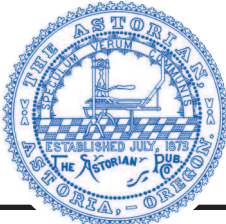


OPINION



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OUR VIEW

Help and hope for Oregon’s suicide crisis

That 825 Oregonians died in a single year by suicide is a sobering assessment of our collective ability to help those who feel trapped in their own despair.

That it’s such a hidden statistic, however, is an embarrassing reflection of our collective ignorance. Hundreds more people died by suicide in Oregon in 2017 than by traffic crashes, firearms or drug overdose. The suicide rate in Oregon is well above the national average, as it has been for the past three decades. Yet this undeniable public health issue has lacked the public attention and sustained outcry that it desperately needs.

Some of that stems from the stigma that persists around mental illness and suicide, shutting off conversation or even acknowledgment that a suicide has occurred. Some may stem from the fear of encouraging “copycat” behavior. Regardless of the motivation, however, our families, schools, communities and media organizations have too often chosen the easy way out by simply keeping silent. Meanwhile, the suicide rate in Oregon and the United States has continued to climb.

Clearly, silence hasn’t worked. This week, news organizations around the state are collaborating to bring attention to the problem of suicide, report on populations at highest risk and share resources on how to prevent it. While the “Breaking the Silence” project won’t necessarily provide answers, it aims to start a statewide effort to confront it. Using responsible reporting practices that examine, not sensationalize, suicide,



Washington state also faces a crisis. Red mock tombstones for people who took their lives by suicide there in 2017 are displayed at the Capitol in Olympia.

AP Photo/Ted S. Warren

OREGON’S SUICIDE RATE IS 14TH-HIGHEST IN THE COUNTRY AND SUICIDE IS THE SECOND-LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH FOR THOSE AGES 10 TO 34, ACCORDING TO THE OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY.

these stories can provide the common understanding, motivation, tools and questions that can help the community mobilize against this public health threat.

The data show just how widespread a problem this is. Oregon’s suicide rate is 14th-highest in the country and suicide is the second-leading cause of death for those ages 10 to 34, according to the Oregon Health Authority. One fifth of those who kill themselves are veterans. More than half the deaths are caused by firearms.

While those statistics may seem daunting, they can also provide possible avenues where leaders can

make a difference. Such data, in the aggregate, can help build support for increased funding for veterans’ health services or provide tangible prevention options, such as the 2017 law that allows family members and police officers to petition a court to take away firearms from someone at risk for suicide or causing harm to others.

We also need to recognize that Oregon’s youth are struggling. Nearly 9% of eighth-graders self-reported having tried to kill themselves one or more times in the previous year and nearly double that percentage considered it, according to Oregon Health

HELP IS AVAILABLE

If you or someone you care about is having a mental health crisis, call the Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare crisis line at 503-325-5724. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Authority data. That children just entering their teen years would even think of suicide as an option should be its own open-and-shut case for more counseling, support and training in schools. And health officials can lead by providing guidance for families, schools, health departments, physicians and nonprofits on how to talk about suicide both as a general public health issue and on an individual basis.

This is not an insurmountable problem. Resources already exist and show that crisis counseling lines and other outreach efforts make a difference. Even friends and family members can take steps to help a loved one who is struggling by asking a series of questions about whether they have wished they were dead, thought about killing themselves or made any plans toward killing themselves. But it requires the willingness to have those uncomfortable conversations in the first place.

The effects of suicide reach far beyond the individual. The injury is borne by families, friends, communities and the public at large. It’s long past time to start treating it that way.

This editorial first appeared in The Oregonian and is being published in newspapers across the state this week.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We’re not Kochbots

State Rep. Tiffany Mitchell discounts the impact the added costs cap-and-trade would have on our vulnerable community members (“North Coast needs clean energy jobs,” The Daily Astorian, April 4). She doesn’t even address the 16 cents per gallon gas increase and increased household costs.

For the past 15 years as the Wauna mill’s United Way campaign coordinator and as a Clatsop County United Way Board volunteer, I’ve been on the front lines of helping our community members that need a hand up. I know the added costs that cap and trade creates would have a detrimental impact on the community members that United Way serves.

In addition, Mitchell appears to think that Wauna mill employees are Kochbots, and that we can’t form our own opinion about cap-and-trade. There’s this thing called the internet, and we’re pretty good at using it. In fact, she may want to use it, since she states to Wauna employees that there are 10 states under a cap and invest program “where these laws” are supposedly working.

How is that relevant? There is only one state, California, where pulp mills are under a cap and trade program, and those two pulp mills shut down after it was enacted. Wauna would be the only tissue pulp mill under a cap and trade system.

At the Wauna mill we’ve pledged more than \$3.5 million in the past 25 years to United Way, plus we’ve donated thousands of cases of sustainably made toilet paper. United Steelworkers Local 1097 takes pride in our United Way efforts, and asks that Mitchell doesn’t put more in need of United Way’s support, and votes no on HB 2020.

JIM ZILE
Hammond

Wauna mill is green

State Rep. Tiffany Mitchell addresses Wauna mill employees as if Georgia-Pacific makes our decisions for us (“North Coast needs clean energy jobs,” The Daily Astorian, April 4). I can form my own opinion about cap and trade, and how it will impact my mill and community.

I’ve lived in Westport for 30 years, and

know it would have a devastating impact with the added gas and household costs. I doubt Mitchell has been to Westport, except driving through it, and now she’s an expert on how it will impact my rural community?

She states that Georgia-Pacific is not communicating with us. What she can’t seem to get is this isn’t a Georgia-Pacific or a Koch issue — they have lots of manufacturing options. This is a Wauna mill issue; we would be the only tissue pulp mill operating under a cap and trade program in the U.S., in a business where pennies per case matters.

Mitchell also points to the hypothetical green jobs that will be created. I already have a green job. In fact, my family has more than 230 years of paper-making and United Steelworkers Local 1097 service at Wauna, and we know the mill is green, and cares about the environment and community.

Wauna uses state-of-the-art controls, the latest technology and has smart and committed team members who are always working to improve the mill. High school students regularly tour Wauna so they can learn about the high-tech jobs available in their backyard.

I want them to have the chance to work here, instead of having to move away for a job. Mitchell’s support of cap and trade could end that opportunity.

MARIE GORLEY
Westport

No on HB 2020

State Rep. Tiffany Mitchell’s guest column about Clean Energy Jobs makes it sound like Georgia-Pacific can just pay more to operate, and everything will be fine (“North Coast needs clean energy jobs,” The Daily Astorian, April 4).

When the Wauna mill uses hydro power and biomass, why should it pay more when it is a high-tech, green mill? We need someone who will fight for our jobs, not someone who will tell us to pay more and everything will be OK.

I have lived in this community for 60 years, and have 12 years of service with the Wauna mill, and know firsthand pennies on the case matter. I have seen our production go up and down because of those pennies. We can’t afford another expensive regulation that does nothing for



the environment, and sends our jobs out of state.

Plus, Mitchell seems to think that United Steelworkers Local 1097 members don’t have a grasp on this issue. Steelworkers are more versed on the impacts of this bill than Georgia-Pacific is. Georgia-Pacific has lots of manufacturing options. The Wauna mill just has one.

House Bill 2020 is a revenue bill disguised as an environmental bill. It will have a negative impact on the environment, a negative impact on our local community and a negative impact on the state.

Keep these green jobs in Oregon so our local community benefits.

RICK HOAGLAND
Astoria

Vote Stevens for Port of Astoria commissioner

Robert “Steve” Stevens is running for the Port of Astoria Commission, Position 4. He was appointed in August 2017 to fill a vacancy in this position. Since that time, he quickly proved to be an exceptional commissioner.

Steve has years of executive experience leading large, diverse Coast Guard crews, managing large budgets and directing massive maritime operations with international forces. He knows how to debate and discuss complex issues with people holding opposing views, and then take that next difficult step to reach a consensus that’s best for the largest number of Clatsop

County residents.

Steve leads by example, and it’s an excellent example to follow. He is a courteous team builder, which I feel is something the Port sorely needs. But he will fight for issues that are core to running a successful Port: seeking partnerships with private companies to expand financial support for Port projects and development, developing and implementing a strategic plan that includes funding for infrastructure repair, and inspiring the staff by exhibiting optimism and a positive attitude.

Steve wants to continue the work of making our Port more viable and financially stable. He’s optimistic about the Port’s future and will work toward returning it to function as a strong engine for our local economy.

Please give him your vote when your special election ballot arrives in early May.

DOUG KAUP
Astoria

Leave wolves alone?

I saw “Eastern Oregon landowners seek to address elk damage” (The Daily Astorian, April 3), and immediately thought of wolves returning to rural Oregon, likely because there is food — elk.

If humans leave the wolves alone for a while, the two species’ populations would reach equilibrium and neither species would be problematic. Just saying.

R.D. SMITH
Gearhart