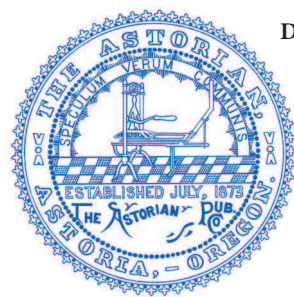


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OUR VIEW

Should sadism be allowed in military recruit training?

Hazing is always with us. We read about incidents involving preteens and teens on social media. These have led to suicides. High school football team hazing has made the news. A few years ago, hazing on a professional football team was made public.

One year ago, a U.S. Marine Corps recruit jumped to his death following what has been called hazing by a drill instructor. The case of recruit Raheel Siddiqui was striking for two reasons. He was a Muslim during a time when our military faces exceptional challenges in the world of Islam. And the drill instructor's actions, described in news reports, were more startling than the legendary 1956 Parris Island incident in which a drill instructor marched his platoon into a creek at night, leading to six recruit deaths.

The New York Times Magazine of July 9 carried the most comprehensive report of the Siddiqui incident. In a litany of taunting a Muslim recruit about his religion, a drill instructor ordered the recruit to enter a large clothes dryer, closed the door and pushed the start button. That is only one incident.

Former Marines will recognize some of the "drills" recruits in Janet Reitman's article were put through. But they will be startled and repulsed by others. Reitman notes that even another drill instructor was sickened by the Muslim recruit's hazing he witnessed.

Reitman does not use the word, but she describes situations in which rigorous training became what many of us would call sadism.

The intractability of the Parris Island drill instructor culture that reliably emerges every few years was illustrated by the experience of a Marine Corps commandant — Charles Krulak — who tried to overhaul that boot camp. Krulak told Reitman that his transformational process had a tangible effect for a few years. "Problem was," said Krulak, "after I left we had a changing world. I think in all these years of war, we lost a bit of our focus. There are people who think war entitles them to behave any way they want."

The military services are bureaucracies. Thus their pockets of incompetence or corruption seldom are made accountable. When U.S. Rep. Debbie Dingell sought answers about the death of Siddiqui, who was her constituent, congressional colleagues warned Dingell not to confront the incident.

What is missing from this discussion is recognition of the financial stakes of the game. Marine Corps recruit training is expensive. Each recruit is an asset in which the Marine Corps invests. Professional football came to that recognition when it figuratively asked: Why are we allowing hazing to impair our million-dollar assets?

'Lemons-to-lemonade' on youth correctional facility

Clatsop County commissioners and Sheriff Tom Bergin are taking a welcome "lemons-to-lemonade" approach to news that the North Coast Youth Correctional Facility in Warrenton will close by Oct. 1.

The Legislature agreed with Gov. Kate Brown's budget recommendation to close the 50-bed facility when it adopted the state's budget for the next two years. The Oregon Youth Authority is coordinating with the facility's 40 staff members to search for other work options.

Meanwhile, after the news in December that the governor was recommending the facility's closure, the county sought other options for its potential use. In May, the county hired a private firm to study the possibility of relocating the county's overcrowded jail in Astoria to the youth facility site.

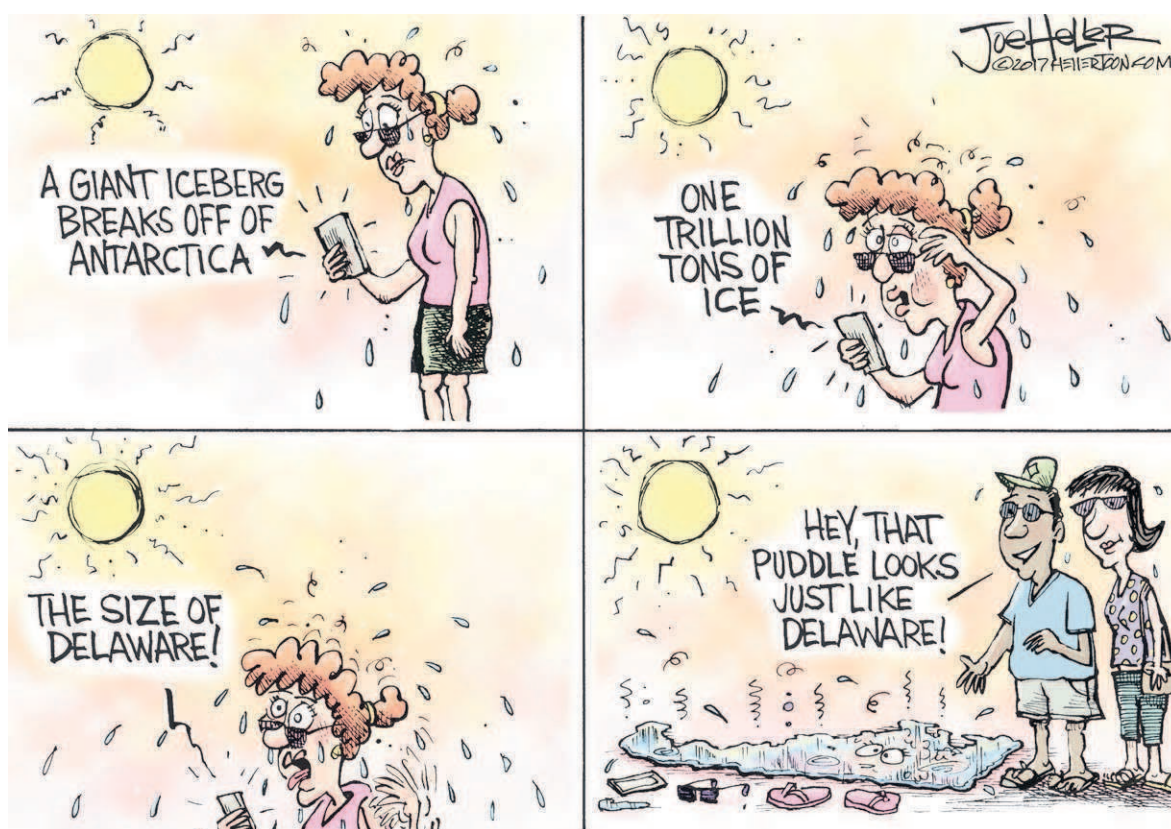
If it's deemed feasible, the move would more than double the jail's inmate capacity. The county jail can currently hold 60 inmates, and the study thus far indicates the youth facility could be expanded to handle 135.

However, it hasn't been determined whether the project would be affordable. A remaining part of the study will address the costs of expansion, security upgrades and the price of deferred maintenance issues. Authorities say those costs may be significant.

But the project thus far is promising. It could solve two immediate problems of what to do with the facility after it closes, and how to expand the county's needed jail space.

Officials say the study should be wrapped up later this summer, although Bergin predicts any conversion wouldn't be a quick process and could take a year or two to complete.

Reflecting on the potential project, Bergin put it in the right perspective. "We've got a long way to go and a lot of work to do, but we're hopeful," he said.



Republicans leap into the awful known

By PAUL KRUGMAN

New York Times News Service

Sometime in the next few days the Congressional Budget Office will release its analysis of the latest version of the Republican health care plan. U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell is doing all he can to prevent a full assessment, for example by trying to keep the CBO from scoring the Cruz provision, which would let insurers discriminate against people with pre-existing conditions. Nonetheless, everyone expects a grim prognosis.

As a result, White House aides are already attacking CBO's credibility, announcing in advance that whatever it says will be "fake news." So why should we believe the budget office, not the Trump administration? Let me count the ways.

First, this White House already has a record of constant, blatant lying about health care that is, as far as I can tell, without precedent in modern history. Just a few days ago, for example, Vice President Mike Pence made the completely false assertion that Ohio's expansion of Medicaid led to a cutback in aid for the disabled — a lie that the state's government had already refuted. On Sunday, Tom Price, the secretary of Health and Human Services, claimed that the Senate bill would cover more people than current law — another blatant lie. (You can't cut hundreds of billions from Medicaid and insurance subsidies and expect coverage to grow!)

The point is that on this issue (and others, of course), the Trump administration and its allies have negative credibility: If they say something, the default assumption should be that they're lying.

Second, the CBO is hardly alone in its negative assessments of Republican health care plans. In fact, just about every group with knowledge of the issue has reached similar conclusions. In a joint letter, the two major insurance industry trade groups blasted the Cruz provision as "simply unworkable." The American Academy of Actuaries says basically the same thing. AARP has condemned the bill, as has the American Medical Association.

Third, contrary to White House disinformation, the CBO actually did a pretty good job of predicting the effects of the Affordable Care Act, especially when you bear in mind that the act was a leap into the unknown: we had very little experience of how an ACA-type system



AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta

Protesters against the Republican health care bill gathered inside the office of U.S. Sen. Rob Portman, R-Ohio, on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., Monday.

would work.

True, the CBO overestimated the number of people who would buy insurance on the exchanges the act created; but that was partly because it overestimated the number of employers who would drop coverage and send their workers to those exchanges. Overall gains in coverage have been reasonably well in line with what the CBO projected — especially in states that expanded Medicaid and did their best to make the law work.

Finally — and this seems to me to be the most compelling argument of all — predicting the effects of destroying the ACA is much easier than predicting the consequences when it was enacted, because what the Senate bill would do, pretty much, is return us to the bad old days. Or to put it another way, what McConnell and U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz are selling is a giant leap into the known, taking us back to a system whose flaws are all too familiar from recent experience.

After all, before Obamacare, most states had more or less unregulated insurance markets, similar to those the Senate bill would create. Many of these states also had skimpy, underfunded Medicaid programs, which would be the effect of the bill's brutal Medicaid cuts.

So while careful, nonpartisan modeling, the kind the CBO excels in, is important, you don't need a detailed analysis to know what American health care would look like if this bill passes. Basically, it

would look like pre-ACA Texas, where 26 percent of the nonelderly population was uninsured.

And lack of insurance wouldn't be the only problem: Many people would have "junk insurance" — insurance with deductibles so large or coverage limitations so extensive as to be effectively useless when needed.

Now, some people might be satisfied with that outcome. Hardcore libertarians, for example, don't believe making health care available to those who need it is a legitimate role of government; letting some citizens go bankrupt and/or die if they get sick is the price of freedom as they define it.

But Republicans have never made that case. Instead, at every stage of this political fight they have claimed to be doing exactly the opposite of what they're actually doing: covering more people, making health care cheaper, protecting Americans with pre-existing conditions. We're not talking about run-of-the-mill spin here; we're talking about black is white, up is down, dishonesty so raw it's practically surreal. This isn't just an assault on health care, it's an assault on truth itself.

Will this vileness prevail? Your guess is as good as mine about whether Mitch McConnell will hold on to the 50 senators he needs. But the mere possibility that this much cruelty, wrapped in this much fraudulence, might pass is a horrifying indictment of his party.

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