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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A tip of the hat to Eli Anderson, profiled in today's paper. Anderson, as we're sure you've read by the time you've thumbed to page 4A, helped stop what could have been a very destructive and even life-threatening fire at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution on March 29.

Anderson repeatedly entered the prison's carpentry shop with fire extinguishers, likely stopping the fire from spreading and getting out of control, causing unimaginable damage to life and property.

Anderson was festooned with awards earlier this week, all of them deserved. But a tip of the hat is the cherry on top, and we appreciate his quick and heroic thinking in a time of serious danger.



A tip of the hat to Darrin Umbarger, the Pendleton man who helped make the Oregon Capitol more easily accessible for people who use electric wheelchairs.

Umbarger and Sen. Bill Hansell (R-Athena), worked together to help secure an \$18,000 state grant that he used to create a unit that could recharge multiple types of electric wheelchairs. It's Umbarger's system that was installed in the Capitol earlier this week, the first of its kind in any statehouse nationwide.

"It gives (all) citizens an opportunity to participate in state government," he told an *East Oregonian* reporter. He also said he hopes the charging stations

catch on and pop up in shopping malls, stadiums, theaters, amusement parks, courthouses and other places.

Here's hoping there are more hat tips down the road.

A tip of the hat to the volunteer crew of ASPIRE at Pendleton High School, a group tasked with helping students apply, attend and make a financial plan for higher education.

Roughly 81 percent of Pendleton High School students used the in-school service at least once during their high school career to talk about college opportunities, work on college applications, search for scholarships or get help with essays, the FAFSA, SAT and ACT test prep, career exploration or tours of college campuses.

Those consultations helped Pendleton's 185 graduates in the Class of 2017 earn 296 scholarships worth \$2,060,572. That goes to show that hard work

and good grades really do pay off handsomely.

But more volunteers are always needed to help Pendleton youth prepare for life after high school. Email ASPIRE coordinator Jill Gregg at jill.gregg@pendleton.k12.or.us or call her at 541-966-3846 to lend a hand.



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

American health care system an entangled Gordian Knot

The (Macon, Ga.) Telegraph

No matter your opinion of President Barack Obama's signature legislative accomplishment, the Affordable Care Act, it has become increasingly clear, as Congress attempts to untie the Gordian Knot, how difficult it must have been to wrangle all of the health care players, lawmakers and various lobbyists to support the ACA in the first place.

After running into a brick wall of competing interests within the Republican Party's own ranks, House leaders gave up on an earlier attempt to repeal and replace Obamacare in March after the Congressional Budget Office scored the proposal and said it would leave 24 million Americans without insurance within a decade. The House returned for another bite of the apple earlier this month and approved and sent it on to the Senate before the CBO scored it.

The results of that scoring were released last Wednesday. It is not pretty. The House bill would leave 14 million more Americans uninsured next year than under the ACA. The House plan would reduce Medicaid spending by \$834 billion. In a decade, 23 million more Americans would be added to the list of uninsured. In 2026, the number of uninsured according to the CBO would be about the same as before the ACA was implemented. The CBO also reported that the proposal would reduce the deficit by \$119 billion over a decade.

Most Americans could care less about what goes on in Washington, D.C. What are the practical impacts of this proposal? Medicaid, in its present form, is insufficient. It doesn't pay enough now for the services rendered. Right now, people who did qualify for Medicaid are no longer eligible because requirements have changed. The result? More people are sick and they are getting sicker, sooner.

And where do the uninsured go when they get sick? Your friendly neighborhood hospital. Hospitals have to care for every person who presents

at their doors, and if the past is any indicator, those without insurance present at the facilities' most expensive entrances: the emergency rooms. And those without insurance arrive there sicker because they haven't received regular care.

There was a time when hospitals could cost shift — charge paying patients and those with good insurance plans more for procedures to help defray the cost of the uninsured and to cover the medigap. Those days are gone. Insurance companies have played hard ball with providers to get the best prices and to improve their bottom lines.

Hospitals are already operating on razor-thin margins. According to Becker's Hospital Review, 21 hospitals closed in 2016. Five have declared bankruptcy this year.

The House health care proposal now sits in the Senate and a working group there has basically said they are ignoring it and drafting their own bill. Why? The House bill has clearly identified winners — young, healthy and wealthy — and losers, those on Medicaid, children, the disabled, poor, sick and older Americans.

Add to that list something the CBO recognized. The House bill would destabilize the health-care system. An amendment that was added would turn some of the responsibilities for what's covered over to states. Some states could allow offering insurance plans that cover next to nothing, as was the case before Obamacare, allowing lawmakers to crow that they made insurance available to everyone.

Obamacare clearly needs fixing. It is far from perfect, but it has taken a huge step toward fulfilling its promise. If lawmakers are sincere in their efforts to provide health insurance to many Americans who would clearly be left out in the cold if this House proposal were ever to see the light of day, they will fix Obamacare, re-brand it, claim credit and live to fight another day. If they don't, the Gordian Knot they are attempting to unravel could land around their necks with the electorate pulling the ends ever tighter.



"DON'T YOU EVER LEAVE ME ALONE IN A ROOM WITH HIM AGAIN!"

OTHER VIEWS

Guess what week it is?

Happy Infrastructure Week! OK, I know some of you are distracted by competing current events. But the Trump administration would prefer that we all concentrate on the president's plans for improving the nation's roads and bridges.

Trump promised he'd be discussing infrastructure with all the major players "in great depth next week." This was right before he went into a meeting with legislative leaders Tuesday. You may be wondering why he didn't discuss it with them in great depth right at that moment. Since this is, you know, Infrastructure Week.

One possible answer is that the president likes promising to discuss important policy matters in the future much more than he likes working on them in the present. But to be

fair, one of the Republican leaders did report later that Trump had mentioned the wall along the Mexican border, which would definitely be a structure. The president revealed he wants to pay for it by putting solar panels along the top.

Wait a minute, I thought he hated renewable energy!

Where did you come from? No, he doesn't hate renewable energy. Just wind power, and that's just because the Scottish government put some turbines near one of his golf courses.

But let me tell you a little more about Infrastructure Week. While the whole world was talking about James Comey, Trump launched it with a plug for privatization of part of the Federal Aviation Administration. He sat down in front of the cameras and signed what might have looked, to the uninitiated, like a law, or a program, or at least a calendar of events. But it was really just a letter to Congress encouraging everyone to take up the FAA idea. Which they have already made pretty clear they probably won't.

Why would we want to privatize the FAA? It's not going to make flying safer. If they wanted to make it better, they could tell the airlines to put in more leg room.

I could use a little less interruption. But, yeah.

During the presidential campaign, Trump called for a \$1 trillion program to rebuild the nation's roads and bridges and waterways. It was a super popular idea, and once he was elected, one of the very few bright spots congressional Democrats saw on the horizon. They figured Republican fiscal conservatives would balk, but they could make a deal to deliver the needed extra votes.

"I told him — you know you'll need our support," a prominent Democrat happily told me last year. "And he said, 'Yeah.'"

This is what conversation sounds like in Washington these days. Still, by Trumpian standards, that's the Gettysburg Address.

But Trump's people never reached out to the Democrats, who had reasonable reservations about the original plan, which made some



GAIL COLLINS
Comment

very iffy presumptions about using tax credits to get private investment in the roads and bridges. Under the very best of circumstances, it would mean a lot of tolls. It would also require a lot of smart government oversight, and we are talking here about a White House that has yet to figure out how to nominate an ambassador to Great Britain.

Plus, the president's budget actually cut \$206 billion the government had already committed to infrastructure projects. So Wednesday, when Trump

was in Cincinnati standing by the mighty Ohio and extolling the glories of river transport, cynics gloomily recalled that he wants to slice a billion dollars from the Army Corps of Engineers, which fixes the dams and locks.

Did he brag about winning the election?

He always does that in his speeches.

Yeah, there was a little mention of how Ohio "was supposed to be close. It wasn't." He spent much more time praising himself for approving the completion of the Dakota Access Pipeline, which required him to courageously stand up to environmental groups that had not supported him in the election. ("Nobody thought any politician would have the guts to approve that final leg. I just closed my eyes and I said: 'Do it.'")

What's wrong with investing government money on roads? President

Eisenhower did the biggest highway construction program ever, and he was a Republican.

If you're going to try to imagine Donald Trump and Dwight Eisenhower in the same party, we can't continue talking.

But Trump did bring up Eisenhower's grand achievement in Cincinnati. "The Interstate Highway System — we don't do that anymore. We don't even fix them," he complained. There was no explanation of how the fixing was going to be accomplished through private investors, who want new tolls, not fewer potholes.

He didn't say anything at all about how his infrastructure plan would work, possibly because it doesn't appear to exist at this point in time. The Democrats do have one, but Trump certainly hasn't read it.

Because he can't read, right?

Don't be mean. He just doesn't like to read at great length. But the president made it sound as if, at the first mention of the word "infrastructure," the Democrats had thrown themselves upon the barricades. "I just don't see them coming together. They're obstructionist," he claimed.

The emperor has no clothes.

Yeah, this one has been buck naked since the day he took office.

Gail Collins joined The New York Times in 1995 as a member of the editorial board. In 2001 she became the first woman ever appointed editor of the Times's editorial page.

YOUR VIEWS

Racism part of daily life for people of color in Eastern Ore.

We have a serious problem. I am one of your own, and you could say that I am one of your successes. I grew up in your community, my parents have separately given to and served your community, I was a part of your highly successful dance team and worked in your businesses. I have received funds from your community to help aid my life as I complete my undergraduate degree at the University of Oregon.

I am thankful for our community and its uniqueness; this being said I ask you to please trust me and follow along while I tell you how I have been victim to your exploitative ways, and urge you to transform them. Racist and sexist ways are of the past, right? Sure, women are allowed to vote and racist slurs are not generally accepted anymore, but I have some hard news: The societally-based ideals that create these social hierarchies are not abolished. If I am wrong, come submit your arguments to the multiple professors and doctors that discuss these issues in academia at my university.

I grew up hearing your racist and sexist thoughts come out in my classmates. I watched as the amazing Native American culture that

we are lucky to have a front row seat to in our small community was often criminalized and disrespected. I have experienced the ignorance first hand. I watched someone in my life of color be handcuffed in front of me for a simple traffic stop. What we'd been accused of hadn't actually happened and we didn't receive a ticket for it.

Now as I have dealt with assault and abuse in our community. I have seen it in my life as a woman, who you believe that you can undermine — from officers who did not allow me to use my rights to obtain a restraining order, which I now finally have since being in a community that takes victim rights seriously. Now that I am attempting to work with Pendleton departments once again I cannot believe what I have experienced. The most recent experience consists of being told that "I just shouldn't get involved with people like this."

Change is hard but important, and as you continue to raise up young people, you should continue to protect them. Knowledge is power, and the young people that you are sending off to gain it will do you a world more of good, if they do not have to come to realize the oppression they may have grown up in.

Celina Taylor
Eugene