

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OUR VIEW

## What should health care in Oregon look like?

The state's top health official is traveling the state, asking that question at 10 public meetings. The responses will help shape health care for about one-fourth of Oregonians, those who are on the state Medicaid program known as the Oregon Health Plan. Many of those clients work at low-wage jobs that lack health insurance.

However, the question matters to all Oregonians. The answers will help determine how our state and federal tax dollars will be used and, over time, how private health care will adapt and mirror the innovations in the Oregon Health Plan. Such practices as developmental screenings for children can become the statewide norm when instituted for the health plan, according to Patrick Allen, director of the Oregon Health Authority.

Allen has substantially improved the management, responsiveness and transparency of the state health agency since taking charge last year. Starting Monday, he is on the road to hear from Oregonians before his agency takes its

next steps in transforming health care.

--The public meeting in Hermiston will be from noon to 2 p.m. Tuesday, June 19, at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, 1750 E Airport Road. Meetings also are being held in Astoria, Bend, Coos Bay, Corvallis, Hood River, Klamath Falls, Ontario, Portland and Springfield.

In 2012, Oregon took a bold step to improve health care and control costs.

Coordinated care organizations — now commonly referred to as CCOs — were established throughout the state to ensure that physical, mental and dental health care worked together for people on the Oregon Health Plan.

CCOs are to health care what a high-quality, lifetime bumper-to-bumper warranty is to auto maintenance.

Traditional health care is fee-for-service. Hospitals, physicians and other providers get paid according to the scope of care provided. (Fees can vary widely based on government programs, private insurance or out-of-pocket payments).

In contrast, CCOs receive a set



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Umatilla city councilor Selene Torres-Medrano puts up a flyer for a recent mental health fair at the city hall building in Umatilla.

amount of government money each month for Oregon Health Plan clients. The CCOs are responsible for all the patients' care regardless of cost. Their financial incentive is to keep the patients healthy, thereby saving money — an incentive that can broaden how health care is delivered.

For example, consider a person with high blood pressure who forgets to take his medications and thus repeatedly winds up in the hospital emergency room. It makes more sense — financially, socially and

psychologically — for a nurse to call or visit the patient each day to ensure he takes his medication.

Research indicates Oregon's CCO model is effective but imperfect. Mental and dental health care are not as well integrated into the holistic approach. CCOs have saved the state money, but health-care costs continue to grow faster than the overall economy.

State officials have dozens of ideas for improvement. But they want, and need, to hear what the public thinks.

## OTHER VIEWS

## Big business is squashing small

The next round of media consolidation has arrived. AT&T has bought Time Warner, thanks to a federal judge's ruling last week. Comcast and Disney are fighting with each other to buy 21st Century Fox. CBS, Verizon and Viacom, among others, may also get involved in a merger. "The floodgates will open," media analyst Jessica Reif told *The Wall Street Journal* after the judge's AT&T ruling.

All of these companies have decided that their best strategy for raising profits involves getting bigger. Larger companies simply have more power — to compete with other giants, to restrain workers' pay, to influence government policy and, in the long run, to increase prices.

It's true beyond the media industry, too. Airlines, banks and oil companies have merged in recent decades. So have retailers, hospitals, hotels, manufacturers, drug companies and law firms. The resulting behemoths have then taken advantage of their newfound scale, as well as globalization and digital technology, to grow further.

For everyone else, the consolidation boom hasn't worked out so well. Since the modern merger era began in the 1980s, corporate profits have surged, while family incomes have stagnated and income inequality has increased. Say this much for the corporate executives who argue that a bigger company can be more profitable: They know what they're talking about.

In recent months, I've spent some time trying to figure out just how much bigger — as a share of the U.S. economy — big business has become. The question has been harder to answer than I expected. The Fortune 500 ranking doesn't answer the question, for example, because it doesn't distinguish between domestic and foreign revenue. And while some good academic work has analyzed consolidation within industries, I haven't been able to find an economy-wide measure.

So I set out to create one, with help from an obscure Census Bureau data set known as Business Dynamics Statistics. It shows how many American workers are employed by different-size companies, now and in the past.

The changes over the past quarter-century are pretty remarkable.

DAVID LEONHARDT  
Comment

In the late 1980s, small companies were still a lot bigger, combined, than big companies. In 1989, firms with fewer than 50 workers employed about one-third of American workers — accounting for millions more jobs than companies with at least 10,000 employees.

Since then, though, many small businesses have struggled to keep up with the new corporate giants and with foreign competition. You can probably see a version of the story in your community. The hardware store has given way to Home Depot. The local hospital and bank are owned by a chain. The supermarket is Whole Foods, which is now owned by Amazon. The family-owned manufacturer may simply be out of business.

The share of Americans working for small companies fell to 27.4 percent in 2014, the most recent year for which data exists, down from 32.4 in 1989. And big companies have grown by almost an identical amount. Today, companies with at least 10,000 workers employ more people than companies with fewer than 50 workers.

Big companies, to be fair, have their virtues. They can create jobs, take on ambitious projects and compete around the world. But the balance in the modern U.S. economy is off. Large companies today are often taking advantage of workers, consumers, taxpayers and small businesses.

"This has been a blind spot for the last 20, 30 years," Ro Khanna, a Democratic member of Congress who represents Silicon Valley, told me. "One of the things that people are rebelling against in this country is large, growing institutions. People feel that individuals don't control their destiny."

He's right. The situation will get worse before it gets better, partly because of the AT&T ruling. But corporate consolidation is a problem that's within our power to fix. A government that wanted to reduce the power of big business — through a combination of new laws, better regulation and different judicial appointments — could do so. Here's hoping we get such a government sometime soon.

David Leonhardt is an op-ed columnist for *The New York Times*.



## YOUR VIEWS

### Separating children unacceptable and appalling

I am appalled, saddened and ashamed that in recent weeks our country has chosen to abuse children by unnecessarily removing them from their families.

The separation of children, including very young children, from their families strikes me as a close parallel to the way our country herded and confined Japanese Americans during the World War II. Plenty has been written describing what the experience of those people was like. Their physical needs may have been taken care of, but the very act of being incarcerated for no crime of their own was shameful behavior by the rest of us.

By locking up children and separating them from their families, we have now entered another dark period in America. Yes, the physical needs of these children are being reported by some observers as reasonably good, and I hope that is true. However, that does not and can not compensate for the effects of being placed in large facilities and not having any contact at all with their parents, no matter how well the children may be able to understand it. In addition, not allowing the families any contact with their children is cruel and frightening to both the children and the families.

Imagine being taken as a child from your family with no contact, no way to know if or when you may see them again, and placed with dozens or hundreds of other children, none of whom you know. Recently a reporter described them smiling and looking happy. However, I know that is often a survival tool children will use in an effort to please those in charge and to hide the natural fear inside that won't go away.

As a clinical social worker for 45 years, I listened to many stories from people who much later still suffered from post-traumatic stress due to separation from their family when young, whether for a long or a short period. The negative effects of the current situation will likely last well into the adult years of the children now being incarcerated, and for many of them it will last their lifetime.

The Attorney General's attempt to quote scripture to justify incarcerating children away from their parents is an unacceptable attempt to rationalize immoral and cruel actions against innocent children. Mental health professionals and educators in most states are required by law to report cases of suspected abuse or neglect of children.

What our government is now doing by locking up these children clearly meets the definition of abuse and neglect. The federal government is now in the position of the acting parent of these children, and is now responsible for their well being. At the same time, our government claims it's actions are required by law. The response from congress and others in our government is unacceptable and inexcusable.

Bruce Barnes, Pendleton

### No more roads to nowhere

I am certainly in favor of jobs in Pendleton. I just wonder if a \$25 million UAS industrial park is the best use of our money.

I was impressed with the tour of the UAS command center. When talking to the people in charge of the center, the impression I got was that there would be few jobs for Pendleton residents and no chance of manufacturing at the airport. I did write a letter to the editor in favor of continuing with the UAS project because it could help make the airport self supporting for once. That was before the \$25 million cost was known. I think this is too much to spend on a few jobs.

The city has applied for a \$3 million federal grant for this project. This size grant usually comes with strings attached — like we have match the \$3 million grant with city funds. It looks like the city has a good chance to get the grant, and there may be more hoops to jump through for the money.

If we get the federal grant without having promises to add more than our own matching funds, stop there. If \$6 million doesn't make the airport profitable, we had better look elsewhere to make the airport self supporting and bring jobs to Pendleton.

The city council wants to spend another \$11.5 million for water supply and storage at the airport. Fine — if the city can show us companies are obligated to build if we put in the infrastructure. Why does Pendleton do everything backwards? First get industry to say we will build if the city puts the utilities in.

I think we are already stuck with spending the \$6 million and higher utility bills. Let's stop there until we can see if any industry is willing to come to Pendleton. Please council members: No more roads to nowhere.

Rex Morehouse  
Pendleton

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