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OUR VIEW

Don't distort Oregon's assisted suicide law

Misinformation industry turns law into something it's not

Oregon's self-image is about an iconoclastic, pioneering spirit. Oregon enacted a bottle bill in 1971. Nine states have imitated it. Oregon voters agreed to death with dignity legislation — physician-assisted suicide — in 1994. Two states — Washington state and Vermont — have followed Oregon's lead.

Every time another state, such as Massachusetts, puts this proposal on the ballot, eyes turn once again to Oregon. Not surprisingly, there is a misinformation industry that aims to turn Oregon's law into something it's not.

Last week's contribution to relitigating Oregon's law was Dr. William L. Toffler's article on the opinion page of *The Wall Street Journal*. Toffler is an Oregon physician and professor of family medicine at Oregon Health and Science University.

Dr. Toffler is accurate in saying that Oregon voters narrowly approved physician-assisted suicide. The ballot initiative won 51 percent of the vote. But he failed to tell *WSJ* readers that when *The Oregonian* and the Catholic Conference of Bishops promoted the law's repeal in 1997, the "no" vote was 59 percent. In other words, the law had gained credibility with time.

Dr. Toffler's basic mischaracterization of the experience in Oregon is that "there

has been a profound shift in attitude toward medical care — new fear and secrecy, and a fixation on death." While it is true that nationally

there is more candor about issues of death and dying — as the Baby Boom demographic moves into its seventh decade — there is no broad trend of discussion in Oregon.

The number of Oregonians who have used physician-assisted suicide is relatively small. And that was always the expectation. It is not forced on anyone. On the contrary, a patient must ask to use it. And the patient must take the barbiturates on their own.

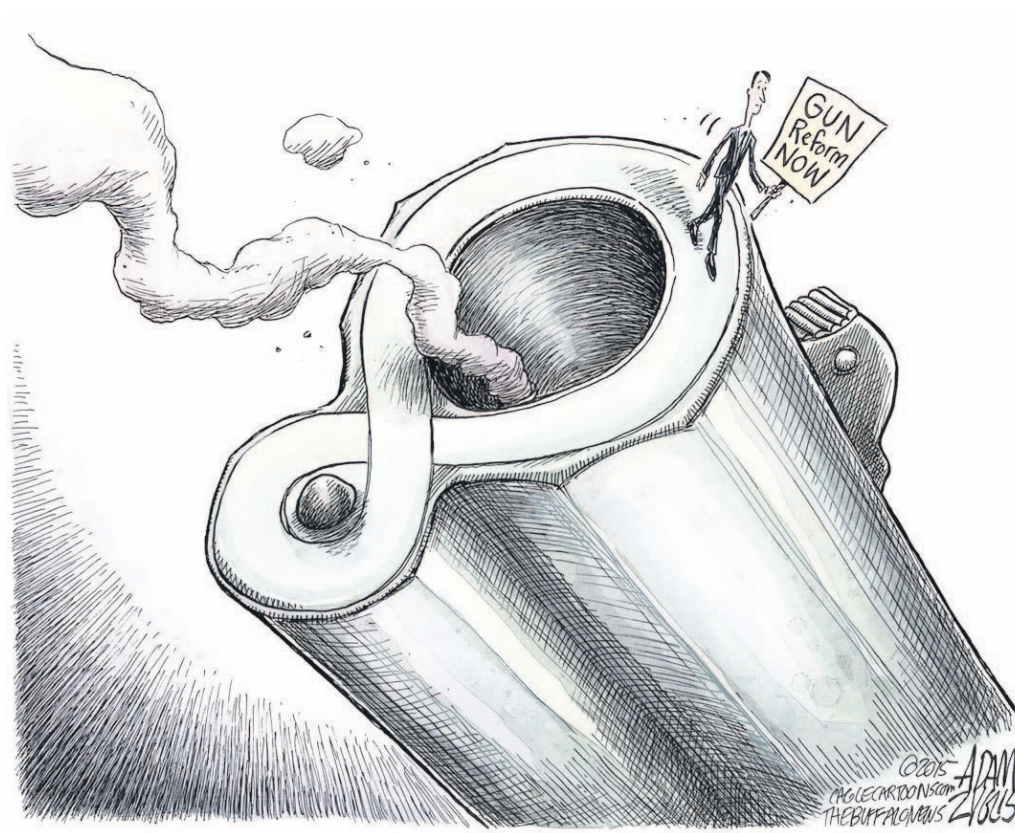
The reality is that many Oregon physicians choose not to take part in the practice. That often makes it difficult for a patient, especially in a rural area, to obtain the barbiturates which the law designates.

The initiative's opponents in 1994 based their case on religion and morality. What the opponents misread was a basic motivation for the death with dignity movement — widespread mistrust of the medical profession on end of life choices. It is no secret that some physicians are not good at pain and symptom control.

An excellent outcome of the law, which Dr. Toffler does not mention, is that hospice and palliative care have gained increased visibility and emphasis in Oregon.

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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

When Islamic State rapists win

The Islamic State atrocities have descended like distant nightmares upon the numbed conscious of the world. The first beheadings of Americans had the power to shock, but since then there has been a steady barrage of inhumanity: mass executions of Christians and others, throwing gay men from rooftops, the destruction of ancient archaeological treasures, the routine use of poison gas.

Even the recent reports in *The Times* about the Islamic State's highly structured rape program have produced shock but barely a ripple of action.

And yet something bigger is going on. It's as if some secret wormhole into a different historical epoch has been discovered and the knowledge of centuries is being unlearned.

This is happening in the moral sphere. State-sponsored slavery seemed like a thing of the past, but now the Islamic State is an unapologetic slave state. Yazidi women are carefully cataloged, warehoused and bid upon.

The rapes are theocratized. The rapists pray devoutly before and after the act. The religious leader's handbook governing the rape program has a handy Frequently Asked Questions section for the young rapists:

"Question 12: May a man kiss the female slave of another, with the owner's permission? "A man may not kiss the female slave of another, for kissing (involves) pleasure, and pleasure is prohibited unless (the man) owns (the slave) exclusively.

"Question 13: Is it permissible to have intercourse with a female slave who hasn't reached puberty?"

"It is permissible to have intercourse with the female slave who hasn't reached puberty if she is fit for intercourse; however, if she is not fit for intercourse it is enough to enjoy her without intercourse."

This wasn't supposed to happen in the 21st century. Western experts have stared the thing in the face, trying to figure out the cause and significance of the moral disaster we are witnessing. There was a very fine essay in *The New York Review of Books* by a veteran Middle East expert who chose to remain anonymous and who more or less threw up his hands.

"The clearest evidence that we do not



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

understand this phenomenon is our consistent inability to predict — still less control — these developments," the author writes. Every time we think the Islamic State has appalled the world and sabotaged itself, it holds its own or gains strength.

Writing in *The National Interest*, Ross Harrison shows how the Islamic State wormhole into a different moral epoch is accompanied by a political wormhole designed to take the Middle East into a different geostrategic

epoch. For the past many decades the Middle East has been defined by nation-states and the Arab mind has been influenced by nationalism. But these nation-states have been weakened (Egypt) or destroyed (Iraq and Syria). Nationalism no longer mobilizes popular passion or provides a convincing historical narrative.

The Islamic State has arisen, Harrison argues, to bury nationalism and to destroy the Arab nation-state.

"It is tapping into a belief that the pre-nationalist Islamic era represents the glorious halcyon days for the Arab world, while the later era in which secular nationalism flourished was one of decline and foreign domination," he writes.

The Islamic State consistently tries to destroy the borders between nation-states. It undermines, confuses or smashes national identities. It eliminates national and pre-caliphate memories.

Meanwhile, it offers a confident vision of the future: a unified caliphate. It fills the vacuum left by decaying nationalist ideologies. As Harrison puts it, "ISIS has cut off almost all pathways to a future other than its self-proclaimed caliphate. The intent is to use this as a wedge with which to expand beyond its base in Iraq and Syria and weaken secular nationalist bonds in Lebanon, Jordan and in even more innately nationalist countries like Egypt."

We are looking into a future with a resurgent Iran, a contagious Islamic State and a collapsing state order. If this isn't a cause for alarm and reappraisal, I don't know what is.

David Brooks's column on the Op-Ed page of *The New York Times* started in September 2003.

YOUR VIEWS

Planned Parenthood must be defunded

After seeing disgusting videos featuring heartless Planned Parenthood officials, any doubt over what that institution stands for must be put to rest. Now is the time for funding abortions via Planned Parenthood to be stopped. Here is the big question for Congress: Will they continue to force taxpayers to fund an organization that treat baby parts like commodities?

Any chance of defunding Planned Parenthood will require attaching a legislative rider to a "must pass" piece of legislation, such as an annual appropriation bill coming in late September, mandating that none of the funds distributed by federal programs can be allocated to Planned Parenthood.

Because Planned Parenthood's federal funds come from a specific Medicaid program, which is referred to as an "appropriated entitlement" in budget speak, it is subject to the annual appropriations process. This provides an opportunity for Congress to put in place funding limitations on Planned Parenthood's activities, including the circumstances under which federal funds can be used to pay for abortions.

This will likely lead to a confrontation with the Obama administration, who ardently defends Planned Parenthood, notwithstanding these horrendous videos, and a possible showdown with congressional Republicans. If President Obama believes that fetal organ harvesting and late term abortions are worth shutting down the government, he will



immediately veto this funding bill. House Republicans should call his bluff!

Historically, Republicans have maintained their majority after Clinton's shutdown in 1995, and grew their majority to be the largest since 1928 after Obama's shutdown in 2013. Congress has the power of the purse to reign in the executive branch. Congress must have the firm resolve to ensure that Planned Parenthood will not be propped by taxpayers dollars!

We all need to contact Rep. Walden and ensure he supports defunding Planned Parenthood.

Donald Crawford
Klamath Falls

Refugees should not be seen as garbage

I took note of the political cartoon you published in the paper Friday, depicting the continent of Africa dumping its garbage on Europe. I must say that it is one of the most disgusting I have ever seen.

This cartoon implies first that the refugees attempting to reach Europe (many with some faint hope of safety, freedom, peace and stability) are nothing more than human garbage. The cartoon also implies that the countries in Africa are purposefully forcing their own

people out of their homeland and sending them to Europe. These notions grossly misrepresent the conditions in Africa today.

The cartoon suggests that all the countries in Africa are the same and completely ignores

the considerable differences in governments and conditions of the countries of Africa today. I would have hoped that the editors of the East Oregonian would have been a bit more thoughtful on this one. This only reinforces the backward thinking notions of what is actually happening in Africa today. I'm sure Donald Trump would like this.

Denzel Fisher
Pendleton

Old Glory, Dixie don't belong side by side

This is addressed to all the people that fly the Confederate flag, presumably as some form of political or social statement. Many of you also fly the "Stars & Stripes" next to the "Stars & Bars."

One flag represents an armed insurrection against the other flag. To most of the rest of the country, displaying it also means that you advocate returning to slavery.

This country allows you to express your opinion. Please find a better way than flying that disgusting piece of cloth.

Patrick J. Delaney
Hermiston

LETTERS POLICY

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