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KATHRYN B. BROWN
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OUR VIEW

Pendleton takes step forward with tourism

Pendleton has had a recognizable and lucrative brand name for the better part of a century. The Round-Up, the blankets, the saddles and more recently the whiskey have carried the connotation of quality, toughness and fine craftsmanship.

For decades, the city was content to revel in its well-worn identity. But recently its tourism offerings have branched out, widening the tent to bring in world-class talent and brands that expand what Pendleton is known for.

It's a welcome move forward, and one that will pay off economically and in quality of life for Pendletonians.

Consider what the city will showcase in the next few months:

An exhibit of work by Chuck Close, one of America's most famous living artists, is showing at the Pendleton Center for the Arts with the help of one of the premier collectors of modern art in the world, Jordan Schnitzer.

One of Pendleton's greatest connections to World War II will be celebrated at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport next month, bringing crowds to celebrate aviation history that will hopefully build into a permanent museum to draw tourists.

Live Wire, a regionally significant radio show, will record here and spotlight regionally significant painters and local musicians.

Harley-Davidson, the most famous American motorcycle

brand with its own legion of loyal followers, is the title sponsor of this year's Pendleton Bike Week.

Maroon 5, one of the biggest touring acts in the country, is playing the Pendleton Whisky Music Fest at the Round-Up Arena. That will

help prove that you don't always need a cowboy hat to party in Pendleton.

And you can look backward, too, to see how this evolution and expansion has slowly moved forward: Zac Brown Band serenaded roaring crowds,

Ursula K. Le Guin read at the First Draft Writers' Series, cyclists welcomed riders from around the Northwest, a yogi and brewer invited fellow enthusiasts to events at the rodeo arena.

The Pendleton Chamber of Commerce deserves much of the credit for expanding the idea of what tourism and entertainment can be in Pendleton. The Round-Up deserves credit for recognizing the grounds can do so much more than host a rodeo. People like Pat Beard, Roberta Lavadour, Doug Corey and Andy McAnally deserve credit, too, for always thinking bigger and better and working hard to turn those big ideas into reality.

When people think Pendleton, they might always think of rodeo, blankets, saddles and whiskey. But now they will think of other things too: motorcycles, music festivals, art, literature, museums and fun, and that Pendleton is always a great place to spend a weekend.

It's move that will pay off economically and in quality of life for Pendletonians.

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

The cost of prescription drugs

The (Yamhill Valley) News Register

According to the Milliman Medical Index, the pre-insurance cost of health care for the typical American family has more than tripled since the turn of the 21st century, rising from \$8,414 in 2001 to \$25,826 last year.

Popular targets of blame for unaffordable health care include global pharmaceutical giants known collectively as Big Pharma, along with biotech startups eager to cash in and real life villains like Martin Shkreli. Given that lineup, it's easy to see why reducing drug prices is a major target for politicians.

Drug outlays account for just 16 percent of overall health care costs. However, they are rising the most rapidly, and are among the easiest to identify.

A group of Oregon legislators is championing a price-control measure proposed as a potential national model — House Bill 2387. Introduced by Rep Rob Nosse, D-Portland, it would require pharmaceutical firms to reimburse insurers for any "excess costs" associated with a drug.

The bill defines excess costs as those exceeding the so-called "foreign price cap" — the highest price paid for the drug in any developed country other than the U.S. If a cancer drug wholesaled for \$10,000 per treatment, while the highest

developed world price outside the U.S. ran \$6,000, the manufacturer would have to reimburse insurers \$4,000.

It sounds logical, right? Except, there is nothing in the bill to ensure the savings are passed on to the consumer. The bill does nothing to reduce the cost for families or employers, only for insurers.

It won't shock you to learn, then, that the director of legislative affairs for Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon was on hand for the bill's introduction.

A sibling bill was introduced to provide relief to pharmacy benefit managers, who are hired to negotiate drug prices on the behalf of insurers.

PBMs are far from just an administrative client. They wring billions of dollars in rebates from manufacturers.

But the PBMs also play a role in rising drug costs, as most of their dealings go undisclosed. That makes it difficult to exactly gauge the extent to which rebates are actually being passed on to the customer.

Put the puzzle pieces together and check some campaign finance contributions. You'll find these two bills don't protect consumers from an "evil profiteer." They simply take from the rich and give to the rich, creating loads of additional regulations in the process, all on the public's dime.

That sounds like politics as usual to us.

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.



OTHER VIEWS

A public health crisis we can fix

The federal judge and legal scholar Guido Calabresi likes to pose a conundrum to his law students. He asks them to imagine a deity coming forth to offer society a wondrous invention, one that would make everyday life more pleasant in almost every way.

This invention comes with a cost, however. In exchange, the deity would choose 1,000 young men and women and strike them dead.

Calabresi then asks the students if they accept the deal. In 30 years of giving the lecture at Yale, the answer is almost always no. At which point he delivers the lesson: "What's the difference between this and the automobile?"

Modern society is impossible to imagine without the automobile, yet it's also one of the biggest destroyers of life. In the United States, crashes claim 1,000 lives every nine days. Last year, 40,000 Americans died, about as many as from breast cancer and more than twice as many as from murder.

We put up with these costs because we imagine them as unavoidable human imperfection. We are willing to make some changes, like wearing seat belts and driving sober, which have caused deaths to decline gradually for decades. But we assume there is no cure. We've accepted the deity's offer: modernity in exchange for 1,000 lives, again and again and again.

The digital revolution, however, is changing the calculation.

It is both making the problem worse and creating a potential solution. First the bad news: Vehicle deaths are surging, up 14 percent in the last two years. It's the first significant rise in a half century, which qualifies as a public-health emergency. The recent increase, by itself, exceeds the entire annual toll from skin cancer.

The only plausible cause is the texting, calling, watching and posting that people now do while operating a large piece of machinery. Insurers understand that, as *The Wall Street Journal* reported, and are raising rates.

The stories of individual deaths — and I read many while reporting this column — are awful. They make you think of your family, your friends and, guiltily, your own distracted driving.

Five-year-old Moriah Modisette was in her parents' Toyota Camry near Dallas when a man driving an SUV, and using his iPhone, slammed into the Modisettes, killing Moriah.

Megan Goeltz, a pregnant mother of a 3-year-old girl, was in her Ford Fusion at a stop sign in Minnesota when a distracted driver's car flew over an embankment and crushed her.

Joseph Tikalsky was getting the newspaper out of his mailbox one morning. Ten-year-old



DAVID LEONHARDT
Comment

Raquel Rosete was walking on the sidewalk. Brittanie Johnson, Brianna Robinson and her sister Jade Robinson, none of whom was yet 20, were passengers returning home from a vacation. Every one of them was killed by a distracted driver.

Unfortunately, stories like these won't persuade most people to give up distracted driving. We are overconfident about our own driving abilities. (I'm just going to glance at my phone on this straightaway.) And smartphones, with their alerts, are so darn enticing.

"This is a really difficult traffic safety problem, unlike any other one," says David Teater, a Michigan business executive who became an anti-distraction advocate after his

12-year-old son, Joseph, was killed. Drunken driving and seat belt-less riding don't tempt drivers at almost every moment. Phones do.

Like most public-health crises, this one requires a societal solution. Today, not a single state has a sensible law. Most forbid holding a phone while driving, but penalties and enforcement are weak — and hands-free use is still dangerous, studies show. The distraction, not the physical act of holding a phone, creates

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the problem.

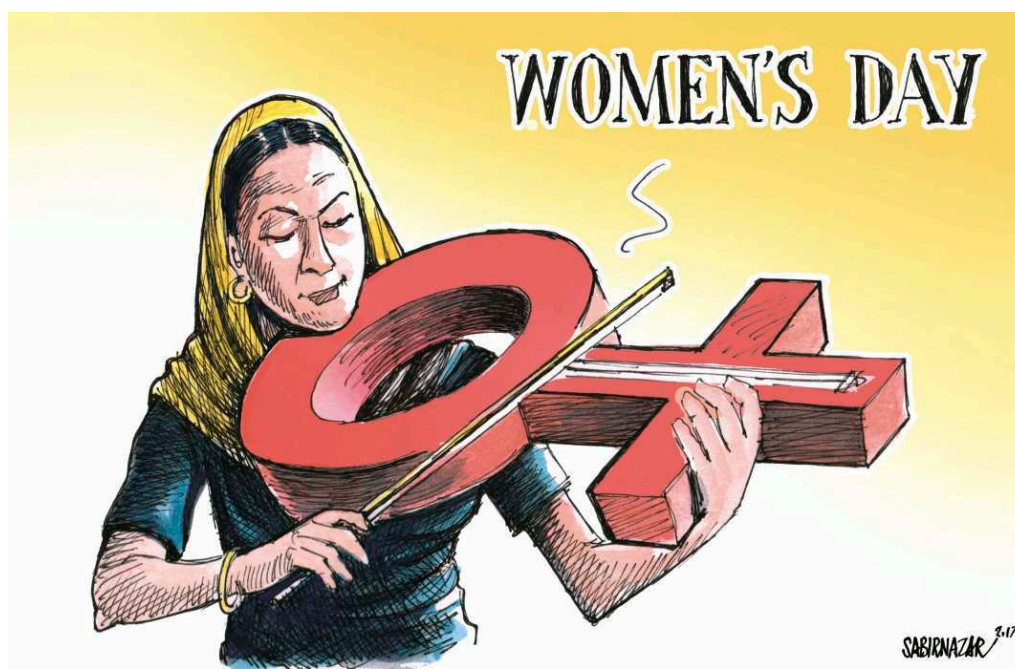
Think of it this way: Allowing hands-free talking and texting is akin to forbidding drivers from getting drunk on liquor yet letting them have a few beers before getting behind the wheel. Some companies, including Exxon Mobil and Johnson & Johnson, have a better approach. They have banned employees from all smartphone use while driving.

The other answer is technology. "There is strong, robust technology available that could solve a lot of the distracted-driving problem immediately," Teater points out. Apple and wireless phone companies could install a driving mode on phones, much like airplane mode, that would allow only directions, music and podcasts. It would turn on automatically in a moving car (and passengers could override it). The companies' refusal to do so suggests that they take convenience more seriously than safety.

Long term, technology can also take over more driving duties, like automatic emergency breaking. I realize "driverless cars" make many people anxious. But automation has made airplanes vastly safer, and it will for cars, too.

Remember Calabresi's lesson: Even before distracted driving, cars claimed a toll that would be shocking if it had not become normal. Technology has now given us the choice between making a terrible problem worse and saving a lot of young, healthy lives.

David Leonhardt is an op-ed columnist for *The New York Times*.



YOUR VIEWS

People who don't like Trump can leave the country

This letter is in response to the ignorance you published in the March 1 *East Oregonian*. The letter stated our president is "a dictator." The author stated also that he is "the most corrupt president in history."

Americans have woken up. We have elected a new leader who is for the American

people. We will become a greater America because someone finally gave legal Americans a voice again.

You don't like what he's doing, or what he's saying? The solution to your "problem" is simple: Go back to where you came from and let America be great again.

Andrea Zendejas Umatilla