

THE COMMON GOOD

COVID-19 and the Trump budget

Between 100,000-240,000 Americans will die from COVID-19 unless there is an immediate nationwide stay home/stay healthy/save lives order. More than 10 million Americans have lost their jobs. As much as 32% of the American labor force is likely to become unemployed, eclipsing 25% unemployment during the Great Depression.

In response, Congress passed a \$2 trillion relief package that meets some, but not all, of our immediate need. Sen. Bernie Sanders and other Democrats are asking for additional legislation. Congress, they contend, must work quickly to pass a new stimulus bill ensuring that every working family in our country is made whole, that ends the anxiety people are experiencing wondering how they're going to pay their rent and utility bills, put food on their tables and access needed



BILL WHITAKER

health care without unaffordable out-of-pocket expense. Republicans appear reluctant to consider additional relief.

As the COVID-19 crisis persists, Congress will need to pass a budget for fiscal year 2021. Budgets represent our values. The way we spend our money shows what we care about. We need a budget that supports the common good.

President Donald Trump's proposed FY2021 budget hurts health care, hurts rural communities and small farmers and ranchers and increases hunger and malnutrition nationwide. Although Trump's budget is unlikely to pass while there is a Democratic majority in the House of Representatives, it's worth close attention in an election year. If Trump is re-elected, Republicans keep control of the Senate and win a majority in the House, Trump's budget will shape our lives.

Trump's budget cuts Centers for Disease Control and Prevention programs for chronic disease prevention and health promotion by \$237 million. It cuts \$500 million from America's Health Block Grant, which would use funds from the Prevention and Public Health Fund for state-based chronic disease programs within CDC. It cuts \$897 million from National Cancer Institute funds. It eliminates health professions training programs. Over 10 years it cuts Medicare by \$845 billion, Medicaid and Affordable Care Act subsidies by \$777 billion. It eliminates Medicaid expansion under the ACA.

Of particular importance to Eastern Oregon, Trump's budget contains many provisions that hurt rural communities, farmers and ranchers. It eliminates Rural Economic Development, Conservation Stewardship and Livestock Forage Disaster funding. It reduces the average premium subsidy for crop insurance from 62% to 48%. It eliminates the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and Community Services Block Grant. It eliminates Preschool Development Grants and School Kitchen Equipment Grants. The budget reduces funding for the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families block grant and eliminates the TANF contingency fund.

Trump also hurts Eastern Oregon rural communities by budget cuts that increase hunger and malnutrition. His budget cuts SNAP (Food Stamps) by about 30%, a \$220 billion reduction over the next 10 years, and eliminates SNAP-Education. It cuts funding for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children by 15% and maintains flat funding for the breast-feeding peer counselor program. It cuts national school lunch and breakfast programs by \$1.7 billion over 10 years and eliminates funding for Farmers Market Nutrition and Food for Progress programs.

The president's budget reduces discretionary nonmilitary spending 5% and increases military spending 9%. If the proposed \$1.3 trillion cuts to nonmilitary programs had to be replaced by religious charity, each religious congregation in the U.S. would have to give an extra \$375,000 per year for the next 10 years. Could your place of worship absorb those costs?

The Trump administration is proud of its proposed cuts to nonmilitary spending. According to a senior administration official expressing concern about the national debt, "This budget will have more reductions in spending than any president in history has ever proposed." Prior to COVID-19 legislation, the deficit has swollen largely because of the Republican tax cuts enacted last year.

If we truly want a "Budget for America's Future," as the president puts it, then we need a budget that ensures families have access to quality, affordable health care, enough food to feed their kids, affordable housing and decent-paying jobs with decent benefits. The president's budget takes us in the opposite direction.

About the Author

Bill Whitaker lives in La Grande. He is professor emeritus of social welfare at Boise State University. He taught community organizing, social policy and planning for 40 years while serving on national social work education boards and state legislative task forces.

Editor's Note

"The Common Good" is the new monthly column from Bill Whitaker of La Grande. We'd like to add other local columnists. If you're interested in providing a regular column, please email editor Phil Wright at pwright@lagrandeobserver.com.

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Your views

Bill Miller will bring new energy and talent to UCSO

Every four years as a voter you have the duty and responsibility to select the person who will serve as county sheriff — "the chief executive officer and conservator of the peace of the county" (ORS 206.010).

When there are more than one running for the position, you must evaluate who you think will best serve the needs of the county for the next term.

The fact that the incumbent has been in office for more than one term does not necessarily mean he is the best choice. As a former Union County District Attorney (1971-1984), I concluded that for me three terms of service was enough and the position required new energy and talent. I believe this is true for other service positions.

New leadership and new vision are valuable. Our current sheriff has been in office for 16 years, and now there are three other candidates, two having been members of the sheriff's department, running against him. This should cause you the voter to question why this is so as you are making your choice on the ballot. It is time for you to examine the qualifications of leadership, variety of experiences, goals, integrity and promise of service to you the electorate for the next four years of each candidate

for Union County Sheriff.

Bill Miller spent five years on the sheriff's command staff as a detective sergeant and has had experience in other areas including corrections, patrol, drug task force, and parole and probation. He is anxious to bring transparency, communication and accountability to the sheriff's office.

Join Ginny and me with your vote for the candidate we feel is the most qualified to be the next sheriff of Union County: Bill Miller.

Dale Mammen
La Grande

Stay with Rasmussen for Union County sheriff

Here come all the "vote for my pal" letters. Happens every time there's an election.

Boyd Rasmussen is the Union County sheriff. He's done that job for a while now. I haven't read about some attorney taking over our county jail on his watch. No one has told me all sorts of "woe is me" tales about the sheriff's office being in jeopardy for this or that. The sheriff's office isn't in litigation for any wrong doing I'm aware of.

Seems to me the sheriff's office is running pretty well, looking from the outside in.

I know if I call Boyd I can talk with him on the phone. I know if he's busy I can make an appointment to see him. I know he and I

hold many similar views from conversations with him and what he's said when I've heard him speak in public.

I don't know why I'd care what someone who doesn't even live in my county has to say about my sheriff. It's inconsequential to me.

I don't know why I'd vote to send someone not qualified to be my sheriff to the police academy for 16 weeks on my tax dollars to become qualified to do the job I'd already be paying for.

I don't know why I'd pay someone to reinvent the wheel: contacts important to the job, develop inroads attained from years of service etc. It's not always what you know. Often it's who you know.

I don't know why I'd consider folks that say one thing and do another. Let's see, a deputy is in charge of union business, that organization votes to support the current sheriff. The deputy leading the union resigns his position and runs against his boss. The association withdraws their support. Re-read my first sentence.

It's not time for a change while things are going fine. It's time for change when they aren't.

I'll vote for Boyd Rasmussen again. He does what he gets paid for and more. You do what you like. That's the great thing about our republic: we get to choose.

Michael Gove
La Grande

CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

President Donald Trump: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1414; fax 202-456-2461; to send comments, go to www.whitehouse.gov/contact.

State Rep. Greg Smith (57th District): Salem office: 900 Court St. NE., H-482, Salem, OR, 97301; 503-986-1457. Heppner office: P.O. Box 219, Heppner, OR 97836; 541-676-5154; Website: www.oregonlegislature.gov/smithg. Email: rep.gregsmith@oregonlegislature.gov.

Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

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City of Cove: Mayor Del Little, (503)-508-6727, 504 Alder St., P.O. Box 8, Cove, OR 97824; City Recorder Donna Lewis, (541) 568-4566.

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