

**GUEST EDITORIAL FROM THE REGISTER-GUARD**

## Doing away with Sudafed prescriptions

Oregon's illicit drug marketplace has changed, and it's therefore time to change how the state regulates allergy medicines.

In 2006, when Oregon passed its toughest-in-the-nation law making Sudafed, Claritin-D and other medicines containing ephedrine available by prescription only, the state was in the middle of a methamphetamine epidemic. Much of that meth was locally produced in clandestine labs set up in homes, trailers, abandoned businesses or other locations.

Meth-makers needed pseudoephedrine in quantity, so limiting the ability to buy it over-the-counter seemed like a reasonable tool that was worth the inconvenience to allergy sufferers seeking relief from their symptoms. Some data show that the number of labs in the state had begun to decline significantly after a 2004 law requiring an ID to purchase pseudoephedrine products, but the 2006 law seems to have sealed the deal.

Today, the meth epidemic might be making a comeback, but not because local meth labs are popping up again. Experts believe laws making it more difficult to buy pseudoephedrine in mass quantity were effective in cutting down on production in the U.S., but Mexican cartels have picked up the slack with more potent, cheaper versions.

Addiction is a deadly serious problem in Oregon, and the state has had some of the highest numbers of meth-related deaths in its history in recent years. Despite this, local production has been all but eliminated.

Rep. Bill Post, R-Keizer, thinks it's time for the law to reflect this reality and make it easier for those with legitimate medical needs to get Sudafed and other allergy medicines.

For the second year in a row, he's sponsoring legislation to end the prescription requirement. He and other supporters make compelling arguments. If the law's intent was to stop local production, it seems to have worked.

The legislation wouldn't end all restrictions on pseudoephedrine, risking a resurgence of local meth labs. Customers would still need to show an ID, and pharmacists would check a national tracking database to ensure individuals don't purchase more than the legal daily or monthly limits at multiple pharmacies. The drugs would remain behind the counter.

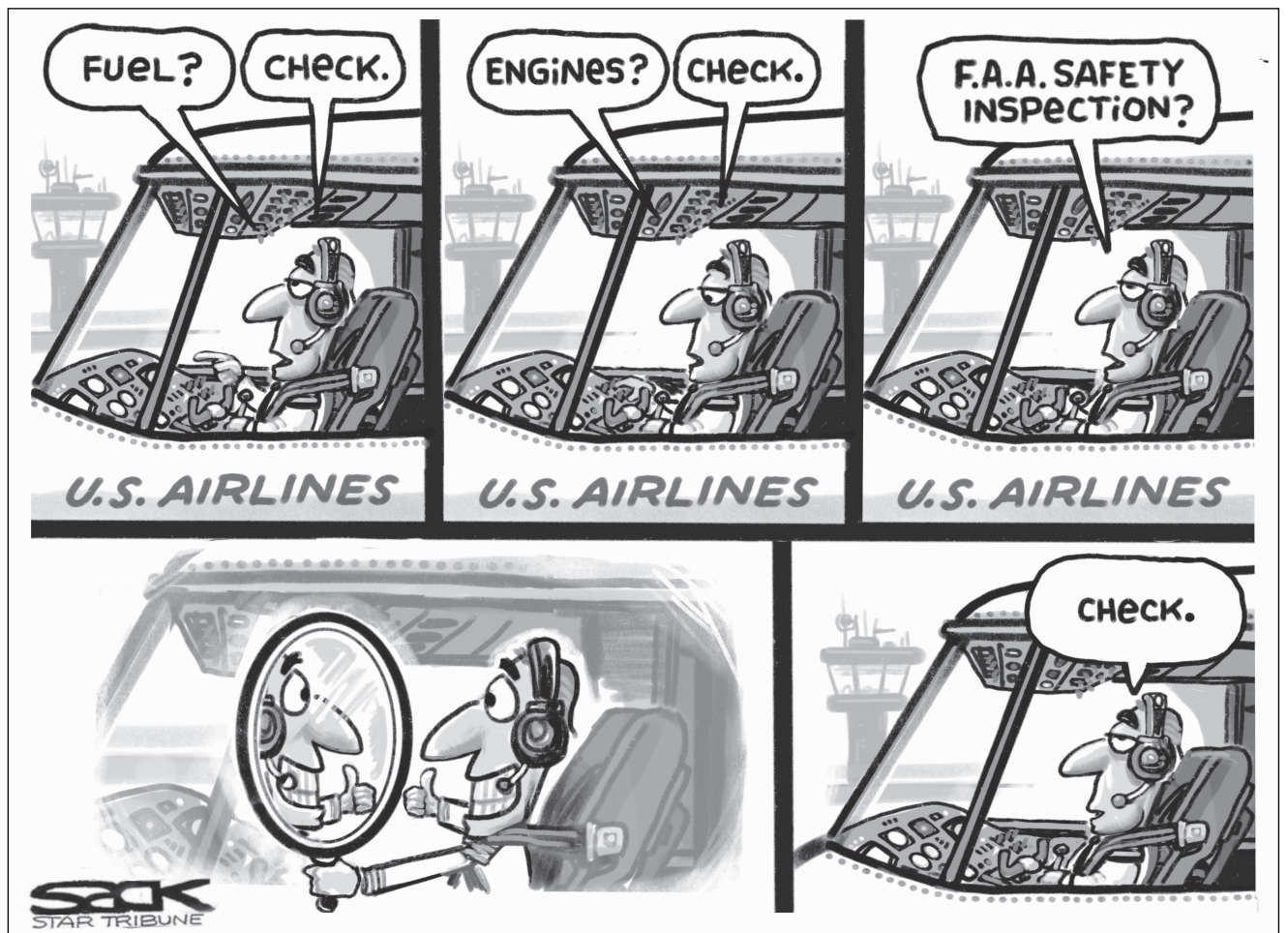
That national database is key because it allows for discovering prescriptions filled at multiple locations, even across state lines, and can help identify fake prescriptions. Access to the database is free to pharmacies and law-enforcement when states opt-in.

The current law inconveniences customers and makes allergy medicine more expensive. If it is no longer serving a reasonable purpose, it only makes sense to try a different approach.

Rob Bovett, legal counsel for the Association of Oregon Counties and author of the current law, is opposed to changing it, with the possible exception of allowing pharmacists to write prescriptions to ease the burden on customers. It seems like that would mostly increase the burden on pharmacists, though.

Mississippi and Oregon are the only states that require patients with allergies to get a prescription. Every other state has found that using a database, requiring an ID and keeping these allergy medicines behind the counter to be just as, if not more, effective.

Lawmakers should pass HB2303 and align policies here with the rest of the country.



## Oregon's Chance to Build for Wildfire

In these long, dark days of winter, wildfire may seem a distant memory. But given the last few years of record-setting wildfire disasters in Oregon and neighboring states, now is no time to forget the risks we face.

Today's wildfires are more disastrous for a variety of reasons—a warming climate, a century of fire suppression and fuel accumulation, and because we are putting more people and homes in harm's way. Across the country, development is fastest in areas with wildfire potential, making future disasters more likely.

Fortunately, a decade of research, post-fire analyses, and laboratory experiments have led to new science about how to avoid such disasters and build wildfire-resilient communities. It starts with where and how we build homes.

A few simple, affordable modifications to a home's roof, walls, windows, deck, and landscaping can be the difference between the home's survival and loss during a wildfire. For example, home survival increases when built with ember-resis-

tant, finer mesh attic vents, noncombustible gutters, and fire-resistant decking. Maintaining a noncombustible landscaping zone immediately around the home can reduce the likelihood of embers igniting the home.

Where homes are spaced closer together, additional strategies become necessary to avoid home-to-home ignition, such as using noncombustible siding and tempered glass windows. Wildfire hazard maps can help land use planners and elected officials determine where to implement such wildfire-resistant building standards.

A study released last month by Headwaters Economics found the cost of constructing a home to such standards was roughly the same as a typical home. Using wildfire-resistant materials can have added benefits such as reduced maintenance and longer lifespans.

This year, Oregon will consider amending its State Building Code to allow local jurisdictions the option of requiring wildfire-resistant construction in high hazard areas. The proposed code, derived from international



**My Voice ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

Kelly Pohl holds a M.S. from Portland State University and is a wildfire researcher with Headwaters Economics. Doug Green is a Fire Inspector and Wildfire Mitigation Manager for the Bend Fire Department and the Safety Manager for the Sisters-Camp Sherman Fire District. My Voice columns reflect the views of the author only. My Voice columns should be 500-700 words. Authors also should include their full name, age, occupation and relevant organizational memberships.



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standards and using the best available science, would allow cities and counties to decide whether and where to implement wildfire building regulations.

Oregon would be wise to allow communities to require wildfire-resistant construction, as Washington and California have already done. To be most effective, mitigation must be mandatory at the community scale in areas of high wildfire hazard. Since implementation takes time, the sooner these code amendments are adopted, the better.

Already, Ashland, Bend, Sisters, and Wasco County are exploring such requirements through expert input

as part of the national Community Planning Assistance for Wildfire program. But unless the state building code is amended, no Oregon community could adopt wildfire-resistant building regulations.

Too often, we believe the unthinkable will not happen to our community, but such willful blindness does us all a disservice. When flammable homes are built in wildfire-prone areas, taxpayers end up shouldering the burden, economies are disrupted, and individuals suffer.

We have the knowledge, technology, and—if added to the State Building Code—the power to avoid wildfire disasters through better planning. Let's get started.

### CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

**City of La Grande:** Mayor Steve Clements, City Manager Robert Strope; P.O. Box 670, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-1309; fax 541-963-3333.

**Union County Commissioners:** Donna Beverage, Matt Scarfo and Paul Anderes; 1106 K Ave., La Grande, OR 97850; 541-963-1001; fax 541-963-1079.

**Wallowa County Commissioners:** John Hillock, Todd Nash and Susan Roberts; 101 S. River St., Room 202,

Enterprise, OR 97828; 541-426-4543, ext. 11; fax 541-426-0582.

**Elgin City Councilors:** Mayor Allan Duffy, 501 N 11th St., 541-437-1016, mayor@cityofelginor.org; Mary West, 260 N 5th Ave., 541-805-0443, councilor3@cityofelginor.org; Kathy Warren, PO Box 697, 541-786-9611, councilor6@cityofelginor.org; Risa Halgarth, PO Box 525, 541-437-9462, councilor2@cityofelginor.org; Rocky Burgess, 800 N 14th St., P.O. Box 854, 541-786-2417,

councilor1@cityofelginor.org; David Reed, 1011 Detroit St., PO Box 368; 541-975-3306, councilor4@cityofelginor.org; Ryan Martin, councilor5@cityofelginor.org

**Enterprise City Councilors:** Mayor Stacey Karvoski, mayorofenterprise@gmail.com; Jenni Word; Dave Elliott; Ashley Sullivan; Micah Agnew; Larry Christman; Chris Pritchard; 541-426-4196; mail to City of Enterprise, 108 N.E. 1st Street, Enterprise, OR 97828

**Imbler City Councilors:** Mayor Mike McLean, Corrine Wilfong, Herman Ortmann, Mark Howell, Rick Viecek, Joan Harding, Jason Berglund; 180 Ruckman Ave.; P.O. Box 40, Imbler OR 97841; 541-534-6095

**Joseph City Councilors:** Mayor Teresa Sajonia; Martin Hamilton; Pearl Strum; Tanya Collier; Michael J Lockhart; Patty Bufford 541-432-3832; P.O. Box 15, Joseph, Oregon 97846; 201 North Main St.; cityofjosephoregon@gmail.com

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Phone: **541-963-3161**  
Toll free (Oregon): 1-800-422-3110  
Fax: 541-963-7804  
Email: news@agrandeobserver.com  
Website: www.lagrandeobserver.com  
Street address: 1406 Fifth St., La Grande

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