

EAST OREGONIAN

Founded October 16, 1875

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OTHER VIEWS

Reworking state's education goals

The (Albany) Democrat-Herald,

Back in 2011, the Legislature rolled out an ambitious set of goals for the state's educational system.

By 2025, legislators declared, every adult Oregonian would have a high school diploma. Some 40 percent of adult Oregonians would have an associate degree or some sort of post-secondary credential. The remaining 40 percent of adult Oregonians, legislators decreed, would have earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

This so-called 40-40-20 goal (in retrospect, a better nickname would have been 40-80-100, but we quibble) was widely seen as aspirational. Realistically, everyone knew that these were goals that never would be completely met. And, more to the point, it was unlikely that Oregon would ever have the kind of money available to reach the goal. (In fact, this still seems unlikely, as legislators battle with a \$1.6 billion shortfall for the next two-year budget cycle.)

So this year's session of the Legislature is considering a bill, House Bill 2587, that would make a small but key change to the 40-40-20 goal. Under the terms of the bill, which is backed by the state's teachers union, the language of the goal would be changed: The state's education goals now would read that 40 percent of Oregon adults will be "given the opportunity" to earn a bachelor's degree or higher. Another 40 percent of Oregon adults would be "given the opportunity" to earn an associate degree or a post-secondary credential. The remaining Oregon adults would have "the opportunity to earn a high school diploma, a modified diploma or extended diploma or any other credential equivalent to a high school diploma."

We are sympathetic to those who argue that the 40-40-20 goals can never be reached. They're right, of course: For example, we never will be at the point at which every Oregon adult has a high school diploma or its equivalent.

(The most recent statistics, for the class of 2015, show that 78 percent of Oregon high school students earned a diploma within five years after starting school.)

Similarly, the two 40 percent goals for higher education are, to put it mildly, very challenging for a state that traditionally has underfunded higher education.

So, proponents of the bill argue, why should we set ourselves up for failure?

We understand that argument.

But it's not as if the 40-40-20 goal, as unattainable as it is, hasn't benefited the state in some concrete ways. The state's high school graduation rate has inched upward over the last few years, perhaps in some small way because of the attention that rate has received statewide.

And the goal also has put a spotlight on the middle 40 percent — the associate degrees and professional certifications that are awarded by the state's community colleges. Institutions such as Linn-Benton Community College have been working vigorously over the last few years to make sure that their students complete their courses of study — in other words, that they leave school with that associate degree or certification in hand. Now, certainly, some of that would have happened without the 40-40-20 goal, but it's clear that adopting the goal helped to highlight the role that the state's often-ignored (not to mention underfunded) community colleges play in our educational system.

So the goal has had, we believe, a practical impact in Oregon.

And something just doesn't feel right about putting it on the shelf.

If we believe that education is the key to Oregon's future, for all of its residents and for the state, why would we choose to say, in essence, well, we know that not everybody will get that key, and that's OK? Throwing in the towel on the 40-40-20 goal would be setting ourselves up for a much more dangerous failure.

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

'People Power' really just following the law

As the organizer of the two People Power events mentioned in a letter to the editor on March 22, I am dismayed at the author's interpretation of the goals and objectives of the People Power organization. I am writing to respond to that letter to the editor.

The ACLU is a non-partisan organization that, until now, has limited its defense of individual rights to litigation through the courts. With the People Power organization, the ACLU is giving citizens, at the local level, the tools to become active participants in protecting those rights. The focus of the movement is currently undocumented residents.

The ACLU has distributed a list of nine model immigration rules and policies (9R&P) for local law enforcement. Adoption of these 9R&P is intended to foster trust in local law enforcement and give people, whose only "crime" is being undocumented, confidence that local law will protect them from local crimes. If a person is beaten, or robbed — should they be so afraid of deportation that they do not seek protection or medical care?

The 9R&P that have been presented at one public meeting, two town halls and a city council meeting are already in force in Oregon — as explained by Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan and Police Chief Stuart Roberts in separate town halls. There is nothing new in these nine points, only an affirmation of the law that already exists.

The first of the nine points reiterates that Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, federal agencies, are required to have a warrant if they want a local agency to detain someone for them. That simple.

The People Power movement is about protecting the rights of individuals through the application of existing law. It is a venue for citizens, by increasing the awareness of existing law, to take an active part in preserving the civil rights and liberties of their neighbors regardless of immigration status.

Miriam Gilmer
Adams

Limit government by cutting Wildlife Services

On Feb. 26, USDA Wildlife Services poisoned a wolf in Wallowa County ("We don't feel good about that," said Wildlife Services).

On March 11, two dogs were killed by the same device, an M44 cyanide bomb, along a hiking trail in Wyoming (Wildlife Services denies blame).

On March 16 a dog was killed by an M44 near a residential area in Pocatello, Idaho, and a boy sprayed with cyanide powder. ("Wildlife Services understands the close bonds between people and their pets and sincerely regrets such losses.") A second device was yards from the first, both on BLM land, despite a 2016 agreement by federal agencies to ban M44s on federal land in Idaho.

Wildlife Services kills millions of animals yearly at the behest of public and private interests. The methods are usually indiscriminate, like M44s, traps and snares. Any animal is a potential victim. Wildlife Services is OK with this; it has been the modus operandi since 1895.

Wildlife Services is a sloppy operator. It sets traps where they endanger the public, it forgets to post warnings, or puts them where they're not seen, or if they're in the right place it leaves them up long after the traps are gone (like on Wallowa County's East Moraine) so that folks are afraid to walk a trail. A Wildlife Services agent filmed his dogs attacking trapped coyotes, and another was convicted of intentionally trapping a neighbor's dog. If pressed, the agency will "investigate" incidents, sometimes apologize (a recent development), but resumes its nasty habits.

What's galling to us who dislike this agency, this behavior, this brutal contempt for animals and citizens, is that we pay the bill.

Our federal, state and local taxes fund this agency. If you pay property tax in northeast Oregon, you are paying your county to pay Wildlife Services to set M44s.

If people want smaller government, let's start with USDA Wildlife Services.

Wally Sykes
Joseph



OTHER VIEWS

Republicans for single-payer health care

Without a viable health care agenda of their own, Republicans now face a choice between two options: Obamacare and a gradual shift toward a single-payer system. The early signs suggest they will choose single payer.

That would be the height of political irony, of course. Donald Trump, Paul Ryan and Tom Price may succeed where left-wing dreamers have long failed and move the country toward socialized medicine. And they would do it unwittingly, by undermining the most conservative health care system that Americans are willing to accept.

You've no doubt heard of that conservative system. It's called Obamacare.

Let me take a step back to explain how we got here and how the politics of health care will most likely play out after last week's Republican crackup.

Passing major social legislation is fantastically difficult. It tends to involve taking something from influential interest groups — taxing the rich, for example (as Obamacare did), or reducing some companies' profits or hurting professional guilds. Those groups can often persuade voters that the status quo is less scary than change.

But when big social legislation does pass, and improves lives, it becomes even harder to undo than it was to create. Americans are generally not willing to go backward on matters of basic economic decency. Child labor isn't coming back, and the minimum wage, Social Security and Medicare aren't going away. Add Obamacare to the list. "Americans now think government should help guarantee coverage for just about everyone," as Jennifer Rubin, a conservative, wrote.

Trump seemed to understand this during the campaign and came out in favor of universal coverage. Once elected, though, he reversed himself. He turned over health care to Price, a surgeon and Georgia congressman with an amazing record, and not in a good way.

Price had spent years proposing bills to take away people's insurance. He also had a habit of buying the stocks of drug companies that benefited from policies he was pushing. Preet Bharara, the federal prosecutor, was investigating Price when Trump fired Bharara this month, ProPublica reported.

Price and Ryan were the main architects of the Republican health bill. They tried to persuade the country to return to a more laissez-faire system in which if you didn't have insurance, it was your problem. They failed, spectacularly. Again, Americans weren't willing to abandon basic economic decency.

But Price may not be finished. This weekend, Trump tweeted that "ObamaCare will explode," and Price, now Trump's secretary of health and human services, has the authority to undermine parts of the law. Here's



DAVID LEONARDT
Comment

where the irony begins: He can more easily hurt the conservative parts than the liberal parts.

Obamacare increased coverage in two main ways. The more liberal way expanded a government program, Medicaid, to cover the near-poor. The more conservative way created private insurance markets where middle-class and affluent people could buy subsidized coverage.

The Medicaid expansion isn't completely protected from Price.

He can give states some flexibility to deny coverage. But Medicaid is mostly protected. On Friday, after the Republican bill failed, Andy Slavitt, who ran Medicaid and Medicare for Obama, was talking on the phone to a former colleague. "Virtually the only words either of us could say," Slavitt relayed, "were 'Medicaid is safe.'"

The private markets are less safe. They have already had more problems than the Medicaid expansion. Price could try to fix those problems, and I hope he does. Or he could set out to aggravate the problems, which he has taken initial steps to do. Above all, he could make changes that discourage healthy people from signing up, causing prices to rise and insurers to flee.

Now, think about the political message this would send to Democrats: It's not worth expanding health coverage in a conservative-friendly way, because Republican leaders won't support it anyway.

Politics aside, private markets in many areas of the economy have substantive advantages over a government program. They create competition, which leads to innovation and lower prices. But private markets in medical care tend to be more complicated and less successful.

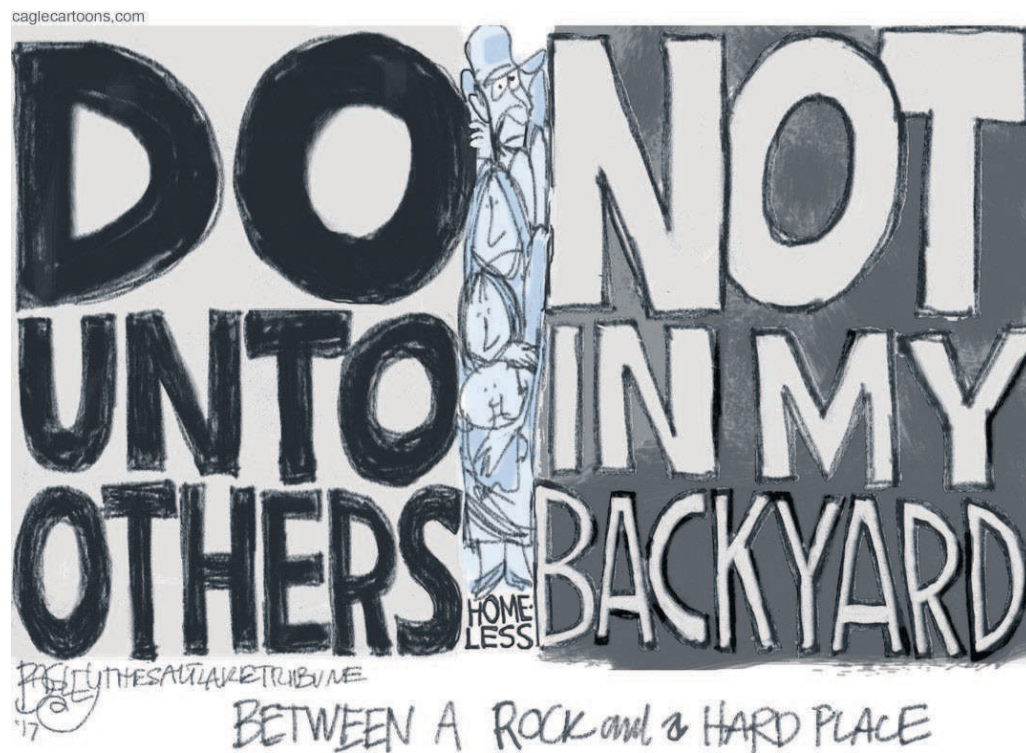
And government health care programs turn out to be very popular, among both Democratic and Republican voters. Medicare is a huge success. Medicaid also works well, and some Republicans have defended it in recent weeks.

So if voters like government-provided health care and Republicans are going to undermine private markets, what should Democrats do? When they are next in charge, they should expand government health care.

They should expand Medicaid further into the working class. They should open Medicare to people in their early 60s. They should add a so-called public option to the private markets. They should push the United States closer to single-payer health insurance. It will take time and involve setbacks, but they are likely to succeed in the long run.

Until then, the future of socialized medicine is in the hands of Dr. Tom Price.

David Leonardt is the managing editor of *The Upshot*, an arm of the *New York Times*, and an op-ed columnist for the paper.



LETTERS POLICY

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