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OTHER VIEWS

Opioid prescriptions need closer attention

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For all the talk about opioid addiction and the need to address it, an audit by the Oregon Secretary of State’s Office shows the state lags far behind others in preventing abuse.

Secretary of State Dennis Richardson on Tuesday released the audit report, saying he was “heartbroken” by some of the findings.

The biggest problem appears to be weaknesses in Oregon’s prescription drug monitoring program, operated by the Oregon Health Authority. Created in 2009, the program, known by its initials, PDMP, should allow the state to share information about potential abuse with health licensing boards and law enforcement, but state laws prevent the OHA from doing that. Auditors found 148 people who received controlled substance prescriptions from 30 or more different prescribers. One person had 290 opioid prescriptions filled by 75 pharmacies.

Oregon also is one of only nine states that does not require prescribing physicians and pharmacies to check the PDMP database before writing or filling prescrip-



OxyContin pills are arranged for a photo at a pharmacy.

AP file photo

tions. And Oregon law does not require the state’s PDMP to collect some data that could help prevent abuse, including prescriptions filled by other than retail pharmacies, and prescriptions written by veterinarians that may be diverted to human use.

In one case, an individual obtained prescriptions for 242 tablets of oxycodone and 87 tablets of clonazepam by two different doctors, and filled them at a long-term care pharmacy that is exempt from reporting to the PDMP, so those prescriptions were not

included in that patient’s prescription history. The same patient saw a third physician in the same month and obtained a prescription for 112 oxycodone tablets and 84 clonazepam, and filled it at a retail pharmacy. The third doctor and the retail pharmacist would have had no way of knowing about the other prescriptions by checking the PDMP database.

Deaths from opioid overdoses have declined in Oregon, unlike other states, but the number of deaths remains above the rate in 2000. An Oregonian dies from prescription opioids every three days on average. Auditors noted that the decline in overdose deaths may be the result of more widespread availability and use of naloxone, which reverses the effects of overdose.

In a letter responding to the audit, OHA Deputy Director Kris Kautz said her agency agrees with the findings, but state law limits OHA’s ability to comply with the recommended changes. Lawmakers should make it a priority to change the laws to allow the monitoring program to operate the way it should.

This is more than just a bureaucratic problem. Lives are at stake.



YOUR VIEWS

Time to give up on the wall

During the run-up to the recent mid-term elections, The Donald used his trademark fearmongering and hysteria hyping that the country was being “invaded” by the caravan of Central Americans. He deployed thousands of troops to the southern border, in what was easily seen to be a political stunt to rally his “base,” and others, for the elections. However, the Democrats easily gained control of the House of Representatives, and this clearly presents big problems for the White House agenda from here on out.

This week most of these troops returned to their respective home bases, and it turned out they were never really needed; the only “action” they had was tear-gassing women and children. Economic analysts put the cost of this unnecessary troop deployment in the millions.

In a related issue, Oregon voters turned back a challenge, Measure 105, to our sanctuary state status. Much is always made of the fact that voters in the Willamette Valley and Portland metropolitan area control the ballot box for the rest of the state. Although I am a resident of rural Eastern Oregon, I am always thankful that the voters of western Oregon do have this political control. Yes, I did vote for Kate Brown, and I did vote against Measure 105.

Now, The Donald is throwing one of his usual temper tantrums and is threatening to take his ball and go home if he cannot get congressional funding for his racist wall. In other words, he will shut down the government if there is no funding for his pet project.

National polls continually reflect that the wall has never been a high priority for most Americans.

The Donald, and his base, need to accept that the wall they envision will never happen. Perhaps The Donald should go to Montana for another rally with his base, so they can all feel good for a while, as he has very big legal situations to deal with in

New York and Washington, D.C., federal courts, even if he is not a defendant, at least not yet.

Bob Shippentower
Pendleton

Pendleton council should welcome input

I have been attending city council meeting in Pendleton periodically since 1998. In my opinion the current city council seems to have more executive sessions and less public input than previous councils I have encountered in Pendleton.

The council has conducted several workshops where public input has been excluded. The prior mayor of Pendleton, Phil Houk, always let public have input during the last five minutes of workshops. Mayor John Turner has stated the workshops are for council members only, not for public input. This is not good public relations for the city.

The mayor’s statement defies common sense. It would appear the workshop would provide the council wonderful opportunity to seek public input. These sessions are usually informal, though public. Currently, citizens are allowed to provide input during a scheduled hearing on the agenda. I am not sure if this universal for all cities, but the standard practice needs to change.

The public evaluates the performance of its elected officials to a great extent by what happens at meetings. Many citizens form their total opinions of city government on the basis of attending just one council meeting.

If citizens are not aware of restrictions placed on public input at council meetings, they tend to leave with a negative feeling about our city government. The meeting should impress citizens favorably and show them that the council is capable of doing its job.

Rex Morehouse
Pendleton

OTHER VIEWS

When anti-Zionism tunnels under your house

In 2002, Hassan Nasrallah, the secretary-general of Hezbollah, was said to have given a speech noting that the creation of the state of Israel had spared his followers the trouble of hunting down Jews at “the ends of the world.” The Lebanese terrorist group has prominent apologists in the West, and some of them rushed to claim that Nasrallah had uttered no such thing.

Except he had. Tony Badran of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies tracked down the original recording of the speech, in which Nasrallah carries on about “occupied Palestine” as the place appointed by Allah for the “final and decisive battle” with the Jews. By “occupied Palestine,” he wasn’t talking about the West Bank.

Sometimes anti-Zionists are — surprise! — homicidal anti-Semites, too.

That’s a thought that can’t be far from the mind of anyone living in northern Israel, where in recent days the Israeli Army has discovered at least three tunnels dug by Hezbollah and intended to infiltrate commandos under the border in the (increasingly likely) event of war. Given the breadth of Hezbollah’s capabilities, the depth of its fanaticism, and the experience of Hamas’s excavation projects in Gaza, it’s fair to assume other tunnels will be found.

What would Hezbollah do if it got its fighters across? In 1974, three Palestinian terrorists crossed the border from Lebanon and took 115 hostages at an elementary school in the town of Ma’alot. They murdered 25 of them, including 22 children.

Another infiltration from Lebanon in 1978 left 38 Israelis dead. Given Hezbollah’s long record of perpetrating massacres from Buenos Aires to Beirut to towns and cities across Syria, it’s a playbook it wouldn’t scruple to follow in a war for the Galilee.

All this is to say that Israelis experience anti-Zionism in a different way than, say, readers of The New York Review of Books: not as a bold sally in the world of ideas, but as a looming menace to their earthly existence, held at bay only through force of arms. It’s somewhat like the difference between discussing the effects of Marxism-Leninism in an undergraduate seminar at Reed College, circa 2018 — and experiencing them at closer range in West Berlin, circa 1961.

Actually, it’s worse than that, since the Soviets merely wanted to dominate or conquer their enemies and seize their property, not wipe them off the map and end their lives. Anti-Zionism might have been a respectable point of view before 1948, when the question of Israel’s existence was in the future and up for debate. Today, anti-Zionism is a call for the elimination

of a state — details to follow regarding the fate befalling those who currently live in it.

Note the distinction: Anti-Zionists are not advocating the reform of a state, as Japan was reformed after 1945. Nor are they calling for the adjustment of a state’s borders, as Canada’s border with the United States was periodically adjusted in the 19th century. They’re not talking about the birth of a separate state, either, as South Sudan was born out of Sudan in 2011. And they’re certainly not championing the partition of a multiethnic state into ethnically homogeneous components, as Yugoslavia was partitioned after 1991.

Anti-Zionism is ideologically unique in insisting that one state, and one state only, doesn’t just have to change. It has to go. By a coincidence that its adherents insist is entirely innocent, this happens to be the Jewish state, making anti-Zionists either the most disingenuous of ideologues or the most obtuse. When then-CNN contributor Marc Lamont Hill called last month for a “free Palestine from the river to the sea” and later claimed to be ignorant of what the slogan really meant, it was hard to tell in which category he fell.

Does this make someone with Hill’s views an anti-Semite? It’s like asking whether a person who believes in separate-but-equal must necessarily be a racist. In theory, no. In reality, another story. The typical aim of the anti-Semite is legal or social discrimination against some set of Jews. The explicit aim of the anti-Zionist is political or physical dispossession.

What’s worse: To be denied membership in a country club because you’re Jewish, or driven from your ancestral homeland and sovereign state for the same reason? If anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are meaningfully distinct (I think they are not), the human consequences of the latter are direr.

The good news is that the conversation about anti-Zionism remains mostly academic because Israelis haven’t succumbed to the fatal illusion that, if only they behaved better, their enemies would hate them less. To the extent that Israeli parents ever sleep soundly, it’s because they know what they are up against. And, to borrow Kipling’s line, they never make mock of uniforms that guard them while they sleep.

The same can’t be said for that class of scolds who excel in making excuses for the wicked and finding fault with the good. When you find yourself on the same side as Hassan Nasrallah, Louis Farrakhan and David Duke on the question of a country’s right to exist, it’s time to re-examine every opinion you hold.

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Brett Stephens is a columnist for the New York Times.



BRETT STEPHENS
COMMENT

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