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**OUR VIEW**

**GOP should learn from Obamacare's failures**

Congress' proposed alternative to Obamacare would not force anyone off the Oregon Health Plan. Let's be clear about that.

But let's be equally clear: Hundreds of thousands of Oregonians could lose their health insurance.

That contradiction exists because the so-called American Health Care Act is not health-care reform. It is financial reform, or at least

change. The plan put forth by congressional Republicans and the Trump administration would slash federal spending on health care, shifting much of that responsibility to the states.

Still, it's disingenuous for Republicans to say no one would be kicked off Medicaid, or for Democrats to say millions of Americans would be, as if those outcomes were guaranteed. As with the health plan's predecessor — the Affordable Care Act, or Obamacare — no one knows what will happen.

The question for Congress and the American people comes down to how much our government should spend on health coverage for low- and moderate-income Americans.

If states have the money — which few, if any, will — they could continue serving all their Medicaid recipients. In Oregon, where most Medicaid coverage is through the Oregon Health Plan, that could cost the state an additional \$2.6 billion over five years. That is why state officials say as many as 375,000 people could lose Oregon Health Plan coverage by 2023.

Democratic Gov. Kate Brown said last week that the number of uninsured Oregonians would triple, from the current 5 percent of the

population to 15 percent. That is because of bureaucratic hurdles imposed by the American Health Care Act, as well as reduced subsidies and Oregon's inability to cover the increased costs.

The Republican plan would repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, which had little to do with health-care reform either. The reform was in insurance coverage, although Oregon

was able to improve care while reducing price hikes. The key was the establishment of coordinated care organizations, whose collaborative model of overall health care reduced emergency room visits and hospital admissions. On the other hand, Cover Oregon was an expensive fiasco, and it is still costing Oregon

**Oregon's view**

**Gov. Kate Brown released a report last week about the American Health Care Act and its potential impact on Oregonians. To read the report, go online to 95PercentOregon.com, and click on News and Updates.**

money.

The Affordable Care Act and the new congressional plan share other similarities — unfortunate ones, starting with lack of clarity at the outset.

Changes in the American Health Care Act are likely because the current proposal appears to please no one. Conservatives in the Republican congressional majority contend the plan remains too much like Obamacare. Minority Democrats complain that it undoes Obamacare's good points.

Unfortunately, congressional Republicans appear ready to follow the Democrats' bad example and ram their health-finance plan down the throats of the opposition. That strategy resulted in the Affordable Care Act we currently have — a mix of flaws, successes and uncertainties.

A Republican plan that follows a similar unilateral approach will yield a similar outcome.

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.

**YOUR VIEWS**

**Strong schools create strong community bonds**

When my family and I first visited Hermiston in 2008 to decide whether to accept a job in the area, one of our deliberate stops was a visit to the school district. Since our only child was in high school and her education was one of our primary concerns, we couldn't imagine relocating to a place with an inferior school district.

To say that we were impressed by the Hermiston School District wouldn't adequately capture the favorable opinion that we formed after a 2½ hour visit with the superintendent and high school principal. Even though it was the third day of the new school year, they dedicated significant quality time giving us a tour of the facilities, letting us visit classes in session, and answering all our questions.

That time spent at the high school was a major factor in our deciding to move to Hermiston. Our daughter graduated from Hermiston High School, subsequently graduated from Corban University, and then moved back to the area.

The quality of education that Hermiston area children have available is remarkable, and our schools really are at the heart of who we are as a thriving community. With projected enrollment growth of 800 students in the next six years, we must continue to invest in our schools if area families in the future are going to have access to the same experience we did when we first considered Hermiston as the place to live our lives.

I strongly encourage you to invest in the future by supporting our school bond this May.

**Joseph Franel**  
Hermiston

**Western meadowlark no flighty symbol**

Thank you for posting Jade McDowell's article in the *East Oregonian* making us aware of the importance of Oregon's state symbols. Senator Bill Hansell (R-Athena) understands the importance of state

symbols and would make an excellent standard bearing for one symbol that I care deeply about — our state bird, the Western meadowlark.

How important is our Western meadowlark? According to the Oregon Blue Book, the official state fact book about all levels of government in Oregon, "The Western Meadowlark was chosen as the state bird in 1927 by Oregon's school children in a poll sponsored by the Oregon Audubon Society. The governor then proclaimed it to be the official state bird. It is the only Oregon symbol not officially chosen by the Oregon Legislature." (Source: bluebook.state.or.us).

The U.S. breeding population of Western meadowlarks has declined by 50 percent between 1966 and 2014, according to the North American Breeding Bird Survey. The species rates a 10 out of 20 on the Continental Concern Score and was not listed on the 2014 State of the Birds Watch List (Source: Cornell Lab of Ornithology).

On February 25th the *EO* reported that Senator Fred Girod (R-Stayton) proposed replacing the state bird with the osprey. Although the osprey is an admirable species, its choice as Oregon's state bird has one fatal flaw: Every single osprey in Oregon migrates out of the state each year and flies to its winter range in Mexico and Central America. The thought had occurred to me, "Why would Oregonians choose a state bird that is only in the state six months out of every year?" Surely, at the very least, we can select a species to enjoy that is here year-round!

Maintaining our meadowlark as the state bird would (1) honor the legacy of Oregon's 1927 school children and (2) bring awareness of the decline of this species to the citizens of Senator Hansell's district.

By sheer coincidence, yesterday morning while walking through our pasture here on the Umatilla Indian Reservation, I heard the first flutelike melody of 2017 ring out from this distinctive species and it definitely brightened my day ... surely spring can't be far behind, can it?

**Jack Simons**  
Pendleton



AMERICAN EXCEPTIONISM...

**OTHER VIEWS**

**'That food saved my life'**

First, a quiz: What is the most important crisis in the world today?

A.) President Trump's false tweets that President Barack Obama wiretapped him.

B.) President Trump's war on the news media.

C.) Looming famine that threatens 20 million people in four countries.

Kind of answers itself, doesn't it? "We are facing the largest

humanitarian crisis since the creation of the United Nations," warned Stephen O'Brien, the U.N.'s humanitarian chief. "Without collective and coordinated global efforts, people will simply starve to death."

How is Trump responding to this crisis? By slashing humanitarian aid, increasing the risk that people starve in the four countries — Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia and Nigeria. The result is a perfect storm: Millions of children tumbling toward famine just as America abdicates leadership and cuts assistance.

"This is the worst possible time to make cuts," David Miliband, president of the International Rescue Committee, told me. He said that "the great danger" is a domino effect — that the U.S. action encourages other countries to back away as well.

The essence of the Trump budget released a few days ago is to cut aid to the needy, whether at home or abroad, and use the savings to build up the military and construct a wall on the border with Mexico.

(Yes, that's the wall that Trump used to say Mexico would pay for. Instead, it seems it may actually be paid for by cutting meals for America's elderly and by reducing aid to starving Yemeni children.)

It's important to note that "all of these crises are fundamentally man-made, driven by conflict," as Neal Keny-Guyer, CEO of Mercy Corps, put it. And the United States bears some responsibility.

In particular, the catastrophe in Yemen — the country with the greatest number of people at risk of famine — should be an international scandal. A Saudi-led coalition, backed by the United States, has imposed a blockade on Yemen that has left two-thirds of the population in need of assistance. In Yemen, "to starve" is transitive.

The suffering there gets little attention, partly because Saudi Arabia mostly keeps reporters from getting to areas subject to its blockade. I've been trying to enter since the fall, but the Saudi coalition controls the air and sea and refuses to allow me in. In effect, the Saudis have managed to block coverage of the crimes against humanity they are perpetrating in Yemen, and the United States backs the Saudis. Shame on us.

Likewise, the government in South Sudan this month denied me a visa; it doesn't want witnesses to its famine.



**NICHOLAS KRISTOF**  
Comment

In the United States, humanitarian aid has been a bipartisan tradition, and the champion among recent presidents was George W. Bush, who started programs to fight AIDS and malaria that saved millions of lives. Bush and other presidents recognized that the reasons to help involve not only our values, but also our interests.

Think what the greatest security threat was that America faced in the last decade. I'd argue that it might have been Ebola, or some other

pandemic — and we overcame Ebola not with aircraft carriers but with humanitarian assistance and medical research — both of which are slashed in the Trump budget.

Trump's vision of a security threat is a Chinese submarine or perhaps an unauthorized immigrant, and that's the vision his budget reflects. But in 2017, some of the gravest threats we face are from diseases or narcotics that can't be flattened by a tank but that can be addressed with diplomacy, scientific research, and social programs inside and outside our borders.

It's true that U.S. foreign aid could be delivered more sensibly. It's ridiculous that one of the largest recipients is a prosperous country, Israel. Trump's budget stipulates that other aid should be cut, but not Israel's.

The United States contributes less than one-fifth of 1 percent of our national income to foreign aid, about half the proportion of other donor countries on average.

Humanitarian aid is one of the world's great success stories, for the number of people living in extreme poverty has dropped by half since 1990, and more than 120 million children's lives have been saved in that period.

Consider Thomas Awiapo, whose parents died when he was a child growing up in northern Ghana. Two of his younger brothers died, apparently of malnutrition. Then Thomas heard that a local school was offering meals for students, a "school feeding program" supported by USAID, the American aid agency, and Catholic Relief Services. Thomas went to the school and was offered daily meals — on the condition that he enroll.

"I kept going to that little village school, just for the food," he told me. He became a brilliant student, went to college and earned a master's degree in the United States. Today, he works for Catholic Relief Services in Ghana, having decided he wants to devote his life to giving back.

I asked him what he thought of the Trump budget cutting foreign assistance. "When I hear that aid has been cut, I'm so sad," he answered. "That food saved my life."

*Nicholas D. Kristof, a columnist for The Times since 2001, is a two-time Pulitzer Prize winner who grew up on a sheep farm in Yamhill, Oregon.*



**LETTERS POLICY**

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