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**OUR VIEW**



# Opioid epidemic needs action

As opioid abuse continues to grow, politicians from both sides of the aisle are trying to get their head around the issue and figure out how best to fight it.

Credit U.S. Rep. Greg Walden for calling together a roundtable discussion about the problem during his recent visit in Hermiston. Opioid addiction — and the sometimes fatal consequences of it — is no longer hidden from mainstream view. The problem is real and solutions are needed.

First, a few quick data points: Heroin is an opioid, but so too are legally prescribed formulations such as morphine, codeine, demerol, hydrocodone and oxycodone, which have medical benefits. All are chemically similar and highly addictive.

According to the National Survey of Drug Use and Health, about 2.1 million Americans are addicted to prescription opioid pain relievers, and another 467,000 are addicted to heroin. Those numbers keep growing, and unintentional deaths from opioids have quadrupled in the last decade. Nearly half of young heroin users first used and then abused prescription opioids.

There are a number of bills currently being debated in the House of Representatives and the Senate aimed at reversing the rising rates of opioid addiction and overdose deaths.

One that is long overdue and should have significant impact if enacted is the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016, which passed the Senate in March. There's a similar bill before the House. It directs a task force to develop best practices for pain management and a strategy for getting this information to providers and the public.

Several other bills aim to reduce over-prescribing opioids. In speaking with the editorial board, Walden noted one that would allow pharmacists to partially fill an opioid prescription, thus reducing the number of unused pills in bathroom cabinets and the number of patients who take more pills than necessary and become addicted.

Another bill would direct the Food and Drug Administration to recommend educational programs for providers who prescribe opioids. Another would provide funding to states to improve monitoring of prescription drug abuse.

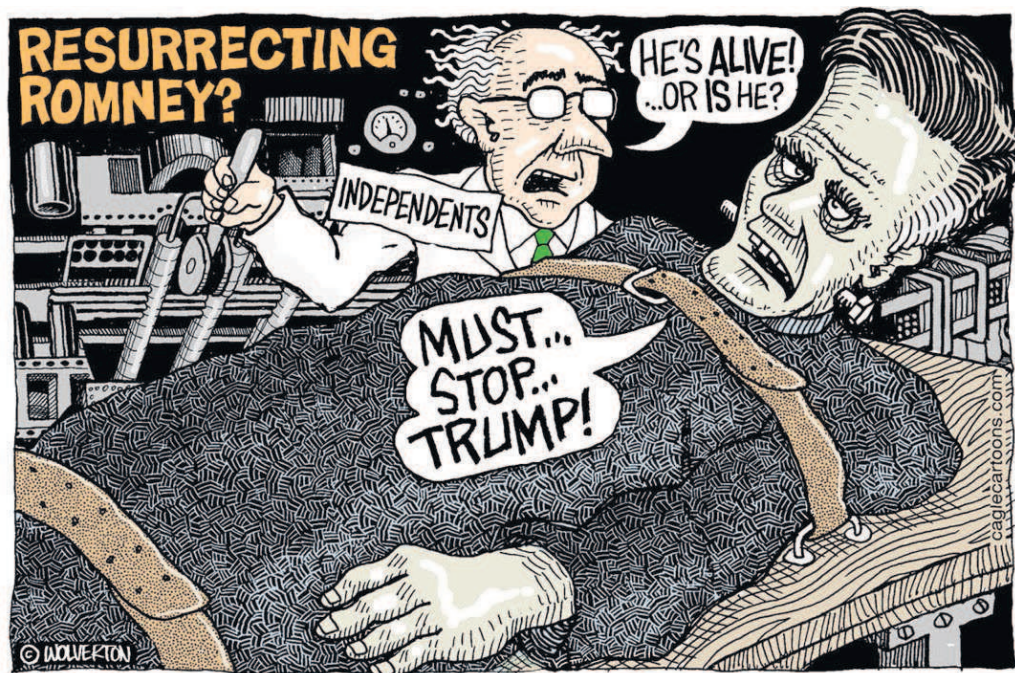
There are also two bills aimed at improving access to treatment for people addicted to opioids. There are two more aimed at helping pregnant women addicted to opioids as well as their newborns who may suffer from neonatal abstinence syndrome.

And another bill seeks to educate teen-aged athletes about the dangers of prescription opioids. And three more focus on making naloxone — which reverses the effects of opioids in overdose cases — more available.

Education, research and access to care has to be at the forefront of government's response to the opioid epidemic right now. Naloxone should have a presence in all user communities. And prescribers should take opioid abuse seriously and err on the side of caution. Relieving short-term pain may not be the best decision for a patient's long-term health. Insurance companies must understand that too, and change their policies and plans to cover alternative treatments that don't rely so heavily on prescription drugs.

This menace must be faced head-on, and no longer be relegated to the shadows.

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**

## Putting grit in its place

We all know why it exists, but the grade-point average is one of the more destructive elements in American education.

Success is about being passionately good at one or two things, but students who want to get close to that 4.0 have to be prudentially balanced about every subject. In life we want independent thinking and risk-taking, but the GPA system encourages students to be deferential and risk averse, giving their teachers what they want.

Creative people are good at asking new questions, but the GPA rewards those who can answer other people's questions. The modern economy rewards those who can think in ways computers can't, but the GPA rewards people who can grind away at mental tasks they find boring.

People are happiest when motivated intrinsically, but the GPA is the mother of all extrinsic motivations.

The GPA ethos takes spirited children and pushes them to be hard-working but complaisant. The GPA mentality means tremendous emphasis has now been placed on grit, the ability to trudge through long stretches of difficulty. Influenced by this culture, schools across America are busy teaching their students to be gritty and to have "character" — by which they mean skills like self-discipline and resilience that contribute to career success.

Angela Duckworth of the University of Pennsylvania is the researcher most associated with the study and popularization of grit. And yet what I like about her new book, "Grit," is the way she is pulling us away from the narrow, joyless intonations of that word, and pointing us beyond the way many schools are now teaching it.

Sure, she starts the book by describing grit as persevering through unpleasantness. She describes Beast Barracks, the physical ordeal that first-year West Point cadets have to endure.

She writes about high school students who grind away at homework for hours and athletes capable of practicing in the most arduous way possible.

And yet Duckworth notes that moral purpose also contributes to grit. People who are motivated more by altruism than personal pleasure score higher on grit scales. She also notes that having a hopeful temperament contributes to perseverance.

Most important, she notes that the quality of our longing matters. Gritty people are resilient and hardworking, sure. But they also, she writes, know in a very, very deep way what it is they want.

This is a crucial leap. It leads to a very



**DAVID BROOKS**  
Comment

different set of questions and approaches. How do we help students decide what they want? How do we improve the quality and ardor of their longing?

The GPA mentality is based on the supposition that we are thinking creatures. Young minds have to be taught self-discipline so they can acquire knowledge. That's partly true, but as James K.A. Smith notes in his own book "You Are What You Love," human beings are primarily defined by

what we desire, not what we know. Our wants are at the core of our identity, the wellspring whence our actions flow.

At the highest level, our lives are directed toward some telos, or vision of the good

life. Whether we are aware of it or not, we're all oriented around some set of goals. As David Foster Wallace put it in his Kenyon commencement address, "In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships." Some worship money, or power or popularity or nursing or art,

**The GPA ethos takes spirited children and pushes them to be hard-working but complaisant.**

but everybody's life is organized around some longing. The heart is both a driving engine and a compass.

I don't know about you, but I'm really bad at being self-disciplined about things I don't care about. For me, and I suspect for many, hard work and resilience can only happen when there is a strong desire. Grit is thus downstream from longing. People need a powerful why if they are going to be able to endure any how.

Duckworth herself has a very clear telos. As she defines it, "Use psychological science to help kids thrive." Throughout her book, you can feel her passion for her field and see how gritty she has been in pursuing her end.

Suppose you were designing a school to help students find their own clear end — as clear as that one.

Say you were designing a school to elevate and intensify longings. Wouldn't you want to provide examples of people who have intense longings? Wouldn't you want to encourage students to be obsessive about worthy things? Wouldn't you discuss which loves are higher than others and practices that habituate them toward those desires? Wouldn't you be all about providing students with new subjects to love?

In such a school you might even de-emphasize the GPA mentality, which puts a tether on passionate interests and substitutes other people's longings for the student's own.

*David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in September 2003.*

**OTHER VIEWS**

## Pendleton must be run with more professionalism

How about calling a timeout on the Pendleton fire station discussion and going back to basics — basics in local government and community development?

First, Pendleton's fire chief should not be going around town trying to find a new site for the main fire station. In 40-plus years of covering local government for newspapers in Oregon, I think the best way is for the fire chief to recommend to the city manager any major changes, such as a new fire station, that the chief feels are needed.

If the city manager agrees with the chief, the manager then makes recommendations to members of the city council. If the city council agrees with the city manager's advice, then come things such as a task force to identify available options, advise on financing capital projects, advise on siting of projects, advise on when to put bond measure proposals on the ballot. Seeking voter approval is of course the ultimate goal in all this.

With upbeat new people coming into city council and mayor positions, this is a good time to put



**MIKE FORRESTER**  
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Pendleton city government on a more professional, businesslike basis. Too often, city officials have made decisions in shoot-from-the-hip style. Drafting a gasoline tax proposal and extending Barnhart Road were examples. Seemed to me those community discussions were disjointed and spasmodic. I could not tell if city council members

were getting the help or analysis from city staff that they needed to make informed decisions.

When such community dialogue drags on, pressure grows to take action of some kind. In that sort of atmosphere, decisions can more easily be flawed. Potholes really need attention, and utility lines really need to be expanded for more business, but follow businesslike procedures to address such problems. Department managers report to and support the city manager, and the city manager reports to and supports the city council. That way of doing the public's business is more apt to result in a successful outcome.

To go from a fire station idea all the way to completion of a new facility takes many steps, ending

in voter approval of a bond issue. Voters are inclined to approve such measures only if they feel their

public officials are honest and informed. If they think city hall is disorganized, ignorant, lazy or less than forthcoming, then they understandably tend to vote no. It's a matter of trust.

So what now for Pendleton's main fire station? The city has a consultant's recommendations advising that the station at Northwest 10th and Court be replaced. It has been a while since the report was completed, so it would make sense for city staff and city council to read or re-read the report to see if it answers all questions about the fire station.

One official told me he wishes the report had looked more at whether the 10th and Court firehouse could be satisfactorily remodeled on its present site. As one Pendleton citizen said last week, it could be the difference between spending \$1 million on a remodel or \$9 million on a

replacement building. Are there other things the report fails to address? The number one question

on a proposed new city facility: Is it really needed?

If city council members decide to recommend a new firehouse at another site, they could schedule public hearings so residents can weigh in. Finally, a campaign committee would be needed to promote the ballot measure.

Blue Mountain Community College's last bond issue drive did a good job of informing voters on that measure.

One more point: City officials and others in town have been calling for improved communications regarding

**The would help themselves if they reached out to those who may not be in "the establishment."**

Pendleton city government. I think a good first step in that is to adopt businesslike procedures for dealing with things such as adequate fire protection facilities. Clarify the role of department managers at City Hall and the role of the city council. Schedule public hearings. Get news releases out to old media and new. Work for openness.

My hometown here has a practice on which I have mixed feelings: the group of 8 to 12 respected wise heads designated to tackle a task or solve a problem with limited input from outside. Many such groups have been successful. But I feel they would help themselves if they reached out more to those bright, innovative Pendletonians who may not be in "the establishment."

*Mike Forrester, of Pendleton, is board chairman of EO Media Group.*

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