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KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

JENNINE PERKINSON
Advertising Director

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

Michael Jordan — no, not *that* Michael Jordan — abruptly announced his resignation as the state's de facto chief operating officer Thursday.

Jordan, who the Associated Press charitably described as "closely linked to former Gov. John Kitzhaber," made an ill-advised decision to ask the Oregon State Police to investigate the leak of Kitzhaber's emails, which the then-governor asked Jordan's agency to destroy. *Willamette Week* is in possession of the leaked emails and plenty of other Oregon media have asked for the information via public records requests.

The timing of Jordan's announcement was also ill-advised. It came just hours before Brown was inaugurated and gave a speech that trumpeted a new era of transparency. Yet that same day, Jordan was causing headlines of his own making, trying to ferret out who gave information — concerning state business and stored on state servers — to the press. It made Brown look hypocritical.

But now, with Jordan on his way out, it looks like Brown's desire for increased transparency really is authentic. One way to increase that feeling would be by stopping the whistleblower witch hunt and getting back to governing. **We tip our hat to the governor's initial steps in that direction.**

A kick in the pants to that dreaded spring forward into Daylight Savings Time.

Sure, we all like the longer evenings and additional sunshine that comes along with the time-hack, but what we don't like is an already too-fast weekend disappearing even faster. One fewer hour of sleeping or lazy Sunday morning time with paper and coffee — poof! — up in smoke.

If we had our druthers, spring forward would take place at 4 p.m. on Monday, so all the sudden — Bam! — it's quitting time. Maybe that could happen every week. And then a weekly fall back, so every weekend is extended by an hour!

A person can dream, can't they?

Well, not this weekend, when sleep will be at a premium.



Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

OTHER VIEWS

Rural Oregon shouldn't suffer from ill-thought federal rules

The (Bend) Bulletin

We regret to report that HUD is using ACS to establish LMISD to determine CDBG funding.

We regret to report that because it's a tangle of federal government alphabet soup. And there's serious worry it's hurting Oregonians in small towns.

Soup can, in fact, be bad for you.

Small towns have the same kinds of needs that big cities do for infrastructure improvements. But because of the way the government decides which communities

get federal funding, small towns can get denied funding even though they qualify.

A few weeks ago, we wrote about how this problem was hurting Haines, population 400, in Eastern Oregon. It needs a \$5 million water system improvement. But the problem is far worse than just the problem for Haines.

Here's a rundown of the alphabet soup:

The HUD is the Department of Housing and Urban Development. It has a program to help pay for infrastructure improvements. The federal government prioritizes which projects get funded by looking at the economic status of

communities.

The ACS is the American Community Survey. The survey — done by the Census Bureau every year — looks at a small sample of the population. Small sample sizes in small towns can create survey results that don't accurately reflect the community.

The LMISD is the Low and Moderate Income Survey Data derived from the ACS. That data is used to determine eligibility.

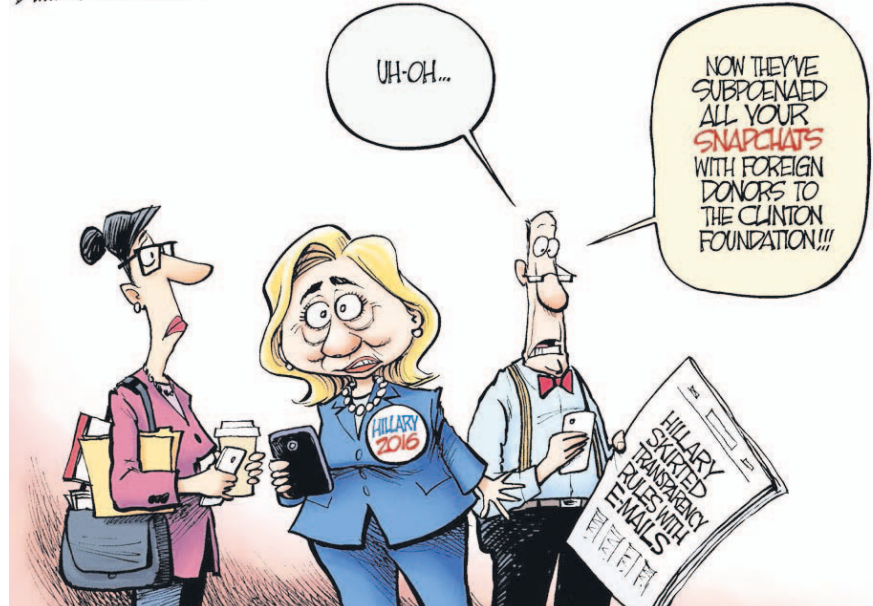
The CDBG is Community Development Block Grants. Those are the grants that small towns in Oregon can qualify for.

Actually, eight towns in the Eastern Oregon counties of Baker, Grant, Morrow, Umatilla, Union and Wallowa lost CDBG eligibility with this method of using the ACS. The Oregon Infrastructure Finance Authority says use of ACS in communities of fewer than 10,000 is problematic. Oregon's Congressional delegation recently wrote a letter to HUD Secretary Julian Castro requesting that it investigate the adequacy of its calculations.

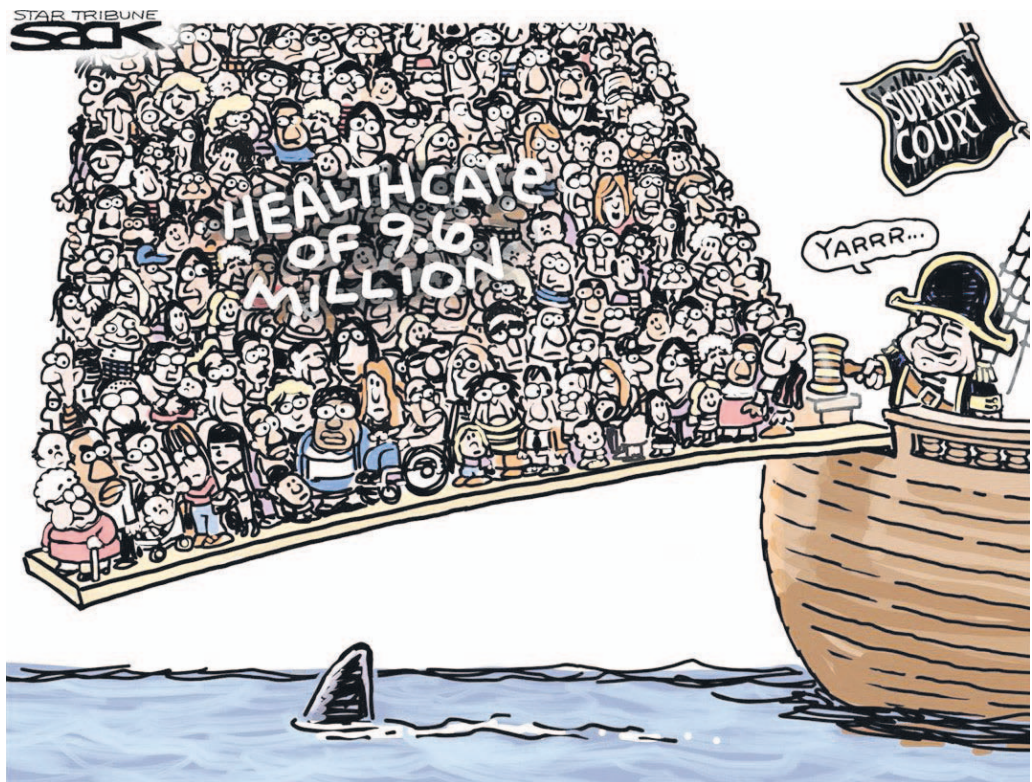
Small towns should not be denied funding because the federal government can't count. The federal government should pay to ensure its count is correct.

Small towns should not be denied funding because the federal government can't count.

BYRON YORK FOR THE OREGONIAN



OTHER VIEWS



GOP scrambles to keep Obamacare subsidies in case of Supreme Court victory

What happens if Republicans win the Supreme Court case against Obamacare? They might end up like the dog that caught the car.

This week the court will hear oral arguments in *King v. Burwell*, the case challenging the payment of Obamacare subsidies through the federal exchanges. If the justices bar the payment of subsidies through those exchanges, it would be both a victory for the health law's critics and a problem for Republicans running Congress.

Which is why a Senate GOP working group has been meeting for months to figure out what to do should the challenge to Obamacare succeed.

It's a difficult problem on several fronts. First, even in a victory scenario, nobody knows just what the court will do. Would subsidies stop immediately? After some period of time? Republican lawmakers don't know any more than anyone else about what path the justices will choose.

More importantly, nobody knows what will follow. Recently Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell told Republicans the administration has no "Plan B" should Obamacare lose in court. "We know of no administrative actions that could, and therefore we have no plans that would, undo the massive damage to our health care system that would be caused by an adverse decision," Burwell told the GOP.

So Republicans are working on their own plan. "We're committed to helping the people who have been hurt by the health care law," said Republican Sen. John Barrasso, leader of the working group. "We're not going to help the law, but we're going to help the people, so they are not left in the lurch."

What that means is Republicans are going to find a way to continue paying subsidies to the estimated 7.5 million Americans who receive taxpayer-funded help to pay their insurance premiums through the federal Obamacare exchange.

The prospect of seeing those people lose their subsidies — even though some have received them for a short period of time, and even though Obamacare has imposed burdensome costs on many other Americans — is just too much for Republican lawmakers to risk.

"We're worried about ads saying cancer patients are being thrown out of treatment, and Obama will be saying all Congress has to do is fix a typo," said one senior GOP aide involved in the work. In recent private polling for the conservative group Independent Women's Voice, a huge majority of respondents said it would be important to "do something to restore

the subsidies" in the case of a court decision striking them down.

Hill Republicans fear such a scenario would create huge pressure on Republican governors, who originally declined to create Obamacare exchanges in their states, to change course and set up state exchanges. The result could ultimately be an Obamacare that is even more firmly rooted and difficult to repeal than it is now — all because of a Republican "victory" in court.

To avoid all that, GOP lawmakers have decided to keep the money flowing. Maybe the

payments won't be called subsidies, but they will be subsidies. The essence of Obamacare — government subsidizing the purchase of health insurance premiums — will remain intact.

For those conservatives who don't like the idea of Obamacare as a new entitlement, who worry that it is furthering a sense of dependency on government — well, that is going to continue, no matter what happens in *King v. Burwell*.

The GOP working group still hasn't decided on a specific plan. One group member, Sen. Ben Sasse, has proposed a system based on the old "Cobra" law that allowed people to continue their health insurance after leaving a job. Under Sasse's proposal, the subsidies would continue for 18 months, until Congress passes a new health law to supersede Obamacare.

Is that even remotely a possibility? If the Supreme Court rules in June, Sasse's 18-month plan would tide things over until the beginning of 2017, when there might be a new Republican president taking office. Or there might be a new Democratic president, which would stop GOP plans right there. And even if there is a Republican in the White House, remember that after six years of talking, the GOP has yet to unite behind any alternative to Obamacare. There's nothing to assure they'll ever do it.

Back in August 2013, when some Republicans were trying to defund Obamacare, even if it meant shutting down the government, one of the shutdown leaders, Sen. Ted Cruz, argued that, "The Obama administration's plan is very simple — to get as many Americans as possible addicted to the subsidies, addicted to the sugar. They know the simple fact that in modern times, no major entitlement has ever gone into effect and then been undone."

Now, as they work to keep the money flowing even in the event of victory in *King v. Burwell*, Republicans are proving that Cruz's remarks were right on target.

Byron York is chief political correspondent for The Washington Examiner.

GOP lawmakers have decided to keep the money flowing. Maybe they won't be called subsidies, but they will be subsidies.



BYRON YORK
Comment

YOUR VIEWS

Radical minimum wage hike would devastate small business

I read with interest the *East Oregonian's* editorial about substantially increasing minimum wages and other benefits that would become mandated. Although I frequently disagree with their position, I had to agree that the effects of this legislation could and would be devastating to small business, which by the way supplies the vast majority of jobs in Oregon.

First, the facts: The states with the highest minimum wage are: Washington, D.C \$9.50; Washington \$9.47; Oregon \$9.25; Connecticut and Vermont (tie) \$9.15; California and Rhode Island (tie) \$9.00.

Their unemployment rates rank as follows: Washington, D.C. 51st (worst in nation); Washington state 37th; Oregon 43rd; Connecticut 40th; Vermont 11th; Rhode Island 46th; California 49th. This trend is very

significant and points to the fact that higher minimum wage rates do indeed lead to lower employment due to small business cutting jobs or going out of business. Couple this with the other pending legislation that also mandates paid sick time and mandatory flex time scheduling and employment will take a big hit. It makes you think that Salem wants more unemployment!

Check for yourself, states with the lowest unemployment rates are at or just slightly above the federal minimum wage rate. We passed a constitutional amendment to increase minimum wage based upon inflation, but it seems that is not enough anymore. Please contact not only our local representatives, but all state representatives and let them know we cannot stand any more unfunded mandates from either the state of Oregon or the federal government.

Neal Simpson
Pendleton

LETTERS POLICY

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