

OUR VIEW

# Finding the right answers

Gov. Kate Brown has called the Legislature into special session on Dec. 13 to try to give renters additional protection against evictions.

We don't know if the solutions she proposes are the right ones, but there is little question quick action is needed.

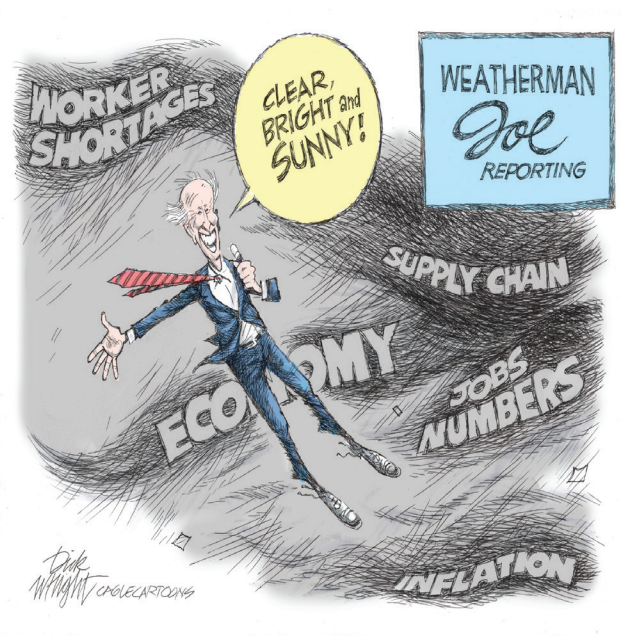
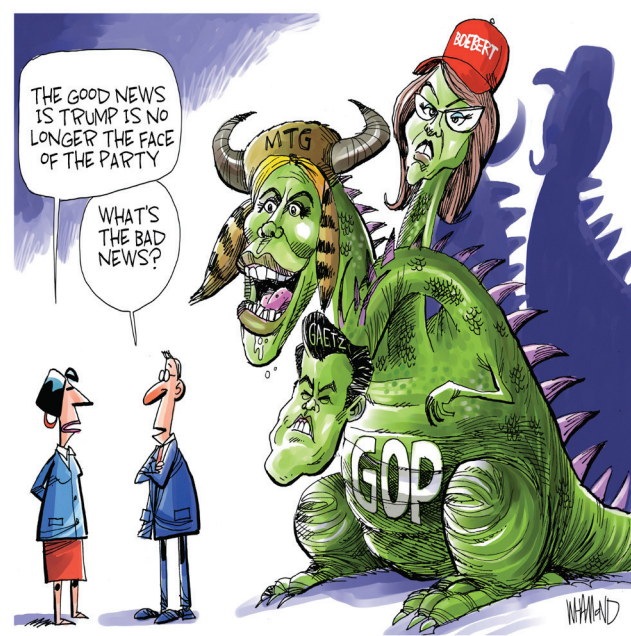
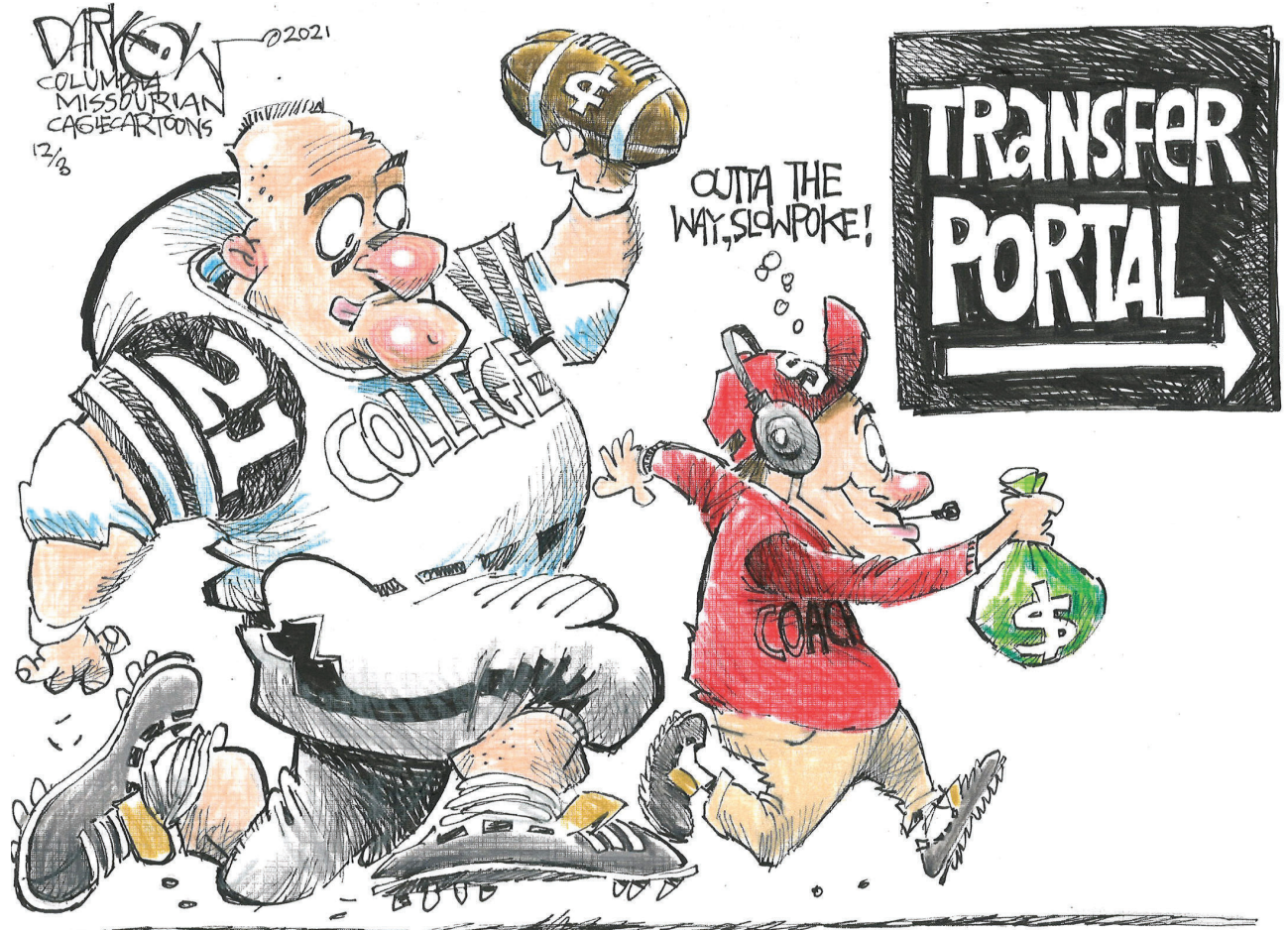
There has been money available to help renters, but the state has had trouble moving fast enough to get it to landlords. The state has also calculated that all the money it has to distribute will be gone, leaving some people to face eviction just as the weather turns colder.

"Oregon Housing and Community Services received \$289 million in federal rental assistance funds to help Oregon renters impacted by COVID-19," the governor's office said in a statement. "As of last week, OHCS and their local partners had paid out close to \$150 million in federal emergency rental assistance to over 22,000 households."

Gov. Brown proposes to

- Give safe harbor protections for people who have applied for rental assistance
- Ensure landlords are paid for what they are owed
- Provide up to \$90 million in rental assistance
- Provide \$100 million to "long-term, locally-delivered eviction prevention services"

What's not clear is how many Oregonians face eviction without state assistance and how much of that is due to the shudder given to the economy by COVID-19.



# State's digital vaccine card is not really a passport

A passport is something that can be required for entry. Oregon's new digital vaccine card won't be a passport. It's going to be an optional way people can show their vaccination status.

People already have options. They can carry around their vaccination card — or what's probably smarter — carry around a photocopy or a photo of it on their phone. We haven't had anyone demand to see ours, but it could happen.

The digital vaccine card, being developed by the Oregon Health Authority, would be one more optional way of carrying around that information.

Oregon's card would be similar to the one in California and Washington state, according to a report from the Oregon Capital Chronicle. You would upload your name, date of birth, cellphone or email and a four-digit number. Your vaccination status would be checked. Once confirmed, you would get a link to the digital vaccination card to show on your phone. It's already being tested in Oregon.

You call it a vaccine passport if you want. It's similar to one. A vaccine passport is good short-hand. But the idea in Oregon is that it will be an optional way of carrying around vaccination status.

# Removing the mental health security clearance



STEVEN BERLEY  
OTHER VIEWS

It was surprising recently to see The Observer put mental health on the front page. Let's keep the dialogue going.

What qualifies me to continue this conversation? As a CPA I have a top-security clearance. Most people can't get two steps into my office without disclosing in confidence their personal issues. All income levels are affected, trust me.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, conspiracy theories galore and inflation squeezing everyone, mental health has clearly risen to the top. When in the presence of a professional, you expect me, and my peers, to be mentally above the fray. One of my staff, who lives in LA, calls me Mr. Perfect. She does my books and she asked me recently what it is like to make all of that money. My response, "My 2021 tax bill is six figures" and "so I can afford to live life on my own terms."

Which means I have the luxury to share my mental health without retribution.

A little background of my situation. I have doctor friends in Denver because I coached Little League baseball for six doctors' boys. Two of the dads and I became close. One day in 2011 Dr. D, with his own wing at a Denver hospital, said I think you are ADD. He said I am giving you three months of Adderall

(amphetamine) and you must find a specialist. The next doctor said my testosterone was low too. My wife contested that notion, but I was like, hey OK, give me testosterone shots. Adderall continued, and he threw in some Xanax and Ambien to boot.

Fast forward four years to a day in May 2016. Six miles into a trail-head near Enterprise, at around 3:30 a.m., I was discovered by the Wallowa County Search and Rescue team, unconscious, with a body temperature of 91 degrees. At dawn, I was Life Flighted to Enterprise.

What happened?  
I made a calculated but failed attempt at suicide.

A week later I visited Dr. Bump at Grande Ronde Hospital. He referred me to Mary Goldstein. In thirty minutes, she changed my life.

She first suggested I immediately stop those medications because they had the opposite effect than intended. I stopped the Adderall, Xanax and the Ambien, but I did ask Dr. Bump for the testosterone. He showed me the test result — I didn't have a testosterone issue. My wife was right.

Mary said I was not ADD. She said read these books and articles. The research is new, but you have a rare issue called Bipolar-2. Though from a family of successfully educated professionals and my grandfather a doctor, my ancestry history started coming together. Today, I take an anti-seizure medication. It works great, but not profitable for Big Pharma.

There is no time here to discuss

Bipolar-2, nor is it the goal here. I would not trade my life for yours. I am successful at the 99th percentile because of the upside Bipolar-2 provides.

May 2016 is surreal to me now. My story is to remove my security clearance to show that mental health is just human nature, not based on an educational level, or income level or whether one is a drug addict.

When the world discovers more about the brain and can make improved diagnoses, and the drug companies stop their gorilla marketing techniques, we will discover that all of us can have a better life with a balanced approach to both our physical and mental health.

Unfortunately, we are decades from great mental health solutions. Doctors are poorly, if even, trained in mental health. In La Grande, we are short many qualified medical professionals. At GRH how many physical doctors are there? Many. How many mental health doctors are there? I think zero? You can see that Mary works 12-plus hours per day — i.e., her SUV sits out on the street from 7 a.m. to at least 7, 8 and 9 p.m.

If anyone wants to get woke, get woke on mental health. Denial is more painful than discovery.

I am really grateful for where I am today.

Thank you to my wife, Kelley, and to Mary Goldstein for their unwavering support.

Steven Berley is a CPA and lives in La Grande.

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