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OUR VIEW

Total eclipse of the economy (in a good way)

On August 21, the sun will go out in Eastern Oregon.

But this total solar eclipse is not the apocalypse. It could be a boon to a region that will be one of the best places in the country to see this once-in-a-lifetime event.

Travel Oregon is expecting a million visitors will descend on the state, about 30 percent of whom will be international travelers. Likely they'll fly into Portland and Tri-Cities or farther afield. But the big, clear skies of Eastern Oregon, far from light pollution and towering buildings of urban centers, should be an appealing destination.

Eastern Oregon must be ready for an influx of visitors. It will take every hotel room we have to host them, and every bit of our emergency management services to keep them safe. Highway 395 might be a standstill for much of the day from Grant County, where the eclipse can be seen in its totality, all the way to Pendleton.

Don't think that's possible? Consider the build-up already.

All reserveable campgrounds at Oregon state parks within the path of totality have been booked up, though many others are first-come, first-serve. Expect competition for those spots to be extreme. Hotels rooms — at inflated prices — are booked everywhere along the path. Other regions are going all out,

expecting to draw thousands upon thousands of visitors. The Oregon Eclipse Festival, located at Big Summit Prairie in the Ochoco National Forest, will feature about 300 acts, headlined by bands

Bassnectar and String Cheese Incident. Silverton is hosting the Total Eclipse of the Garden, the Moonshadow Festival and Solarfest is being planned in Madras, as well as the Sublimity Festival in Salem and events at the Bi-Mart Willamette Country Music

Festival. Closer to home, Condon is encouraging people to "take the backroad to totality" with a festival of its own, featuring camping, music, food and beer.

It's time for all of Eastern Oregon to get in on the action.

The Eastern Oregon Visitors Association is trying to do just that, and Pat Beard of Travel Pendleton is leading up the Umatilla County effort (see today's front page). Businesses can jump in as well. Staging areas need to be set up, transportation offered, big events planned, vacation packages cobbled together. We must move quickly as a region to cash in and show off, and keep ourselves and our visitors safe.

August 21 is going to be a wild, busy, incredible day in Eastern Oregon. We know it, and everyone else knows it, too. We have five months to prepare.

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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.

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 managing editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.

Drug court saved my life, should be funded

Hello, my name is Michelle and I am addict. I recently read an article in the *East Oregonian* about discontinuing Umatilla County Drug Court. I am writing this today to be a voice for all the lives that said drug court has saved.

When I entered drug court three years ago, I was not ready to quit using. As far as I was concerned my drug addiction wasn't hurting anyone. I was full of anger and rebellion. I was a heroin addict trying to numb the pain from my husband's death, and the world owed me.

I had tried 13 inpatient treatment centers, methadone and suboxone replacement therapies. I tried moving to another state. My two oldest children were adopted out to my parents and I had my third baby in a methadone treatment center in Eugene. Even after the loss I created for myself and my children, plus watching my baby go through withdrawal at six days old, I still could not stop "chasing the dragon."

Umatilla County Drug Court accepted me even though I did not have a drug charge. I was less than thrilled that my probation officer got me in. I was on probation for

a felony assault that I committed against an officer while intoxicated.

The drug court team assisted me in finding a new way to cope with loss, pain, and how to stay clean through individual counseling and groups. They showed me how to be accountable and even though I went to jail a few times, I became grateful for the team and their undying support in my life. They helped me to value my life, mend my relationships with my children and loved ones, give back to the community, and go to college.

I graduated from Umatilla County Drug Court last fall, however the drug court team is still a large support system in my life. I know I can always call or drop in. I have two years clean and I will be graduating from college this year.

If we take away such a vital program and have nothing to replace it, what then? What about all the tax dollars that will go to more incarcerations, more unpaid hospital bills, higher crime rates, more children in the foster care system, and ultimately more deaths?

What about the value of a human life? Drug court works. Umatilla County Drug Court worked.

**Michelle DeBord
Pendleton**

Everyone gets worse health care with Trump

I saw an article recently regarding proposed "Trumpcare" revisions to the Affordable Care Act "Obamacare," and believe it important to make a case against these revisions, and for a single payer system.

ACA is not collapsing. Health care premiums were rising before the ACA and the increases initially slowed.

They sped up again when Senator Rubio slipped in a rider renegeing on a funding mechanism to slow premium increases, and will again accelerate when the effects of the revisions repealing taxes to support coverage take effect. But there is no indication of the system "collapsing."

Trumpcare premium prices for older but not retired Americans will be dramatic. According to CNBC: "This would bring average annual premiums up to \$17,900 for someone aged 60 or older who purchases health insurance on the individual market." How many of us can afford \$18,000 in premiums (AARP believes the rates would actually be higher)?

For those of us who would not be able to afford the costly

premiums, we will not have coverage. Trumpcare would be a return to the bad old pre-ACA days of no real safety net. Its enactment will result in sicker and dead Oregonians. The Congressional Budget Office projects an additional 14 million Americans will not be covered next year if Trumpcare is enacted, and 24 million by 2026.

Trumpcare is opposed by AARP, the American Medical Association, American Hospital Association and American Nurses Association and surprisingly, by several GOP senators, according to ABC News.

Quick question: Of all the developed nations, which do not provide healthcare as a right? Answer: Only one: The United States. We pay far more for coverage and prescription drugs than other countries.

A single payer system would remove the stress of paying for illness and care — it is our tax dollars, shouldn't they be spent on citizens' care first? What is possibly more important? I recommend we contact all of our federal legislators and oppose Trumpcare and ask — no, state — we want a single payer health insurance system.

**Bill Young
Pendleton**

Community should save BMCC pool

Blue Mountain Community College is again offering their water aerobics class during spring term. Swimming classes begin April 3.

If you have reached the golden age of 65, this class will only cost you \$34 for 10 weeks. That is quite a bargain at just over a dollar per class. One thing for sure, you will be entertained during this class.

As you are probably aware, the BMCC pool may be going away. One way we all can help to assure its continued operation is to sign up for classes in the pool. I began taking this water aerobics class four years ago and it has helped me to recover from surgeries, and now it will help regain my strength after a bout with breast cancer.

I have fond memories of the pool as a BMCC student: water safety classes for my baby, taking my daughter to family swim hours, and later when my daughter was grown, going to the pool to swim laps. BMCC pool is of great value to both Pendleton's and Hermiston's swim teams. Let's all do what we can to save the BMCC pool.

**Rose Murphey
Pendleton**



OTHER VIEWS

The Trump Elite: Like the old elite, but worse!

Legislation can be crafted bottom up or top down. In bottom up you ask, what problems do voters have and how can they be addressed? In top down, you ask, what problems do elite politicians have and how can they be addressed?

The House Republican health care bill is a pure top-down document. It was not molded to the actual health care needs of regular voters. It does not have support from actual American voters or much interest in those voters. It was written by elites to serve the needs of elites. Donald Trump vowed to drain the swamp, but this bill is pure swamp.

First, the new Republican establishment leaders needed something they could call Obamacare repeal — anything that they could call Obamacare repeal.

It became clear as the legislative process rushed forward that there was no overarching vision in this legislation on how to reform health care or even an organizing thought about how to improve the lives of voters. There was no core health care priority that Republicans identified and were trying to solve.

There were just some politicians who wanted a news release called Repeal.

Second, Donald Trump needed a win. The national effects of that win seemed immaterial to him.

His lobbying efforts for the legislation were substance-free. It was all about Donald Trump — providing Trump with a pelt, polishing a credential for Trump. His lobbying revealed the vapidness of his narcissism. He didn't mind caving to the Freedom Caucus on Wednesday night on policy because he doesn't care about policy, just the publicity win.

Third, the bill was crafted by people who were insular and nearsighted, who could see only a Washington logic and couldn't see any national or real-life logic.

They could have drafted a bill that addressed the perverse fee-for-service incentives that drive up health costs, or a bill that began to phase out our silly employment-based system, or one that increased health security for the working and middle class.

But any large vision was beyond the drafters of this legislation. They were more concerned with bending, distorting and folding the bill to meet the Byrd rule, an arbitrary congressional peculiarity of no real purpose to the outside world. They were more concerned with what this internal faction, or that internal faction, might want. The result was a pedantic hodgepodge that made no one happy.

In 24 hours of ugly machinations, the Trump administration was willing to rip out

big elements of the bill and insert big new ones, without regard to substance or ramification.

House members were rushed to commit to legislation even while major pieces of it were still in flux, when nobody had time to read it, when the Congressional Budget Office had no time to score it, when the effect on health outcomes of actual Americans was an absolute mystery.

As the negotiating process has gone on, you've seen rank-and-file House Republicans caught between the inside game and the outside game. The logic of the inside game says vote for the bill. Support Speaker Paul Ryan. Don't defeat a Republican president. But the outside game screams: Oppose This Bill. It's bad for most voters, especially Republican voters. And nobody likes it.

I opposed Obamacare. I like health savings accounts, tax credits and competitive health care markets to drive down costs. But these free-market reforms have to be funded in a way to serve the least among us, not the most. This House Republican plan would increase suffering, morbidity and death among the middle class and poor to provide tax cuts to the rich.

It would cut Medicaid benefits by \$880 billion between now and 2026. It would boost the after-tax income for those making more than \$1 million a year by 14 percent, according to the Tax Policy Center. This bill takes the most vicious progressive stereotypes about conservatives and validates them.

It's no wonder that according to the latest Quinnipiac poll this bill has just a 17 percent approval rating. It's no wonder that this bill is already massively more unpopular than Hillarycare and Obamacare, two bills that ended up gutting congressional majorities.

If we're going to have the rough edges of a populist revolt, you'd think that at least somebody would be interested in listening to the people. But with this bill the Republican leadership sets an all-time new land speed record for forgetting where you came from.

The core Republican problem is this: The Republicans can't run policymaking from the White House because they have a marketing guy in charge of the factory. But they can't run policy from Capitol Hill because it's visionless and internally divided. So the Republicans have the politics driving the substance, not the other way around. The new elite is worse than the old elite — and certainly more vapid.

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in 2003. He is currently a commentator on PBS.

YOUR VIEWS