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**OUR VIEW**

# Steps needed to restore health care predictability

Open enrollment for Affordable Care Act coverage starts Nov. 1 and runs through Dec. 15 for health care policies starting Jan. 1, but it would be understandable if many Americans are unaware of these important dates. They should at least review their current coverage, in order to avoid being locked into something they don't like.

The Trump administration has cut back on efforts to inform people about deadlines and other matters pertaining to the ACA — part of a strategy of sabotaging the national health care system sometimes called Obamacare. The White House also has axed billions in funds to subsidize insurance policies for Americans covered by the act, suggesting the payments amount to a taxpayer-funded subsidy for insurance companies. (This is a valid point; the ACA was modeled on a Republican-designed system in Massachusetts that was highly accommodating to private insurers.)

None of this should come as a surprise, considering Donald Trump and congressional Republicans ran for office on a platform of undoing Obamacare. Unfortunately for ordinary citizens, the haphazard way they are going about it is making matters worse instead of better. There are so many changes and uncertainties, it's hard to keep straight what to do, what will be covered and what it will cost. Since insurance depends on sophisticated analysis of facts and risks, the marketplace is reacting to all these open questions by raising prices on the policies some Americans are legally obliged to buy.

The good news in Oregon is that coverage options and financial assistance remain available. The president's elimination of subsidies — apart from causing insurance companies to raise premiums in anticipation — isn't expected to have a dramatic impact on those who make up to 2 1/2 times the federal poverty level. For a family of four, that comes to \$60,750 in 2017. What they lose in more expensive premiums, they will make up in income tax credits.

This will end up costing the U.S. Treasury even more. "The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office forecast that ending cost-sharing reductions would increase the federal deficit by \$194 billion

over a decade, because the tax credit amounts would increase and because more people would receive them," the *Washington Post* reported.

People in the next income tier — up to four times the federal poverty level — also make out OK in the short run. It is Americans in the highest tier — those ineligible for tax credits — who will be hurt the most directly by rising premiums. These premiums are becoming more and more crushing, at the same time coverage becomes more limited. It's hard to imagine this trend being sustainable for the relatively small percentage of people who buy their own policies, rather than being covered through their employer or by Medicare or Medicaid.

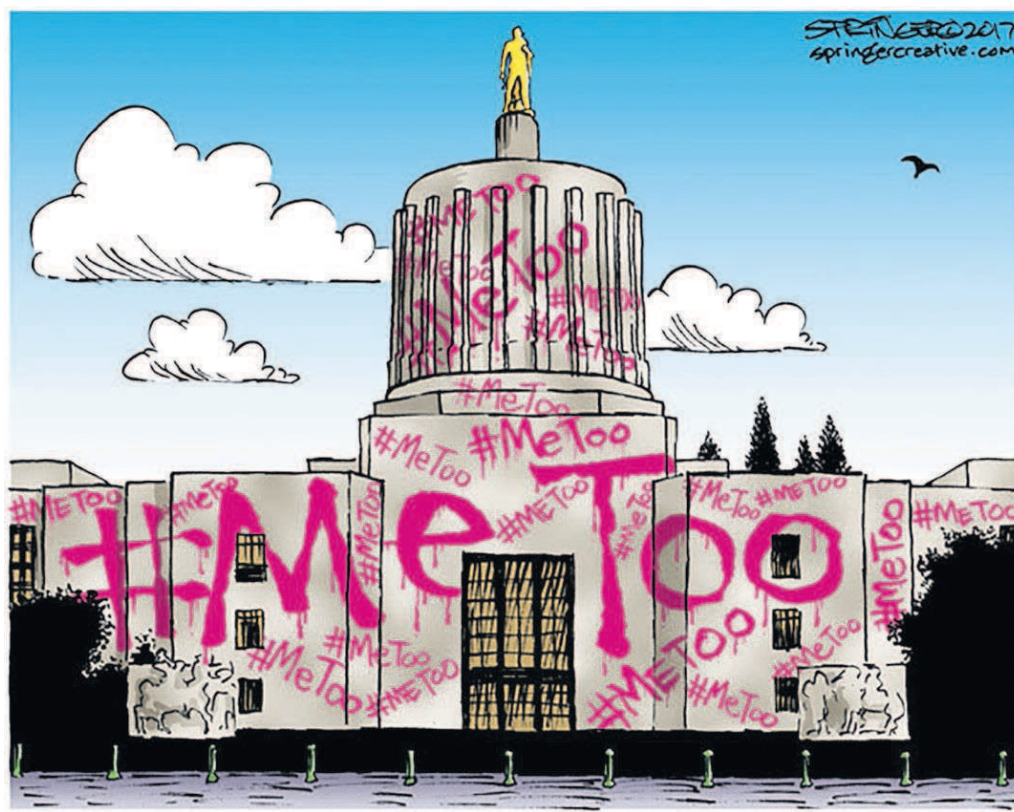
Last week, U.S. Sens. Lamar Alexander, R-Tennessee, and Patty Murray, D-Washington, proposed a two-year extension of subsidies in order to stabilize the insurance marketplace. This is a smart idea, but the president appears to be against it.

Besides all the angst this causes for Americans wondering what our health care laws will be from one year to the next, the real significance of all these political gyrations is how it discombobulates a huge segment of the U.S. economy, one on which we rely for essential services. Hospitals like St. Anthony in Pendleton and Good Shepherd in Hermiston — and all their individual medical providers — depend on predictable payments by private and public insurers. Medicare reimbursements have declined and slowed for years. And now the private leg of the health care platform is getting more and more shaky. We all face a steep price for incompetent management of this literally life-and-death business.

Speaking about Trump's decision, an industry expert said: "I think it will create a lot of uncertainty — and it's a cumulative uncertainty created not only by this decision of this administration, but the executive order, the question of will Congress step in, what will the agencies do."

The ACA is far from perfect, but most people were getting used to it. But jerking it all around is making it more expensive and less reliable. This is not what any sensible person wants to happen. It's time for responsible steps to restore health care predictability for all.

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**

# The national crackup

I never cared for the "melting pot" metaphor, in part because it treats a nation of immigrants like a stew with all the cultures cooked out of it. Nor was I a fan of "gorgeous mosaic," which sounds fine coming from a kindergarten teacher but is flat as a political rallying cry.

I prefer "the American experiment." It's just as inartful, yet closer to the truth. The audacious idea that people from all races, ideologies and religious sects would check their hatreds at the door after becoming citizens is our sustaining narrative.

Within our borders, Protestants don't fight Catholics, Sunnis don't go after Shiites, Armenians share neighborhoods with Turks, and a family that can trace much of its ancestry to slavery occupied a White House built in part by slaves.

But that tenuous construct is breaking apart. We are retreating to our tribal, ethnic and primitively prejudicial quarters. Everything is about race and identity. We come from privilege, or oppression. We choose politicians based on whether they help our tribe or hurt People Like Us.

This is President Donald Trump's legacy. He has shattered the idea, eloquently expressed by President Barack Obama, that we are not "irrevocably bound to a tragic past." In the Trump era, we are neck-deep in that tragic past.

Stupidly, the left is playing its part in this crackup, perhaps ensuring that Trump will stay in office. When people shout, "Check your privilege" at a speaker at a public event, what they're saying is, "Shut up, your opinion doesn't matter because of the color of your skin."

Trump is a master divider. He tweets against football players because he wants people to resent rich black athletes. Instead of sports being our last unifying diversion, it's just another platform for hate.

He tweets about saying "Merry Christmas again," because it puts people of other faiths on alert. As Newt Gingrich, a master demagogue himself, said, "He intuitively knows how he can polarize."

Trump opened the door to overt expressions of hatred. Investment adviser Marc Faber recently made this observation in his newsletter: "Thank God white people populated America, and not the blacks. Otherwise, the United States would look like Zimbabwe." For good measure, he defended Confederate generals, "whose only crime was to defend what all societies had done for more than 5,000 years: keep a part of the population enslaved."

Trump, of course, has never apologized for giving comfort to people who marched on behalf of a confederacy of slaveholders. And we all know that race would be an issue if a

black occupant of the White House had fathered five children with three women, attacked grieving combat widows and exploited the office for personal gain.

But when people shame fellow citizens with the blunt edge of identity politics, they only encourage the backlash that gave us Trump.

White people who are not privileged — the poor, the uneducated, the struggling — feel belittled when elite whites scorn their "privilege."

What's privileged about living paycheck to paycheck? About 8 million citizens voted for Obama — twice — and then flipped their vote for Trump. Most of them, surely, are not racist.

What they heard from Obama was the best American music. "In no other country is my story even possible," he said in his 2008 speech on race. After noting that he won some of the whitest counties in the country, he criticized a view "that sees white racism as endemic, and that elevates what is wrong with America above what we know is right with America."

To dismiss white concern over busing or affirmative action as racist "only widens the racial divide and increases misunderstanding," he said. Yet, that is exactly what many liberal whites and blacks are doing now. Ta-Nehisi Coates, in his new book of essays, compares gentrification, which comes in many colors, to "a more pleasing name for white supremacy."

He's been getting pushback from African-Americans with a more expansive view. "Coates has convinced me that his particular brand of anti-racism does more political harm than good," wrote Cedric Johnson, a professor of African-American studies at University of Illinois at Chicago, in an essay last year.

Certainly Steven Bannon knows that. He has repeatedly said that the more Democrats talk about identity and race, the more it helps his white nationalistic cause.

If all cultural appropriation is bad — extending even to, say, an Italian-American chef becoming expert in North African food — then we are doomed. If everyone is a racist, then no one can be saved from an awful destiny at birth.

Most Americans now feel their own group faces discrimination, according to a new NPR poll. A majority of whites say that discrimination exists against whites, even though a majority have not personally experienced it.

This is a tragic result of the retreat to tribal quarters, pushed by extremists on both sides. If it persists, the United States that Obama celebrated cannot hold. The breaking point is now.

Timothy Egan worked for 18 years as a writer for *The New York Times*, first as the *Pacific Northwest* correspondent.



**TIMOTHY EGAN**  
Comment

**We choose politicians based on whether they help our tribe or hurt People Like Us.**

**OTHER VIEWS**

# Clean Energy Jobs bill will help rural communities and tribes

As a fishery biologist, I have worked on Columbia River salmon restoration for more than 30 years. As an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, I grew up on the reservation hunting elk and deer and fishing for salmon.

My work has involved studying changes to our river system. The impact of climate change became apparent almost 20 years ago as our tribes studied the flow of water in the river at different times.

Since then, our Tribes have worked extensively to document the impact of climate change on our salmon and Oregon rivers due to reduced snowpack and increased drought. For many of you reading this, you know summer wildfires fill our skies for weeks with smoke — affecting our air, our children, our elders. It is projected the intensity and magnitude of wildfires in the West will increase due to climate change. We are seeing it now.

Native Americans and rural communities in Oregon are affected by climate impacts



**DON SAMPSON**  
Comment

on a daily basis. The salmon run sometimes arrives late — or not at all. The migration patterns of birds and elk, which we have hunted for generations, are changing. The native roots in the foothills and mountains that we have relied on for food arrive earlier and for a much shorter period of time. Last year the huckleberries were few, arrived early, and the window of time they were available decreased from three months to two and a half weeks. These native foods have great cultural and ceremonial significance, and to lose them due to climate change means losing part of who we are.

We're working on adaptation strategies, but many tribes have also begun to focus on how to prevent and mitigate climate impacts by reducing carbon pollution, increasing the use of wind and solar energy, and developing innovative projects like at the Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, which is so energy efficient it produces nearly as much energy as it uses.

The Clean Energy Jobs bill, a policy I'm advocating that the legislature passes

in 2018, is important to tribes and rural communities like Pendleton, because it will reduce climate pollution by making large emitters pay for what they pollute, and use the proceeds to invest in clean energy solutions. Investments will be prioritized to help Native American communities and other low income, rural and communities of color that are hardest hit by the impacts of climate change and air pollution.

The Clean Energy Jobs bill will also help tribes protect the forest. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, and companies can "offset" some of their contributions to global warming by paying to protect the trees. The Warm Springs Tribe in central Oregon just completed a 20,000-acre forest land project on the east side of Mount Jefferson.

This project will help mitigate carbon emissions for the next 100 years while bring millions in revenues to be reinvested the reservation's rural economy. But this project is being developed under California's cap and trade program. With Clean Energy Jobs, tribes could participate in the offset program, right here in Oregon benefiting the tribe and all Oregonians.

Most tribes in Oregon are developing climate mitigation plans, and the reinvestment resources from Clean Energy Jobs would create an exciting opportunity for tribes to implement those plans. These plans are being developed with our local city, county, and state partners. We could invest in expanding renewable energy like wind and solar and in land preservation, which creates jobs and protects our culture, food, and watershed.

Our lives and our way of life are interconnected with the climate. It's time to transition Oregon from dirty to clean energy while creating jobs and business opportunities. On Nov. 4, we will have a kickoff rally statewide, so please join us and find out how you can help at [RenewOregon.org](http://RenewOregon.org). When the legislature convenes in February, they should pass the Clean Energy Jobs bill.

Don Sampson is the former Chairman and Executive Director of the Umatilla Tribe. He currently serves as the Climate Change Project Director for the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians.