

OPINION



Jonah Goldberg

The story of healthcare policy this week, this month and for the last decade (at least) has been a tale of partisan folly. But fear not, this isn't another earnest pundit's lament for the vital center to emerge, phoenix-like, to form a governing coalition of moderates in both parties. That's not my bag.

After all, I have always argued that bipartisanship is overrated.

Bipartisan support often means unthinking support (as the founders could have told you). Partisans may be annoying from time to time, but they also can be relied upon to point out the shortcomings of what the other side is doing.

Honest partisanship isn't the problem, bipartisan dishonesty is.

Both parties have become defined by their lies and their refusal to accept reality. It's a problem bigger than healthcare, but healthcare is probably the best illustration of it.

For seven years Republicans campaigned to repeal Obamacare. We now know that for many of those politicians, that pledge was a sales pitch that expired after the sale — i.e., the election — was final.

But before liberal readers pull a muscle nodding their heads: The Democrats aren't any better. Obamacare itself was lied into passage. "You can keep your plan!" "You can keep your doctor!" "Your premiums won't go up!" These were lies. If those promises were remotely true, Obamacare wouldn't be the mess it is.

But these aren't even the lies I have in mind.

The Republican "repeal and replace" bills debated for the last six months did not in fact repeal Obamacare. They kept most of its regulations intact — particularly the popular ones. The GOP did seek to repeal and reform the Medicaid expansion under Obamacare, but that's not the same thing as repealing Obamacare.

Yet Republicans insisted it was a repeal because they wanted to claim that they fulfilled their repeal pledge. Actually fulfilling the substance of the pledge was a low-order priority.

Donald Trump just wanted a win. He has made it abundantly clear that he would sign anything the Republicans sent him — up to and possibly including the head of Alfredo Garcia if someone had written "Obamacare: Repealed" on the poor chap's forehead. Trump has shown zero preference for any specific policy or approach during these debates. He just wants the bragging rights.

And that is the one thing Democrats are most determined to deny him. The Democrats know that Obamacare has been an albatross for their party. They often acknowledge, through gritted teeth, that the law needs a substantial overhaul.

More important, they also know that the GOP wasn't pushing an actual repeal. But they couldn't tolerate for a moment the idea that the Republicans would get to claim it was repeal. So the one thing both sides could agree upon was that this was a zero-sum war over repealing Obamacare — when it wasn't.

This was all about bogus gasconade and rodomontade for Republicans and insecure rhetorical wagon-circling around Barack Obama's "legacy" for Democrats. If Trump and the GOP agreed to abandon "repeal," as Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer wants, one can only wonder how much replacing of Obamacare Schumer would allow the GOP to get away with.

Likewise, if Democrats could somehow give Republicans the ability to say they repealed Obamacare, many Republican senators — and certainly Trump — would probably be happy to leave the bulk of it intact.

It is this fact that makes the polarized, tribal climate in Washington so frustrating. I like partisan fights when those fights are about something real. The Medicaid fight was at least about something real. But most of this nonsense is a battle of liars trying to protect past lies in the hope of being able to make new lies seem just plausible enough for the liars to keep repeating them.

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Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

This is in response to Craig Rullman's Bunkhouse Chronicle, "Don Jr. goes to Hollywood." (*The Nugget*, July 19, page 10).

Mr. Rullman suggests the reporting by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and CNN, among others is overwrought, breathless, hysterical and generally way over the top. He minimizes this story to a mere kerfuffle oversold by liberal media, similar to the tack taken by the Trump administration. After all, Mr. Rullman says, Mr. Smith does not go to Washington anymore without taking a few meetings with sketchy characters. He concludes that this is just like another Seinfeld episode with Phil Donahue(?) and "teppich-fressers(?)" thrown in for good measure.

Russian hacking and interference in our election and possible collusion by the Trump campaign are very serious matters under investigation. Many would say this is the most important question we must answer now in order to protect the integrity of our election process now and in the future. As Vice

President Joe Biden might say: This is a big ****ing deal!

It is suggested that sometimes it may be best to just shut the Bunkhouse door and take a nice long nap.

Will Lacey



To the Editor:

In response to Daniel Bower, Letters to the Editor, July 12, 2017:

You're absolutely right, Sisters is the worst.

We have the worst winter invasion of jacked up trucks from the Valley, on summer tires, towing a 40-foot snowmobile trailer up Three Creek Road at 60 mph. We have the worst sun-filled summers that burn your pasty Seattle skin while you paddle on one of the many frigid mosquito-infested lakes. Why do you keep coming back?

I don't mind it being the worst, even if it means standing in line behind you at the

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Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Chance T-storms 89/53	Sunny 88/52	Sunny 89/51	Sunny 90/52	Sunny 91/53	Sunny 91/na

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442 E. Main Ave., P.O. Box 698, Sisters, Oregon 97759

Tel: 541-549-9941 | Fax: 541-549-9940 | editor@nuggetnews.com



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