

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Rights and aspirations

Last week, the Oregon House speedily passed a measure that would give Oregonians the ability to amend the state constitution to make health care a right for all state residents.

The proposal (HJR 203) had a public hearing in the Senate on Monday. If it passes that august body, it would appear on the ballot in the November general election.

The amendment reads: "It is the obligation of the state to ensure that every resident of Oregon has access to cost-effective, medically appropriate and affordable health care as a fundamental right."

Sounds good at first offing. But if a majority of Oregonians support the measure, does anyone know what that would mean?

Not currently.

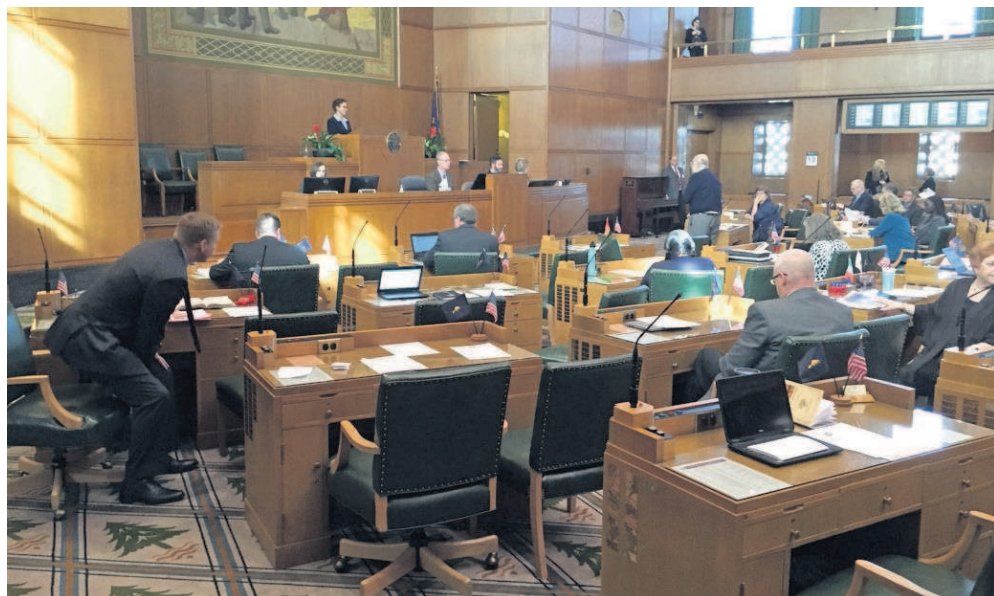
There are many questions and few answers about what effect the law would have, and even its proponents

call it "aspirational" rather than a concrete proposal to improve health care in the state.

We're not sure "aspirational" has any place in the state Constitution. Aspirations were for the Declaration of Independence, but the federal Constitution was a place to lay down guarantees for all Americans — promises that the government had to live up to or find it askance of the law.

Our legislators should always be looking at ways to make health care cheaper and better for Oregonians, but consider us unwilling to jump aboard a train that has little clue where it's headed.

We want our constitution to be as free from unknown legal requirements as possible — and especially on something as important as health care. We want to be clear and concise, so we know our rights and we know what the state must do.



AP Photo/Andrew Selsky

Oregon Representatives debate on the House floor at the Capitol in Salem on Tuesday, Feb. 13.

The pushback on this bill — even in liberal and progressive corners — has been swift. There is no appetite for taxpayers to force Oregon to pick up a check when no one is quite sure what has been ordered.

Let's wait until we know what

we're buying. And even then, let's order à la carte by paying for preventative health care — mammograms and colonoscopies and well-child checkups and subsidized insurance — instead of the overpriced emergency care.

OTHER VIEWS

Whatever Trump is hiding is hurting all of us now

Our democracy is in serious danger.

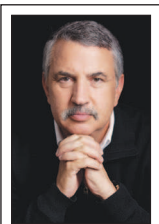
President Donald Trump is either totally compromised by the Russians or is a towering fool, or both, but either way he has shown himself unwilling or unable to defend America against a Russian campaign to divide and undermine our democracy.

That is, either Trump's real estate empire has taken large amounts of money from shady oligarchs linked to the Kremlin — so much that they literally own him; or rumors are true that he engaged in sexual misbehavior while he was in Moscow running the Miss Universe contest, which Russian intelligence has on tape and he doesn't want released; or Trump actually believes Russian President Vladimir Putin when he says he is innocent of intervening in our elections — over the explicit findings of Trump's own CIA, NSA and FBI chiefs.

In sum, Trump is either hiding something so threatening to himself, or he's criminally incompetent to be commander in chief. It is impossible yet to say which explanation for his behavior is true, but it seems highly likely that one of these scenarios explains Trump's refusal to respond to Russia's direct attack on our system — a quiescence that is simply unprecedented for any U.S. president in history. Russia is not our friend. It has acted in a hostile manner. And Trump keeps ignoring it all.

Up to now, Trump has been flouting the norms of the presidency. Now Trump's behavior amounts to a refusal to carry out his oath of office — to protect and defend the Constitution. Here's an imperfect but close analogy: It's as if George W. Bush had said after 9/11: "No big deal. I am going golfing over the weekend in Florida and blogging about how it's all the Democrats' fault — no need to hold a National Security Council meeting."

At a time when the special prosecutor Robert Mueller — leveraging several years



THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Comment



of intelligence gathering by the FBI, CIA and NSA — has brought indictments against 13 Russian nationals and three Russian groups — all linked in some way to the Kremlin — for interfering with the 2016 U.S. elections, America needs a president who will lead our nation's defense against this attack on the integrity of our electoral democracy.

What would that look like? He would educate the public on the scale of the problem; he would bring together all the stakeholders — state and local election authorities, the federal government, both parties and all the owners of social networks that the Russians used to carry out their interference — to mount an effective defense; and he would bring together our intelligence and military experts to mount an effective offense against Putin — the best defense of all.

What we have instead is a president vulgarly tweeting that the Russians are "laughing their asses off in Moscow" for how we've been investigating their interventions — and exploiting the terrible school shooting in Florida — and the failure

of the FBI to properly forward to its Miami field office a tip on the killer — to throw the entire FBI under the bus and create a new excuse to shut down the Mueller investigation.

Think for a moment how demented was Trump's Saturday night tweet: "Very sad that the FBI missed all of the many signals sent out by the Florida school shooter. This is not acceptable. They are spending too much time trying to prove Russian collusion with the Trump campaign — there is no collusion. Get back to the basics and make us all proud!"

To the contrary. Our FBI, CIA and NSA, working with the special counsel, have done us amazingly proud. They've uncovered a Russian program to divide Americans and tilt our last election toward Trump — i.e., to undermine the very core of our democracy — and Trump is telling them to get back to important things like tracking would-be school shooters. Yes, the FBI made a mistake in Florida. But it acted heroically on Russia. What is more basic than protecting American democracy?

It is so obvious what Trump is up to:

Again, he is either a total sucker for Putin or, more likely, he is hiding something that he knows the Russians have on him, and he knows that the longer Mueller's investigation goes on, the more likely he will be to find and expose it.

Donald, if you are so innocent, why do you go to such extraordinary lengths to try to shut Mueller down? And if you are really the president — not still head of the Trump Organization, who moonlights as president, which is how you so often behave — why don't you actually lead — lead not only a proper cyberdefense of our elections, but also an offense against Putin.

Putin used cyberwarfare to poison American politics, to spread fake news, to help elect a chaos candidate, all in order to weaken our democracy. We should be using our cybercapabilities to spread the truth about Putin — just how much money he has stolen, just how many lies he has spread, just how many rivals he has jailed or made disappear — all to weaken his autocracy. That is what a real president would be doing right now.

My guess is what Trump is hiding has to do with money. It's something about his financial ties to business elites tied to the Kremlin. They may own a big stake in him. Who can forget that quote from his son Donald Trump, Jr. from back in 2008: "Russians make up a pretty disproportionate cross section of a lot of our assets." They may own our president.

But whatever it is, Trump is either trying so hard to hide it or is so naive about Russia that he is ready to not only resist mounting a proper defense of our democracy, he's actually ready to undermine some of our most important institutions, the FBI and Justice Department, to keep his compromised status hidden.

That must not be tolerated. This is code red. The biggest threat to the integrity of our democracy today is in the Oval Office.

Thomas Friedman, a New York Times columnist, was awarded two Pulitzer Prizes for international reporting in Beirut and Israel and one for commentary.

YOUR VIEWS

EOTEC problems not addressed by any board

I am concerned about the conduct of the city of Hermiston, Umatilla County and the EOTEC board. Most alarming is the conflict of interest among their roles in their official capacity and their affiliation with the infamous EOTEC facility.

The county commissioners now realize that the EOTEC facility is a slow sinking ship and have essentially paid Hermiston so they could walk away from the original deal. It appears that this deal is a commissioner-approved EOTEC bailout package. In the end when the facility sinks, all of what was invested by the county will be lost. What is very sad is the entities responsible will never be held accountable since they enjoy legal immunity as local governments. That means all the private investors will never have restitution if they ever intended to seek it.

What I cannot understand is why both Umatilla County constituents as well as Hermiston constituents are not up in arms about what seems like misuse of resources and funds by both government bodies.

The most recent example of Hermiston's poor management of EOTEC is a lack of action regarding noise complaint issue with the EOTEC facility. Pendleton with a much larger venue (Pendleton Round-Up) adopted the state required noise regulations. When brought to the mayor of Hermiston, he simply deflected back to EOTEC and subsequently EOTEC defers back to Hermiston and so on. They will become one in the same come March 2018.

Hermiston city manager Byron Smith and the city's legal counsel are bullying local residents affected by the excessive noise (among numerous other issues). They are now trying to force undue financial burden on the residents affected by their inadequate noise ordinance, by requiring response by legal counsel in order to resolve the noise issue.

I'm miffed. Hermiston can fast track department project over-spending, but they cannot fast track the adoption of an ordinance that has already been approved by their neighbor. Even more discouraging, this noise issue has been revisited numerous times since the facility opened for business. The new noise ordinance compliance issue was brought

to their attention in January but still no progress. The noise regulations are mandated by the state.

You would think they would nip that in the bud. What has happened to the democratic process in our communities? Since when has it been OK for local government bodies to beholden to themselves and their individual private interest and not the community and its citizens?

Chris Waive
Hermiston
President, Hermiston Airport Road
Neighborhood Association (HARNA)

Renewable fuel standard supports domestic biofuels

We are continually bombarded with news about new oil drilling and fracking, but that's not the only solution for domestic fuel production or the only path toward loosening OPEC and Russia's grip on energy supplies — homegrown biofuels also play an integral role.

Domestic energy security is no longer a far-fetched goal. It is finally within reach.

But it can't happen without the continued steadfast support from President Trump and the Environmental Protection Agency of homegrown biofuels and the renewable fuel standard.

American-made ethanol already replaces over 500 million gallons of oil each year and comprises 10 percent of domestic fuel consumption. It provides a cleaner-burning alternative to toxic additives, reducing carbon emissions by 43 percent when compared to traditional gasoline. As a bonus, it holds down prices for American consumers.

The benefits from wonderful policies like the renewable fuel standard aren't just seen nationally, but locally as well. Biofuel production supports 16,000 Oregon jobs and provides a clear path towards domestic energy security.

To support this progress, I hope Congressman Greg Walden will stand in support of the RFS and other green policies just like it that help to continue to provide jobs and innovation opportunities for Oregonians.

Christiana Mayer
Forest Grove

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