management

able, people inside the agency and in the community were shouting that the emperor had no clothes—but the WESD board and its cohorts didn't want to believe them.

The situation culminated last summer when the board, after directly receiving allegations of wrongdoing, put then Superintendent Maureen Casey on leave and ordered internal investigations. Even then the board and state officials were reluctant to request a state audit, viewing it as an expensive waste of money.

The Editorial Board continued to urge state action, and finally the tide turned. Several Republican legislators, including state Rep. Kim Thatcher of Keizer, demanded the state audit. Senate President Peter Courtney of Salem added his clout. Ultimately, Secretary of State Kate Brown worked with the WESD Board and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Susan Castillo to make the audit happen.

Tenacious auditors

Brown and her tenacious staff deserve profound thanks for heading the public's concerns.

That is a critical lesson from this debacle: the importance of paying attention to complaints from employees and the public; instead of bithly trusting top management.

The audit report underscores the role of public boards and elected officials in holding agencies accountable, which is why it should be required reading throughout the state.

"It's raised the level of scrutiny for people serving on elected boards," Brown said.

That scrutiny is good for the Willamette ESD and good for Oregon.

Tenacity of decisions and activities; improve every level of the organization.

"Unstable"

Haiti case shows how far children's rights have come

This year we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the most widely ratified human-rights treaty in the history of the world. In fact, it has been ratified by every recognized country in the world except the United States and Somalia. (Of course, Somalia has no recognized government, so it could not ratify the treaty even if it wanted to.)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child embodies values about childhood that are now universally accepted. For example, the convention recognizes the child's rights to live with and be cared for by one's parents and to grow up in one's own culture, traditions and community. It also calls upon the international community to assist in reuniting children with their relatives when natural disasters strike, such as the recent earthquake in Haiti.

Twenty years ago, none of these standards existed. Prior to the convention, it was common for child victims of natural disasters to be removed from their communities both through charitable efforts as well as illicit child trafficking. Now extensive efforts are made by the international community to photograph and trace separated family members so that families can be reunited as promptly as possible.

When it is not possible to reunify children with their families, the convention provides that children should be raised in a family environment. Only when this is not possible should alternative care in an institution or orphanage be considered.

Finally, international adoption may be considered as a last resort, but only when all other avenues have been exhausted and the states have determined that it is in the best interests of the child.

The recent arrests of 10 Americans in Haiti who tried to cross the Dominican Republic border illegally with 35 Haitian children highlight the efforts

Haiti has made in recent years to protect its children and comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In addition to developing extensive legal requirements for international adoptions, Haiti promulgated laws that require children to have proper legal documentation before they are allowed to cross the country's borders. Its police and border guards proved well-trained to be alert to signs of child trafficking. Given Haiti's historical issues with child exploitation and trafficking, such protections are especially crucial at a time like this.

Unfortunately, there seem to be those who respect neither international nor national laws. In this case, the 10 Americans have claimed both naïveté and to be on "a mission from God."

Although the church-affiliated group has made many claims about what they are doing and why, subsequent investigations suggest that the group has been less than honest about both. We now know that most of the children were not orphans as the "missionaries" claimed, but poor children from a local village whose parents say they were misled about the group's plan for the children.

Thus, it was not surprising that on Thursday, the Haitian government announced that it was charging the 10 Americans with kidnapping and criminal conspiracy.

Despite the tragic aspects of this incident, their prosecution serves as a reminder of how far the world has come in the past two decades in recognizing children's rights and implementing laws to protect them, especially when they are most vulnerable.

Letters

Don't assume that state employees are wasting money

The recent arrests of 10 Americans in Haiti who tried to cross the Dominican Republic border illegally with 35 Haitian children highlight the efforts

Haiti has made in recent years to protect its children and comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In addition to developing extensive legal requirements for international adoptions, Haiti promulgated laws that require children to have proper legal documentation before they are allowed to cross the country's borders. Its police and border guards proved well-trained to be alert to signs of child trafficking. Given Haiti's historical issues with child exploitation and trafficking, such protections are especially crucial at a time like this.

Unfortunately, there seem to be those who respect neither international nor national laws. In this case, the 10 Americans have claimed both naïveté and to be on "a mission from God."

Although the church-affiliated group has made many claims about what they are doing and why, subsequent investigations suggest that the group has been less than honest about both. We now know that most of the children were not orphans as the "missionaries" claimed, but poor children from a local village whose parents say they were misled about the group's plan for the children.

Thus, it was not surprising that on Thursday, the Haitian government announced that it was charging the 10 Americans with kidnapping and criminal conspiracy.

Despite the tragic aspects of this incident, their prosecution serves as a reminder of how far the world has come in the past two decades in recognizing children's rights and implementing laws to protect them, especially when they are most vulnerable.