's a pandemic.

I'm proud to be a card-carrying member of the COVID-19 Vaccinated Club. I've done it for you, my family and myself.

Sandy Murray  
Prairie City

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- Oregon Legislative Information** — (For updates on bills, services, capitol or messages for legislators) — 800-332-2313, oregonlegislature.gov.
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