

OUR VIEW

New metric may be key to state police's staffing

Providing the right number of law enforcement can be as important and difficult a decision as providing the right kind of law enforcement.

How do you get the number of police right? Is there some sort of objective standard?

A number that comes up repeatedly is patrol officers per capita. For instance, in 2020, the Oregon State Police Officers' Association proposed a bill that would have required the state police to have at least 15 patrol troopers per 100,000 Oregonians. At the time there were just eight troopers per 100,000 residents. Boosting it to 15 would have put Oregon about in the middle of the pack nationally and helped ensure better statewide coverage.

The bill died in committee.

The Oregon State Police no longer has 24-hour coverage across Oregon. Wildfires, protests and the pandemic have stretched its coverage even further. The OSP doesn't just patrol state highways. It investigates crimes, assists local police, regulates gaming and enforces fire codes, fish and game regulations and more. Oregon's population also has grown while the number of troopers has shrunk. When Oregon had 2.6 million people in 1980, it had 665 troopers. Now Oregon's population is more than 4 million and the number of authorized troopers is 459.

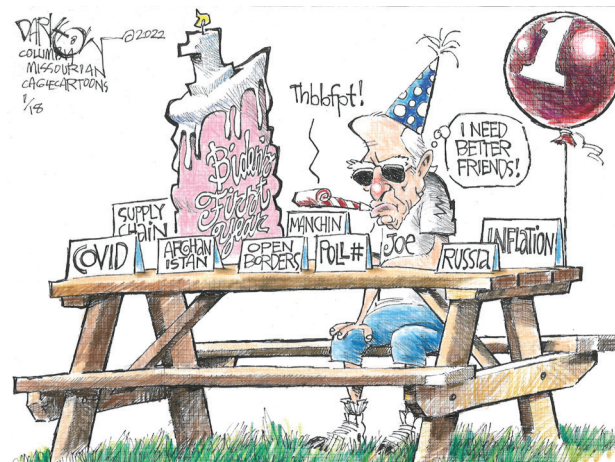
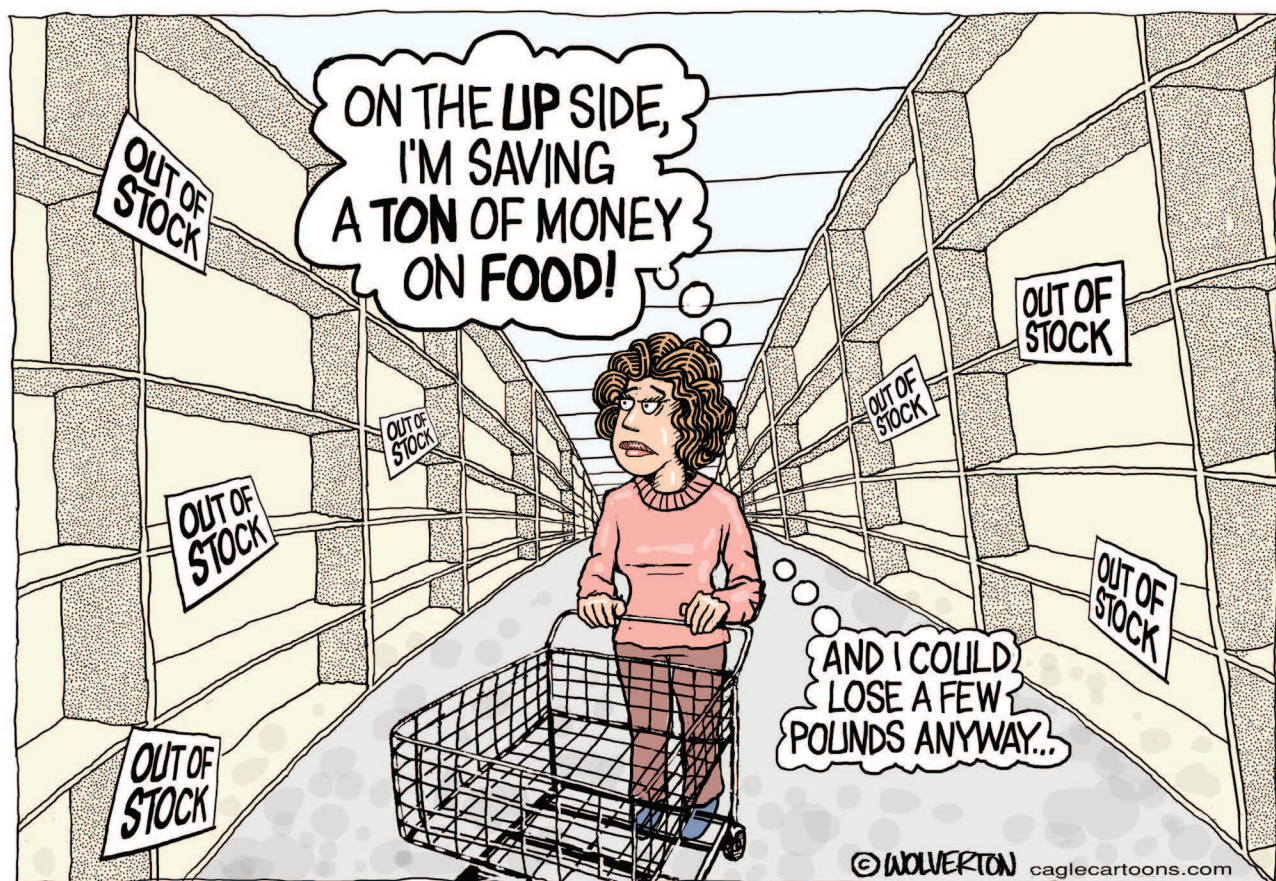
Oregon State Police have traditionally used that kind of troopers-per-capita analysis to determine its staffing needs. A new Oregon Secretary of State audit recommends the OSP adopt a new more comprehensive analysis to determine its staffing levels than per capita.

OSP does look at issues beyond per capita levels of troopers. It is concerned about workload. It is concerned about officer safety. But when it presents arguments to the Legislature about staffing levels, it emphasizes per capita and comparisons to other states.

The audit recommends, in part, an approach based on workload analysis.

OSP generally agreed with that recommendation. It did point out that the weakness of a time-based workload analysis can be that it can assume calls for service are equal. OSP may try to supplement workload analysis with more qualitative approaches, such as patrol area size, proactive enforcement time and more.

The Oregon State Police's budget and staff challenges have long been a concern of the OSP and legislators. If a workload analysis gets the state closer to better answers, we are all for it.



Kristof may serve Oregon in the long run

RICH WANDSCHNEIDER
OTHER VIEWS

Nick Kristof for chief of staff ... or something Oregon at some future time.

Kristof is a longtime New York Times reporter and columnist and, with his wife and writing partner, Sheryl WuDunn, the author of several books, including "Tightrope: Americans Reaching for Hope." The book was published in 2020, right before the pandemic and right before their daughter, Caroline, graduated "virtually" from Harvard.

Nick — that was his name growing up in Yamhill on a 100-acre farm that specialized in pie cherries — and the family retreated to the farm. They had spent summers there as the children grew and Nicholas and Sheryl covered the democracy movement in China and political and economic upheaval across Asia. The husband-and-wife team won a Pulitzer Prize for their reporting on Tiananmen Square in 1989.

Sheryl moved from journalism to business, and Nicholas from reporter to columnist after 9/11. He won a Pulitzer for bringing the world's attention to genocide in Darfur in 2006. Together again in 2009, they published "Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide." He's used his column to bring attention to human trafficking, poverty and injustice in this country and across the world, exposing corruption and misdeeds in government and business along the way. He's been called the "conscience of American journalism."

Back in Yamhill, where his mother still lives on the family farm that was always summer home for the children, Caroline is the CEO of

Kristof Farms, now specializing in cider apples and wine grapes. (The first batch of cider was a hit; wine grapes are not yet mature.) And Nick has announced his candidacy for governor. The secretary of state says that he does not meet the three-year continuous residency requirement; Kristof is appealing.

What to make of it? I doubt there is anyone in the entire country who knows more about the impacts of poverty, racism, sexism, pharmaceutical greed, the building and hollowing of the middle class — and the positive impacts that timely and well-run educational and rehabilitation programs can have on individuals and communities — than Nick Kristof.

In "Tightrope," Nick and Sheryl trace the lives of classmates he grew up with in Yamhill. They follow the school dropouts, loss of high-paying union jobs, health problems and drug addictions of once-promising Yamhill students as they slide into illness, family breakups and poverty that a previous, post-World War II generation had seemingly left behind. They recite interviews, attend funerals and give the muddy details of old friends' collapses and deaths by drugs, illness and suicide.

They go to other places where rehab, early education and vocational training programs are changing lives. They look at Portugal, which long ago moved the drug problem from law enforcement to health departments. They advocate for universal health care and major prison reform and criticize an economy and tax structure gone wrong enough so that just three Americans — Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates and Warren Buffet — "now possess as much wealth as the entire bottom half of the population."

The intimate stories of old friends and classmates, and the worldwide search for answers to the challenges that stumped and crippled

those once upwardly mobile families, represent an incredible amount of research and a vast reservoir of human connections and knowledge gained over decades of reporting and engaging in the world. He might make a great governor.

I doubt that he can get there — and especially not now, with the controversy about his residential status. Add to that the knee-jerk rejection of anything New York Times, and the fact that his immediate huge war chest came mostly from out of state, and he will be fighting a steep uphill battle.

But what if Tina Kotek, or whoever gets the Democratic nomination — or gets elected, for that matter — signs Kristof on as chief of staff? The political gossips couldn't slam him with "carpetbagger," couldn't trip him up on knowledge of what's going on in Lake County, and couldn't complain about out-of-state financing.

And if we need someone or new ideas to run health care, prisons, human services or universities, Nick could turn to his rolodex. If we need a grant to move along a new program for recovering opioid users, he'll know who to call, and if he needs to find an Oregonian who has climbed out of one abyss or another, he has them among old friends in Yamhill.

I'm reminded that Chris Dudley, a Portland Trail Blazer who'd done good community work and enjoyed popularity with fans and a wider public, ran for Oregon governor in 2010, losing to John Kitzhaber by only 22,000 votes. Dudley's was a one-shot affair, and he's since moved to California.

I suggest Nick — and Caroline — dig their heels in and be ready to serve Oregon for the long run.

Rich Wandschneider is the director of the Josephy Library of Western History and Culture.

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