

EAST OREGONIAN

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OUR VIEW

Oregon and the opioid epidemic

The opioid epidemic has hit Oregon.

More residents die from prescription opioids than from any other drug — roughly three overdoses per week, a number that has tripled since 2000. Oregon ranks highest in non-medical use of prescription painkillers in the country.

It's not just an inner-city issue, either. It's a real and outsized concern in Eastern Oregon, where trips between doctors can be longer than in bigger cities and prescriptions for pain killers can be, too.

Well-intentioned efforts to ease pain, both chronic and acute, have led to much worse problems as some patients become addicted. There are biological and genetic reasons why some are more prone to addiction, according to Baker City doctor Chuck Hofmann.

And people are dying because of it. Lives are being ruined, too. Parents are losing their jobs and their children. Users are committing crimes and getting locked up behind bars. Productive members of society have become those who are now tearing it apart at the seams.

Fixing the problem is not easy. It's time-consuming, emotionally exhausting and expensive.

But there are ways to help. Hofmann is helping organize a number of forums in our area for

both the medical community and the community at large.

Consider attending one of the discussions, where you can ask questions and get reliable information about the cost of opioid addiction and alternative methods for pain relief. If you're in the health care field, make it a priority. Getting this information out of the shadows and into the light of the public square is needed.

Local forums for medical providers are 5-9 p.m. on Friday at Good Shepherd Hospital in Hermiston, and Feb. 24 at St. Anthony in Pendleton. Topics include talking to patients about addiction, the neuroanatomy and neurochemistry of addiction, pain schools, nondrug treatment options and the role of buprenorphine in treatment.

Other forums, open to the public, will explore acute versus chronic pain, non-drug options for chronic pain and the role of psychosocial support in chronic pain management. These forums are 6:30-9:30 p.m. on Thursday in Hermiston and Feb. 23 in Pendleton.

Register online at www.eocco.com or call Briona at 503-952-5010 or email her at briona.campbell@modahealth.com.

Wrangling opioid addiction will not be easy, but we must do it head-on or it will wrangle us.

Local forums are scheduled in Pendleton and Hermiston to learn and talk about opioid addiction.

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

Don't reduce expectations — make up instructional time lost to snow

The Oregonian/OregonLive

After snow storms and poor road conditions forced school districts to cancel school day after school day this winter, it's understandable that districts haven't yet calculated how to make up the time to students.

It's disappointing, however, that the state is jumping in so quickly to make the math easier. The Oregon Board of Education will consider next week a proposal that lets districts count as much as 14 hours of lost school time toward the total number of instructional hours that they owe students by state law, as *The Oregonian/OregonLive's* Betsy Hammond reported. Districts simply need to secure support from their school boards and submit a written request to state schools chief Salam Noor for his approval. If districts still can't find ways to make up enough missed hours to meet state minimums for instructional time, they may seek a waiver.

To be sure, the state must be flexible with school districts, some of which faced unprecedented weather conditions or inadequate plowing by transportation crews that kept them closed for nine or more days this winter. Making up lost time is more complicated than simply declaring a new ending date. It requires not only resources but agreement by teachers and administrators.

But the state's default message should be that districts are expected to meet the minimum. That's inherently what the word "minimum" is supposed to convey. Rather than automatically provide a relief valve, the state should put the burden on districts to show why they can't meet it.

Oregon already has one of the shortest school years in the country. It mandates 900 hours of instruction for students from full-day kindergarten through 8th grade; 990 hours for 9th

grade through 11th grade; and 966 hours for high school seniors. According to the Education Commission of the States, most states range from 900 hours on the low end to 1,080 on the high end. Losing any time puts students even farther behind.

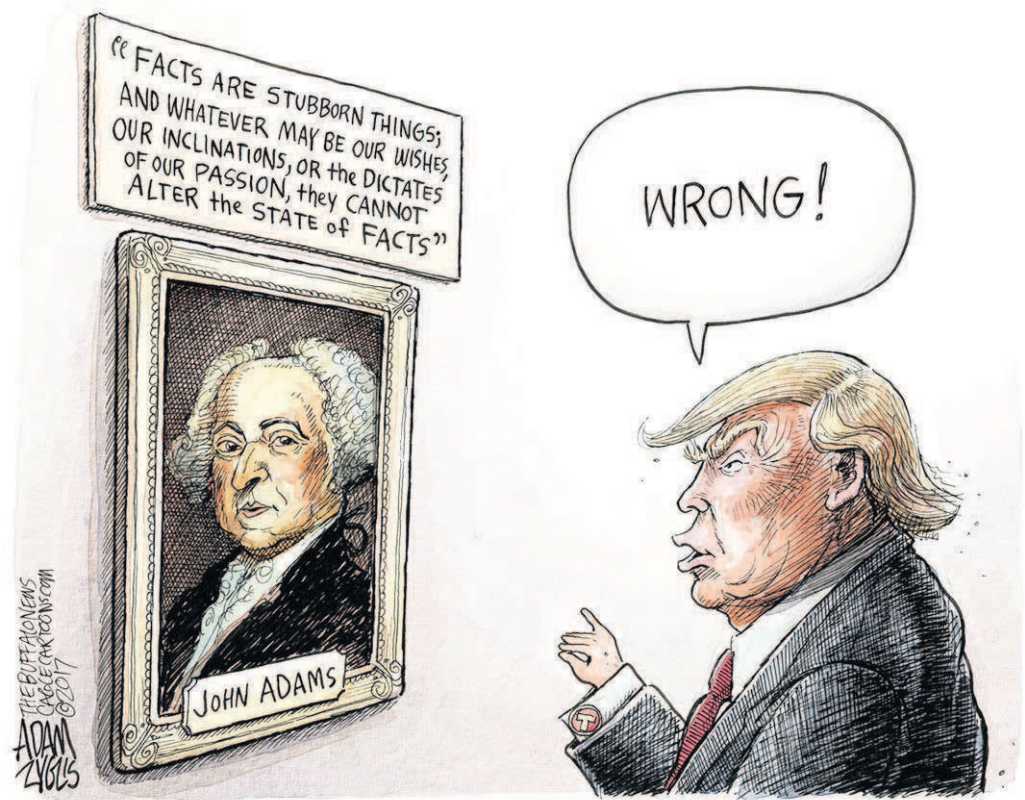
The 14-hour proposal also backpedals on the message that the state issued just two years ago. In 2015, the state board of education said it would phase out its practice of allowing districts to count some of the hours lost to school closures toward the instructional time minimum. That makes sense, obviously, as schools aren't providing instruction when they're closed. But the current proposal sends a new message that the state is still wishy washy on what "instructional time" actually means.

No doubt there are legitimate arguments that districts can and should make for seeking a waiver. But they need to first do the work of trying to meet these very bare minimums and then make their case to the state for why they cannot.

Consider that both Portland Public Schools and Beaverton School District are mapping out strategies to avoid seeking a waiver from the district, spokespeople for both districts said. They have flexibility in part because they originally scheduled students for well over the minimums. While the winter isn't over yet, it's a promising sign of their commitment. It's also proof that the state shouldn't automatically look to lower the bar.

Too many times, it seems that when districts are faced with tough situations, they negotiate compromises that place the needs of administrators, teachers and staff above those of students. The state shouldn't feed into that by allowing a definition of instructional time that is instructional only in showing the frailty of the state's expectations.

The state must be flexible with school districts.



OTHER VIEWS

For many, Trump's inauguration means the return of optimism

"It was a Trump speech," said Beth Lesser, a Donald Trump supporter from Greenville, South Carolina, after listening to the president's inaugural address on the Mall.

"He hasn't changed at all — and I don't want him to."

Lesser was one of the thousands who traveled a long way to come to the inauguration, and who loved what they heard. They didn't come to hear soaring rhetoric from Donald Trump. They didn't come to hear Trump try to sound like Marco Rubio or, God forbid, Barack Obama. They came to hear Trump sound like himself.

That's what they got. And to them, Inauguration Day was a day of hope.

"It brings some hope that we're going to have a new direction for the country, that we're going to create a real economic recovery," said Rick Fischer, who organized for Trump in Fairfax County, Virginia.

"I think this really restores our country to its place in the world as far as a leader is concerned," said Patrick O'Neal, of Atlanta.

"To me, it means the future of America," said Emily Ovecka, who volunteered for Trump in Philadelphia.

"It means the return of optimism," said Phil Bell, of Vienna, Virginia. "We've had years and years where I personally, and I think a lot of people, have felt simply like we didn't have an opportunity."

Talking to people on the Mall was like entering a universe entirely apart from that of the political commentariat. In the pundits' world, Trump delivered a pessimistic and foreboding address, one sure to further divide the nation. The adjective of choice was "dark."

"Unusually dark," wrote *The Atlantic*.

"Short, dark, and defiant," wrote *USA Today*.

"A dark vision," wrote the *Los Angeles Times*. There were many, many more.

Where journalists and pundits saw darkness, the people who came to the inauguration saw promise. For example — and this should shock no one who has spent even a minute paying attention to politics — they really liked it when Trump talked about jobs.

Indeed, the biggest applause line in the area where I was standing was when Trump said, "We will get our people off of welfare and back to work — rebuilding our country with American hands and American labor."

Where the pundits heard a "dark, weird" speech (*New York magazine*) or a "dark, raw" speech (*Vanity Fair*), or a "dark, hard-line" speech (the *New York Times*), the audience heard the possibility that jobs — not just low-paying service jobs, but better, higher-paying jobs — would come back to their communities.

"It's the first time we've been excited and looking forward to a government," said Jay Leone, of Long Island, New York. "I think it marks the beginning of a new era, hopefully, for prosperity and jobs and security."

Trump's speech was remarkable in that he spent a significant amount of time bashing the



BYRON YORK
Comment

political establishment arrayed behind him on the West Front of the U.S. Capitol. That was just fine with the people standing in front of him.

"For too long, a small group in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost," Trump said. "Washington flourished — but the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered — but the jobs left, and the factories closed."

"The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country," Trump continued. "Their victories have not been your victories; their triumphs have not been your triumphs; and while they celebrated in our nation's capital, there was little to celebrate for struggling families all across our land."

The people who come to inaugurations are a new president's biggest supporters. Out where I was standing — the podium was far, far away — there were no bigwigs, no people who would have reservations

"(Trump) hasn't changed at all — and I don't want him to."

— **Beth Lesser,**
Supporter from
South Carolina

Friday night at Washington's priciest restaurants. Some had traveled a long way, but a lot were from neighboring Eastern Seaboard states. And many said they believed in Donald Trump from nearly the first day.

Patrick O'Neal, a Trump supporter from the get-go, said he booked tickets on

Amtrak and made hotel reservations for January 20, 2017 in Washington back in January 2016. He felt that strongly that Trump would win.

From the moment Trump finished speaking, many analysts compared the inaugural address to Trump's Republican convention acceptance speech last summer. And indeed, much of the punditocracy's reaction to that speech was the same as its reaction to this one: it was "dark."

Immediately after the convention speech, I asked 20 people in Cleveland's Quicken Loans Arena, in quick succession, what they thought of it.

They all thought it was great. Of course, those were the type of Republican loyalists who actually attended a GOP convention. On the Mall Friday, there were the type of Republican loyalists who attend a Republican presidential nomination.

The bigger question last summer — and now — was how the vastly larger TV audience would see the speech. As it turned out, Trump actually got a bounce from the convention. (It was short-lived, given that Trump created enormous problems for himself the very next week with the Khizr Khan affair.) At the very least, it's fair to say that Trump's convention speech did not keep him from winning the general election.

Now, Trump has given another speech with worlds-apart reactions from the commentators and the people who came to see him. Dark? On the Mall, people saw Trump's speech as a ray of sunshine.

"It means we have a chance," said Liz Rawlings, of Annapolis, Maryland. "We have a chance to move our country forward."

Byron York is chief political correspondent for *The Washington Examiner*.

YOUR VIEWS

Protests were beneficial, can help influence decision makers

I was absolutely amazed with the turnout of peaceful protesters in the United States and around the world on Jan. 21. Regardless of your political views, the magnitude and the intensity of this movement had to catch your eye.

People in the United States and around the world are very concerned about foreign policies and relations, health care, women's rights, immigration, global warming, and extreme policies of any kind. I doubt if Mr. Trump will be moved by any of this, but congressmen are. I bet some are thinking "Damn, do I want thousands of angry women on my doorstep?" Pushback on these folks can work.

We can start by emailing our representative Greg Walden and demand to hear his

intentions on issues like Social Security, women's health, Medicare, immigration and health care. When you visit his web site you see a statement saying "working for health care for Oregonians." This rings a bit hollow when in fact he voted to immediately throw out ACA before any other health plan was in place.

Mr. Walden's vote is much more important now that Mr. Trump is in office. We need to give him a chance to show he can represent all Oregonians, but if he can't come up with some clear explanations on his plans then we need to push a little harder. Hopefully he can rise to the occasion and become a true statesman for all of us.

This movement is not going to go away anytime soon, so thank you ladies — you started an amazing thing!

David Lange
Pendleton