



OREGON HOUSE REPUBLICAN OFFICE

Bend Bulletin Editorial Board on Foster Care Crisis
“These are our kids, and they deserve better.”

[Editorial: Problems with Oregon’s foster programs aren’t a political ruse](#)

Bend Bulletin Editorial Board

It’s enough to make your blood boil, or at least it should be. A Secretary of State’s [audit](#) of Oregon’s foster care system, released in late January, found a bureaucracy in such a state of disrepair that it endangers the very children it is charged with protecting.

These are our kids, and they deserve better.

Instead, Gov. Kate Brown, a Democrat, has been largely silent about the audit and what it found, even as members of her staff have accused Secretary of State Dennis Richardson, a Republican, of using his auditing authority to his own political ends.

Our kids deserve better.

Brown’s staffers should have done some serious fact checking before they accused Richardson of playing politics with the foster-care system audit. Had they done so, they’d have discovered it was former Secretary of State Jeanne Atkins, appointed by Brown, who scheduled the audit before she left office. Atkins now heads the state’s Democratic Party.

Had they dug a bit deeper, as Claire Withycombe of the Portland Tribune did, and checked with the current and former heads of the Secretary of State’s Audits Division, they’d have found that those directly involved with the division don’t believe politics played a role in this or other audits under Richardson. In fact, says Gary Blackmer, who headed the division from 2009 to 2015, the foster care audit actually was “unusually sympathetic to the bureaucracy.”

Meanwhile, the Democratic majority in the Legislature appears unwilling to do much, either. Perhaps that’s because of Brown’s clear lack of interest. Perhaps it is, as Sen. Sara Gelsler, D-Corvallis, told The Oregonian recently, because money is tight and the problem will take years to fix.

Our kids surely deserve better.

They deserve a governor who, upon reading the SOS audit, reacts with the outrage the audit deserves and a Legislature that can agree — with or without the governor’s approval — that our children deserve at least as much attention as a scheme to tax carbon emissions.

Yet Oregon’s most endangered children, those who cannot live safely in their own homes, get neither. That’s an outrage, even if the governor and lawmakers don’t get it.

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