Opinion

FROM THE PUBLISHER:
Get Ready to Fight for Healthcare Justice

The inauguration of a new president should be a celebration of American democracy.

An inauguration tells us that no matter what our party or politics, we can be thankful to live in a country where power is transferred peacefully and the will of the people decides who our leaders will be.

This inauguration, however, brings more fear than hope.

The disenfranchisement of thousands of largely poor and minority citizens in states

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has promised us "something great."

But the Republicans are refusing to say what a replacement would look like, possibly because they do not have a real alternative plan. And if Obamacare is repealed with-

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that ultimately handed their votes to President-elect Donald Trump is just one of many shadows that hang over his election victory.

What will this new president do?

At the top of President Trump's agenda is the repeal of "Obamacare," the Affordable Healthcare Act.

In destroying this law, he has willing accomplices in the Republicans who now control Congress, and have fought tooth and nail against the idea that the richest country in the world can ensure all its citizens have affordable healthcare.

Repeal and replace, they say. And President-elect Trump

out a new plan, 18-20 million Americans will lose their healthcare.

That puts American lives at risk. And it's just the begin-

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ning.

Republican leaders have also pledged to remove the expansion of Medicaid and insurance subsidies, which will send the number of uninsured Americans soaring to

27 million, and then to 32 million by 2026. That's according to the Congressional Budget Office.

It gets worse. In a vote last week Senate Republicans made it clear they will not save the healthcare act's most important measures.

Under Obamacare, you could not be refused coverage for a so-called "pre-existing condition."

Senate Republicans used their majority to vote against saving that provision. They also voted against saving guaranteed coverage for children and for contraceptives.

The Affordable Care Act is not perfect. Many of us hoped for a single payer system, as is the case in most advanced countries. But we will settle for any fair plan that ensures every American can get healthcare when they need it.

Under the Affordable Healthcare Act, members of

Congress and their families could sign up with the Health exchanges like everyone else, with a federal subsidy.

Sen Jeff Merkley, for example, signed up for the Oregon Health Plan and refused to

take his federal subsidy.

But Sen. Ted Cruz who is at the forefront of the repeal effort, did not need to. He gets his healthcare through his wife's employer — Goldman Sachs.

So it's not enough to say, 'We'll be happy to take whatever Congress gives itself." Because our millionaire and billionaire leaders have all kinds of money to take care of their own health needs.

Nevertheless, the outcry against the repeal is growing, as people across the country realize how much damage it will cause. Lawmakers already are hearing healthcare appeals that would break the heart of any feeling person.

As we move into this uncharted territory, Oregon lawmakers nationally and with state leadership from Gov. Kate Brown are at the forefront of the fight to keep healthcare for all Americans. They can't do it without our support.

2017 is not a year to slink away and lick our wounds. It is time to make our voices heard. This year, more than ever, we need to rally, march, speak out and build bridges with red state allies who can hold our political leaders to account. Wake up Americans. It's time to take the fight to Washington.

Why Some People Will Always Believe 'Fake News'

I have been thinking about the controversy surrounding so-called fake news, much of which has been discussed in connection with the November 2016 elections. It is important to understand that "fake news" is a form of propaganda called "black propaganda." Black propaganda refers to information that is manufactured to appear as if it is coming from one source when it is, in reality, coming from somewhere else.

In the early 1970s, during the height of the Black Panther Party, a children's coloring book surfaced that was inspired by the Black Panther Party. It was targeted at children and was available in offices of the Black Panther Party. I remember looking at it once and noticing that one of the "stories" in it had children shooting police. I thought that was a bit intense, but it was only years later that I discovered that the coloring book had not been created by the Panthers at all. It was a creature of the COINTELPRO

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operation of the FBI, which utilized such techniques in order to discredit and destroy the Panthers. This was an example of "black propaganda."

In 2016, it became clear

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that there have been Internet sites that have circulated an immense amount of false information. These are not from official news agencies. A dramatic example of this was the false allegation that the Clinton campaign had a pedophile ring in Washington, D.C.

Someone who believed this story went so far as to show up with a rifle to "investigate" the allegation.

Fake news is not new. What we should have learned over the years is that the best defense against so-called fake news is to question what you read. The fact that something appears on the Internet, even from what appear to be reliable sources, does not mean that it is true or accurate. Further, even very sincere people can fall prey to a hoax, as I am sure most of us will admit.

I was doing a training recently and the matter of accurate information came up. The basic question facing the class was how can one know what is true? That is not a new question but the answer

remains the same. In the face of any information you must identify and validate the source; one should check to see whether there is independent corroboration; and then determine whether you believe that it is consistent with other information that you know to be accurate.

In all cases, there will be debates around how to interpret any information or data. But interpretation is completely different from agreeing on the facts themselves. The suggestion, for example, that there were masses of Muslims in New Jersey cheering the 9/11 terrorist attacks was backed up by NO facts. Nevertheless, it was spread around the Internet, because of the person who claimed to have seen it. Fake news, indeed.

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