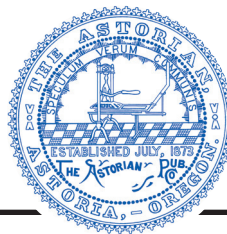


OPINION



the Astorian

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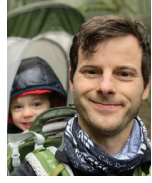
CARL EARL
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GUEST COLUMN

Bill could prevent violence in emergency rooms

Among the many ripple effects of the pandemic, in the last two years health care workers have reported a disturbingly prolific increase in assaults while they are providing care.

According to surveys by the American College of Emergency Physicians and the Emergency Nurses Association, almost half of emergency physicians and 70% of emergency nurses reported being physically assaulted on the job. This phenomenon is not simply something that is showing up in esoteric statistical data, but it is playing out every day in Oregon's hospitals.



ALEX SKOG

Several weeks ago, I was toward the end of one of a string of 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. emergency department shifts that had prevented me from seeing my two young children for four days straight. A COVID test on an older patient I was taking care of came back positive. The patient had a low oxygen level necessitating admission to the hospital.

As I started to discuss the unfortunate result with the patient and family, the patient's son stood up from his chair and walked up to me screaming that he wouldn't let me admit his father to the hospital so that I could put his father on a ventilator and kill him. I explained that my only goal was to do everything possible to make his father get better and that a ventilator was only a last resort. He pushed his jacket back to reveal a gun holster strapped to his hip and said, "If anything happens to my father, I will kill you and your family. It will be World War III."

Fortunately, I was able to get out of the room and call security and subsequently police. Police officers escorted the patient's son out to his car in the parking lot where he undoubtedly left the firearm that he carried in the holster he was wearing. I was left in the emergency depart-



Oregon Health & Science University Hospital

The emergency department at Oregon Health & Science University Hospital.

HB 4142'S GREATEST IMPACT WILL BE ITS EFFECT ON THE NUMEROUS PATIENTS I SEE DAILY WHO HAVE RED FLAGS ON THEIR CHART FOR PREVIOUS HISTORY OF ASSAULTING HEALTH CARE WORKERS.

ment unarmed and virtually defenseless. Acts like this don't just effect the health care provider personally but send shockwaves that reverberate long after the incident's immediate aftermath.

For the remainder of my shift, I caught myself regularly looking at the security camera video screen, hoping not to see the ED doors sliding open to reveal this person returning. I listened for any commotion in the waiting room, instead of focusing on a nurse asking me to confirm the correct medication for another patient.

While trying to see the remaining patients who had overwhelmed us during the latest COVID surge, I found my mind regularly drifting to my two sons whom I hadn't seen in four days. This person had my name and, therefore, would be able to find my address where my children were sleeping.

Unfortunately, this type of experience is far from unique and numerous Oregon hospital workers have stories where threats have progressed to actual assault. An emergency department technician was

tackled, causing ligaments in his knee to tear, requiring surgery. A pregnant nurse was kicked in the abdomen and went into premature labor. A provider was strangled with the stethoscope that hung around her neck.

The effect of these assaults goes far beyond the immediate physical and emotional trauma they cause by fueling the never-before-seen exodus of health care workers and leaving the most vulnerable Oregonians sicker and further marginalized with substandard care.

Oregon had an opportunity to make a major stride toward addressing this by passing House Bill 4142. In doing so, Oregon would join 34 other states with similar laws, which make it a felony to assault a hospital employee while specifically shielding vulnerable Oregonians in mental health crises from being charged. Currently, it is only a misdemeanor to assault a hospital employee. Victims of assault have been told by police that it is not worth the paperwork to charge the assailant. It is past time for this to change.

HB 4142's greatest impact will be its effect on the numerous patients I see daily who have red flags on their chart for previous history of assaulting health care workers. Currently, these repeat offenders know that there are virtually no legal repercussions from past assaults and, therefore, are completely uninhibited and emboldened to do it again. Having actual consequences will change this calculation.

This bill passed the state House 53 to 7 and died in the Senate during the last week of the short session. We urge legislators to not wait until 2023 to address the problem of violence in hospitals and the trauma of health care worker assault, but to take decisive action during the interim to develop solutions.

Dr. Alex Skog is an emergency physician and president-elect of the Oregon Chapter of the American College of Emergency Physicians.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Somewhat annoying

I find it interesting, and somewhat annoying, that the government of the U.S. will send American soldiers to fight, and possibly die, in countries with unstable puppet dictators that only want to steal their nation's wealth and retire to owning a Holiday Inn in Southern California, but that same government will not even supply weapons or economic aid (in the form of sanctioning the aggressors) to a strong and able people who will fight for their freedom.

Ukraine and its people are fighting tooth and nail to preserve a democratic government and way of life, yet the powers that be sit on their hands, verbalizing platitudes about freedom for all. It seems that this cause is far more worthy than past conflicts where we have fought, and died, to no avail.

This is just my opinion; I could be wrong.

DAVID GRAVES
Astoria

Beware

Gearhart voters beware! This is what city government doesn't want you to know: Measure 4-213, if passed, will add an additional \$1,213 per assessed \$1,000 of your home's assessed market value.

They leave out the following: Gearhart has two outstanding bonds for their water treatment plant, one being retired in March 2025, the other in September 2031.

Measure 4-213, if passed, will be added to these two outstanding bonds, making the rate you pay on your assessed market value \$2.28 in year one per assessed \$1,000 until March 2025, at which time the assessed rate will be \$2.19. The rate will then drop to \$1.56 until September 2031, when the second water bond is retired.

Using the 2021-2022 assessed market value on a \$450,000 home, an owner would have an additional property tax burden of \$545.85 for the fire and police station, with an annual total of \$1,028 when including the two water bonds.

When the first water bond reaches maturity in 2025, the second water bond and the fire/police bond would remain, making your burden \$702 per year combined, or \$1.56 per assessed \$1,000.

Only after the second water bond is retired will the fire/police bond of \$1,213 per assessed \$1,000 remain. Measure 4-213 is scheduled to go for 20 years.

Remember, this is only if your assessed market value doesn't change. If the assessed market value goes up, your tax burden will also increase.

We need a new fire station, but at what



LETTERS WELCOME

Letters should be exclusive to The Astorian. Letters should be fewer than 250 words and must include the writer's name, address and phone number. You will be contacted to confirm authorship. All letters are subject to editing for space, grammar and factual accuracy. Only two letters per writer are allowed each month. Letters written in response

expense to taxpayers? Let's be realistic about what we can actually afford! Vote "no."

JANE GABLE
Gearhart

Showing up

Most of us don't give much thought to how quickly a good day can turn into a bad day. If our house catches on fire, or someone in our family has a medical emergency, we rely on our first responders to help us on one of the worst days of our lives.

When the call comes, Gearhart volunteer firefighters drop whatever they are

doing, show up quickly and professionally help us in our time of need. Firefighters miss birthday parties, dance recitals, soccer games and family dinners to help us. Firefighters volunteer to serve, and train every week so that they can help us.

Our volunteer firefighters are members of our Gearhart community—they are our friends and neighbors. They deserve our thanks and respect. And they deserve a fire station that is appropriate for their needs. How can we be satisfied with the small, inadequate, 64-year-old badly aging fire station that is currently used for the Gearhart fire department?

There are no decontamination areas or showers to allow firefighters to remove the toxins and soot from fighting fires. There

isn't adequate space for training. The building is literally crumbling.

It's time we show up for Gearhart firefighters as they have been showing up for us. We have the opportunity to come together and vote "yes" on Measure 4-213 for a new fire/police station in Gearhart.

BEBE MICHEL
Gearhart

Local outlet

Whether there's a log export facility or not, the trees still fall and still sail, because foreign buyers pay the highest prices. Without a local outlet, the big losers are the Port of Astoria, the county and the industry. Longshoreman lose, but are a very small component.

When approximately 82% of all Oregon forest land is dedicated exclusively for domestic use, it's hard to blame exports for their decline.

If the Port, city and county want to proceed with a tourist-centric economy, the Port will remain richer and underperform, and the city's housing crisis will only get worse.

Last time I looked, there wasn't anyone connected to the forest industries living on the streets.

CHRIS CONNAWAY
Astoria