

OUR VIEW

We can fix food insecurity

More people across the region and locally are utilizing food banks and that means those facilities need as much help as they can get from area residents.

The average number of people who accessed fresh food services jumped by 28% in April and May, and there was a 23% increase in fresh food box demand across Baker, Grant, Union and Wallowa counties.

While statistics tell only part of the story, the tale they do reveal is troubling. The apparent causes of the rise in services are inflation and the sudden evaporation of federal COVID-19 relief funds.

Finding the cause, though, is only the first step. The next move is to discover how to alleviate the need. Regional food banks receive regular shipments from the Oregon Food Bank along with local donations. The state food bank deliveries are supplemented by fresh produce donations from local stores and farmers.

Citizens and residents who can, though, need to do more to help. That means finding ways to donate more food on a regular basis to area food banks.

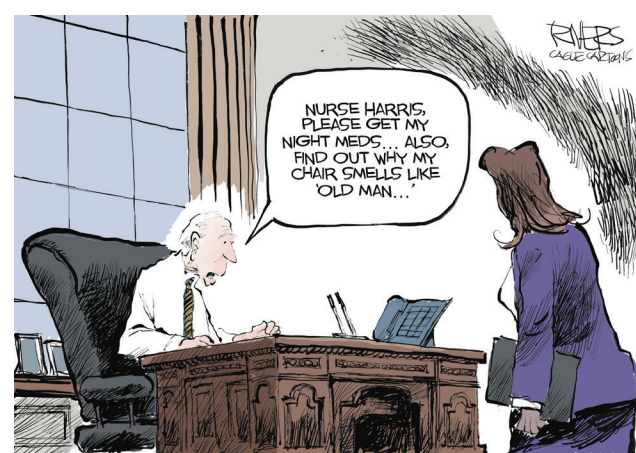
We've lamented food insecurity on a regular basis on this page — in a nation as rich as ours we believe no one should go hungry. We also believe that local problems are best solved at the local level. We have a great capacity locally to fix even the most complex problems, to overcome even the most difficult problems.

Our region is rich in people who care about one another and we should be able to address the rise in the need for food in a proactive way.

That means all of us can do our part. A simple donation, if possible, to a local food bank can make a difference to a family or individual who is food insecure.

Volunteering to assist a local food bank or some other organization that is working to alleviate food insecurity is another good way to help make a difference.

We can all work together to support our local and regional food banks and to lend a helping hand.



YOUR VIEWS

Medical debt is leading cause of personal bankruptcy in the USA

Thank you for opening a conversation about universal health care for all Oregonians (“Being up-front about cost of universal health care,” June 23, The Observer).

As you stated, the benefits are many: freedom from medical debt and bankruptcy, lower overall costs, inclusion of vision, hearing, and dental care, freedom to choose any provider, freedom from insurance hassles, and freedom from health care access worries. The question of how we pay for all of this is a good and important question.

First, let’s look at what the costs are now. Recent data (2020) showed that health care cost per capita in the USA was \$12,000; the average cost for comparable countries was \$5,800. We are already spending more money than any other country, and it’s not because we are getting twice as much health care. Most of us know someone who cannot afford needed health care or prescription medications, or are uninsured due to high insurance premiums. Most Americans (93%) do not believe they are getting good value for all this spending, and an estimated 44% of American adults struggle to pay for health care (West Health/Gallup poll, March 31, 2022).

Medical debt is the leading

cause of personal bankruptcy in the USA, while health insurance corporations are making billions in profits, with an increasing share of those profits coming from our tax dollars.

This fragmented, broken system is unsustainable and big change is needed. The Joint Task Force on Universal Health Care has been working on developing the Health Care for All Oregon Plan since 2019. This group continues to listen to public input to develop a plan that will be affordable while providing health care to all Oregonians.

The proposed tax structures are progressive, ensuring much greater equity in health care costs. Increases in income tax are very unlikely to even come close to the high costs that families are now paying.

Universal health care will provide many freedoms, and all freedoms have costs. I believe Oregonians will agree and take a leadership role once again. Join us at Health Care for All Oregon, www.hcao.org.

Cheryl Campbell Imbler

Prove citizenship to vote in this country

Voting is central to a healthy democracy. I believe voting is not only a right, but the duty of every citizen. Common sense tells me we must require all citizens to show proof of citizenship before they

are allowed to cast their ballot. Furthermore, they must show proof that they live where they are voting. Common sense also tells me this must not be an onerous or restrictive process. Voter and election fraud are already serious criminal offenses. Making it onerous for citizens to provide the necessary proof required for voting must also be prosecuted as serious offenses.

We can get next-day delivery of almost anything we want to buy. We can put men on the moon. Surely we can make a simple, quick and efficient way for any citizen to provide the proof necessary for voting. This is the challenge, but we can solve it. This is where our focus needs to be. Avoiding the problem is not the solution.

Some would argue that if people pay taxes then they should be allowed to vote. I disagree. People who live in this country already get the services (police, fire, roads, schools, etc.) that they paid for with their taxes. Citizenship and voting are separate issues.

Citizenship is about defining the country that we belong to, not simply living in that country. That’s why we let citizens living abroad vote, because they belong to this country. That’s the difference. You must belong to vote. Let’s face it, unions would not want nonunion workers to vote in their union elections. It’s the same thing. You must be a citizen to vote in this country.

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