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Health care uncertainty a concern

Marion County Commissioner: We don't want to lose current services

JONATHAN BACH
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Marion County Commissioner Janet Carlson voiced concern March 8 over federal "uncertainty" on health coverage.

Her remarks at the State of the County address came after U.S. House Republicans this week unveiled their proposed replacement of the Affordable Care Act. "I would say there's a lot of uncertainty right now at the federal level partic-

ularly around health-care and what's going to happen with regard to Medicaid," Carlson told the audience at the Broadway Commons in Salem, where commissioners spoke on issues such as economic development, homelessness, and transportation.

Carlson has served as chair of the Board of Directors for Willamette Valley Community Health, a coordinated care organization for Marion and Polk counties. There are more than 90,000 members of the Oregon Health Plan in the two

counties, she said.

"On the one hand, we're looking for improvements in the Affordable Care Act. But we're also wanting to make sure we don't lose the great services that we have for the people that need it so that they can get back in the community and become solid citizens," Carlson said. The Affordable Care Act is also known as Obamacare.

The Marion County Health Department serves people with addictions and mental health issues; developmental and intellectual disabilities; and offers immunizations. In fiscal year 2015-2016, 43,483 people received services from the health department, Interim Director Scott Richards said. Not all were on the Oregon Health Plan.

As far as federal changes to the Affordable Care Act, "it seems from a health department perspective pretty early to know for sure what all the impacts will be," Richards said, later adding, "We still are committed to serving those people that are most vulnerable."

The Oregon Health Authority is looking at the proposed Affordable Care Act replacement to see how it would affect Oregon. The agency has said more than 1.1 million people take advantage of the Oregon Health Plan.

"Oregon currently has over 375,000 Oregonians on Medicaid expansion and there are serious concerns about proposals that would scale back funding and

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Silverton girls fall in state title game



Silverton places second in the OSAA Class 5A state championship on Friday, March 10, at Gill Coliseum in Corvallis. LaSalle defeated the Foxes 42-28.

PHOTOS BY DANIELLE PETERSON/STATESMAN JOURNAL



The valiant Foxes were pleased to make it to the state championship. Read more on Page 1B.

Silverton's Paige Alexander and the Foxes fall to La Salle 42-28 in the OSAA Class 5A state championship on Friday, March 10, at Gill Coliseum in Corvallis.



DOUGLAS C. PIZAC, AP

Cottonwood Canyon, center, branches off in the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument east of Boulder, Utah.

GOP seeks 'paradigm shift' in federal land management

BARTHOLOMEW D SULLIVAN
STATESMAN JOURNAL

WASHINGTON — Four days after Donald Trump took office, Utah Republican Rep. Jason Chaffetz introduced legislation to dispose of 3.3 million acres of federal land in 10 Western states. Nine days later, after public protests and irate phone calls from sportsmen and others, he withdrew the bill.

Last week, Natural Resources Chairman Rob Bishop, another Utah Republican, wrote to colleagues, saying "it's time for a paradigm shift in our nation's approach to federal land management" and called for \$50 million to be set aside to facilitate conveyances of federal land to state, local and tribal governments.

Both proposals illustrate the radical shift in public land policy that has been a goal of Republicans for several years.

The 2016 Republican Party Platform pointed to 640 million acres of land owned or controlled by the federal government. "It is absurd to think that all that acreage must remain under the absentee ownership or management of official Washington," the policy statement reads. "Congress shall immediately pass universal legislation providing for a timely and orderly mechanism requiring the federal government to convey certain federally controlled public lands to states."

Overall public land policy — which includes resource extraction, wildfire policy, efforts to restore the timber industry and record-breaking declarations of national monument acreage by President Barack Obama — has been in flux for some time. But with one-party government in Washington, Republicans think the time is right to make sig-

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Should voting be free in Oregon?

TRACY LOEW
STATESMAN JOURNAL

Do Oregon voters fail to return their ballots because of the price — or inconvenience of obtaining — a postage stamp?

Two Democratic legislators think in a significant number of cases, the answer is 'yes.'

They're backing a bill to provide postage on mail-in ballots, at a cost to taxpayers of about \$650,000 per year.

"We know there are ballots out there that are not getting in," Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, told the Senate Rules Committee on March 6. "We would like to remove the impediment that is there for some people to mailing their ballot that has to do with the postage stamp."

"The purpose of this legislation is to increase participation in our representative democracy," said Sen. Richard Devlin, D-Tualatin. "If this legislation were to lead to a

5 or even 10 percent increase in voter turnout then I believe this expenditure of public dollars will be very well spent."

Oregon is one of three states that conduct elections entirely by mail, eliminating polling centers.

Ballots are mailed to registered voters, and can be returned by mail for the cost of a forever stamp — currently 49 cents. Or they can be taken to county-designated drop-

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