

# EAST OREGONIAN

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## OUR VIEW

# Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A kick in the pants to governor Kate Brown for once again finding ways to limit rural voices and put sycophants from the valley in important positions.

Brown had previously fired three members of the state Environmental Quality Commission, including Melinda Eden of Milton-Freewater and Colleen Johnson of La Grande. The governor cut them loose because they voted (along with two others) to appoint Richard Whitman as permanent director of the department.

The firing was roundly criticized, though Brown said she didn't fire them for their decision but how they arrived at it. Those of us far from the halls of power are perhaps not as familiar with how such back-scratching is supposed to be done. Our state senator, Bill Hansell, was one of those critical of Brown.

"The governor should not fire commissioners because they are doing their jobs," he said earlier this week during floor debate.

We agree, but of course the proclamation was to no avail

The trio was replaced this week by three voices from inside the I-5 corridor. Which means the result is all too common, another government institution — populated by westsiders — making decisions that affect us here on the east side.

**A tip of the hat to Judge Daniel Hill, or as we must now address him: Brigadier General Hill.**



The Umatilla County circuit court judge will soon be promoted to Assistant to the Chief Counsel of the National Guard and an advisor to the Judge Advocate General of the Army.

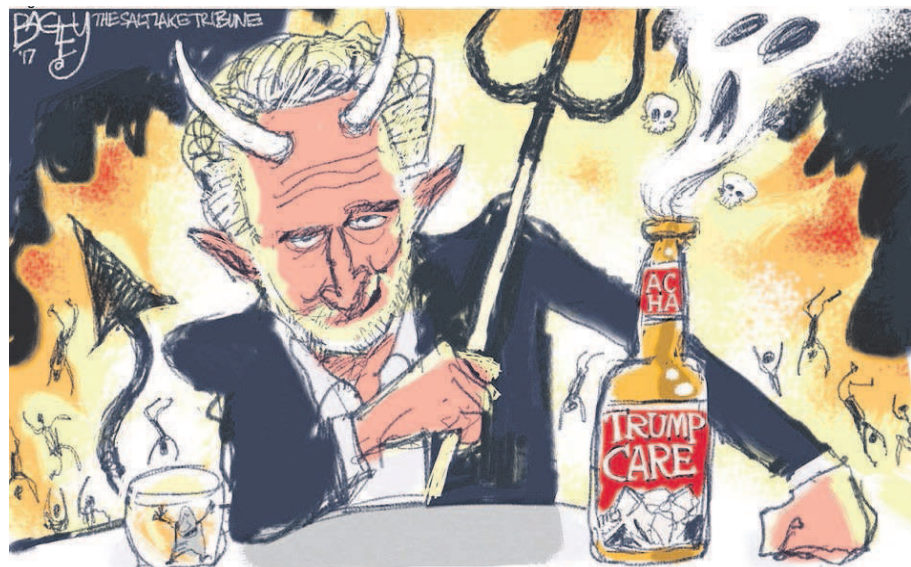
Step outside the bureaucrat-speak of top Army brass and you'll see that Hill's promotion is a mighty big deal. It's a national position that was almost created for Hill, who had been serving in the top legal position of the Oregon National Guard since 2015.

He will now work on big legal issues

involving overlaps between the National Guard, active duty Army and Army Reserve.

It has been quite a journey for the Hermiston High School and Blue Mountain Community College graduate, who will still spend plenty of time at his day job on the local circuit court.

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.



"I DON'T ALWAYS TURN HEALTH CARE FOR MILLIONS INTO A MASSIVE WINDFALL FOR BILLIONAIRES, BUT WHEN I DO..."

## LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication. Send letters to 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email [editor@eastoregonian.com](mailto:editor@eastoregonian.com).

## Appreciate firefighters, but don't like location

Two young men representing the Pendleton Fire Department called on me at my home. They convinced me we need better accommodations for the fire station. These men were knowledgeable, sincere and dedicated to their cause. I am proud to have such men representing the city.

However, I strongly disagree that the vacated St. Anthony Hospital land is the place to build it. This land is down in a hole. The exit north on Southeast 17th has a railroad track, as does the exit west on Court Place. The exit east is a dead end. The exits south on Southeast 17th and Southeast 16th have a very steep incline. This land is on the easterly fringe of Pendleton, and Pendleton is rapidly growing toward the west.

The building plans and new equipment are top of the line. If we are going to spend this kind of money, let's find a better place to put it.

Mary E. Harris  
Pendleton

## When is life too costly?

The fire station is more than just a building. It houses millions of dollars in equipment.

The fire station is more than just a building. It hosts community meetings and events.

The fire station is more than just a building. It hosts school tours and special events.

The fire station is more than just a building. It represents Pendleton and pride in our community.

The bond is needed. It pays for self-contained breathing apparatus. Not just for a building.

The bond is needed. It pays for heart monitors/defibrillators. Not just for a building.

The fire station is more than just a building. It houses the men and women of Pendleton Fire & Ambulance, who are very fortunate to serve Pendleton.

The fire station is more than just a building. It houses the men and women of Pendleton Fire & Ambulance who put their lives on the line every day for our community and people who just pass through and visit. The men and women of Pendleton Fire & Ambulance are currently housed in a fire station that is unnecessarily

## YOUR VIEWS

exposing them to cancer causing agents and mold. The men and women of Pendleton Fire & Ambulance are your neighbors and unselfishly serve the citizens of Pendleton.

The fire station is not just a building. It is an office, meeting place and a home.

The bond is more than just for a building. It will save lives.

Is the cost too great? The voters will decide on May 16. And remember, the lives of those men and women who work for you will be affected by how you vote. Pendleton, take pride in your community. Vote yes.

John Richardson  
Pendleton

## Tell reps your thoughts on health care

Thursday the U.S. House of Representatives passed the AHCA, or the American Health Care Act.

If passed in the Senate and signed by the President, it will sicken and kill voters and their families. Unless you're wealthy enough to enjoy the tax break from weakening healthcare in the U.S., anyone recommending the AHCA

is not your friend. Let your federal representative hear from you about this.

The proposed revisions will sicken and kill Americans who are not wealthy. Proposed AHCA 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.

The proposed AHCA will remove the safety net for pre-existing conditions — the subsidy offered in return is a tiny fraction required to offer reasonable coverage.

The Congressional Budget Office projects an additional 14 million Americans will not be covered next year if the AHCA is enacted, and 24 million by 2026. People without health care coverage die early.

The AHCA is opposed by AARP, the American Medical Association, American Hospital Association, American Lung Association, American Heart Association, American Academy of Pediatricians, the American Nurses Association and surprisingly, by

several GOP senators, according to ABC News.

A single payer system, based on the model of all other developed nations, which provide healthcare as a right. Single payer is a system where we would all pay for a more efficient system with rules but with our best health outcome as a goal.

A 2013 study of Rep. Conyers' bill (HR676) to provide universal coverage, no deductible, doctors free to practice as they see fit, would cost less for 95 percent of U.S. households than our current healthcare insurance model. We'd save money and have better care.

America is the only developed country putting their citizens at the mercy of the Healthcare Industry. In fact, U.S. citizens pay far more for coverage and prescription drugs than other countries, and our outcomes are generally worse. Be better to have insurance that won't kill us.

Please call our U.S. Representatives and let them know how you feel about this life and death matter: Rep. Greg Walden, 202-225-6730; Sen. Jeff Merkley, 202-224-3753; Sen. Ron Wyden, 202-224-5244.

Bill Young,  
Pendleton



## OTHER VIEWS

# Rural Oregon wants health care solutions

Quality rural healthcare always has been and always will be a fundamental foundation to sustain robust rural life in Oregon.

Maintaining quality rural healthcare poses special challenges when hospitals and doctors may be a long drive or even a helicopter flight away, challenges made even harder by inclement winter weather.

We must meet the challenge to protect the health and well-being of rural seniors, children and families.

At the same time, healthcare generates good jobs at good wages, providing significant financial resources for smaller communities statewide.

Because rural healthcare is so key, I'm holding a statewide rural healthcare listening tour this year. I've heard so far from doctors, nurses, patients, advocates and many others about what's working and what needs improving to stay on the path toward quality care for all.

Two of my seven roundtables were in Pendleton and John Day. I plan additional Oregon rural healthcare meetings this year but so far can report these five takeaways from my meetings in Pendleton, John Day and the other five roundtables:

### 1) The Affordable Care Act (ACA) has produced real benefits for rural Oregonians

Rural healthcare providers overwhelmingly said many Oregonians have benefited from the ACA.

I heard powerful personal stories of Oregonians whose lack of insurance pre-ACA had forced them to put off essential medical treatment because the mammoth healthcare expenses would have bankrupted them.

Thanks to coverage under the ACA, those same people can now receive vital care that helps keep them healthy and providing for their families.

I also heard how the ACA generated more cost-saving and life-saving preventive care, as well as access to caseworkers and behavioral health providers to help patients improve their quality of life.

Healthcare providers also talked about the important connections they can make in coordinating services to link crucial mental health treatment, community resources and good physical health care.

### 2) Expansion of Medicaid in rural Oregon has been especially helpful

More than 1 in 4 Oregonians are enrolled in Medicaid — and that share exceeds one in three in some rural counties.



RON WYDEN  
Comment

I heard repeatedly how repealing the ACA's Medicaid expansion would significantly decrease rural coverage and increase uncompensated care.

That could force shutdowns of rural hospitals and clinics, many of which already have slim financial margins.

Cuts to Medicaid would worsen the often-tough job of recruiting providers to rural Oregon, with the ultimate victims being rural residents needing healthcare.

### 3) Some of the heaviest impacts from repealing the ACA and slashing Medicaid funding would land on rural seniors and children; and people battling opioid addiction

Rural seniors would be threatened because those older Oregonians tend to have chronic conditions and disabilities, and are more likely to enter nursing homes.

I also heard how rural children could suffer because youngsters are disproportionately served through the Oregon Health Plan.

And providers also spoke of how the fight to combat opioid addiction would become tougher if the expanded addiction treatment coverage under the ACA is lost.

### 4) Soaring prescription drug prices continue to undermine lasting healthcare solutions

There were harrowing tales about Oregonians facing prescription drug costs that place the treatment they need far out of financial reach.

Providers and patients alike highlighted about the need to lift the veil of secrecy covering the opaque system of pricing prescription drugs.

We discussed my bill that would require pharmacy benefit managers in Medicare to disclose their total rebates provided by drug manufacturers.

The legislation also would disclose how much those rebates are passed on to health plans so prices are lowered for people needing prescription drugs.

### 5) Rural Oregon is hungry for solutions

Oregonians prefer proven innovations pioneered in rural Oregon over partisan standoffs that could reverse those gains.

They say ideas are most likely to succeed when they emerge from the "Oregon way" prioritizing what works over partisan politics.

I wholeheartedly agree.

Ron Wyden is Oregon's senior U.S. Senator.

These are the five takeaways from my meetings in Pendleton and elsewhere.