

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat, kick in the pants



A tip of the hat to efforts by Umatilla County officials to get in on the ground floor of federal funding for the CAHOOTS Act — Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets — a bill being promoted by Sen. Ron Wyden. The bill would provide funding for partnerships between law enforcement and mental health agencies that would form two-person teams available 24/7 to respond to calls for nonviolent situations involving mentally ill or homeless individuals.

Umatilla County commissioners told Wyden they are setting aside money to be ready to participate right away, and leaders from around the area met last weekend with Wyden to discuss mental health.

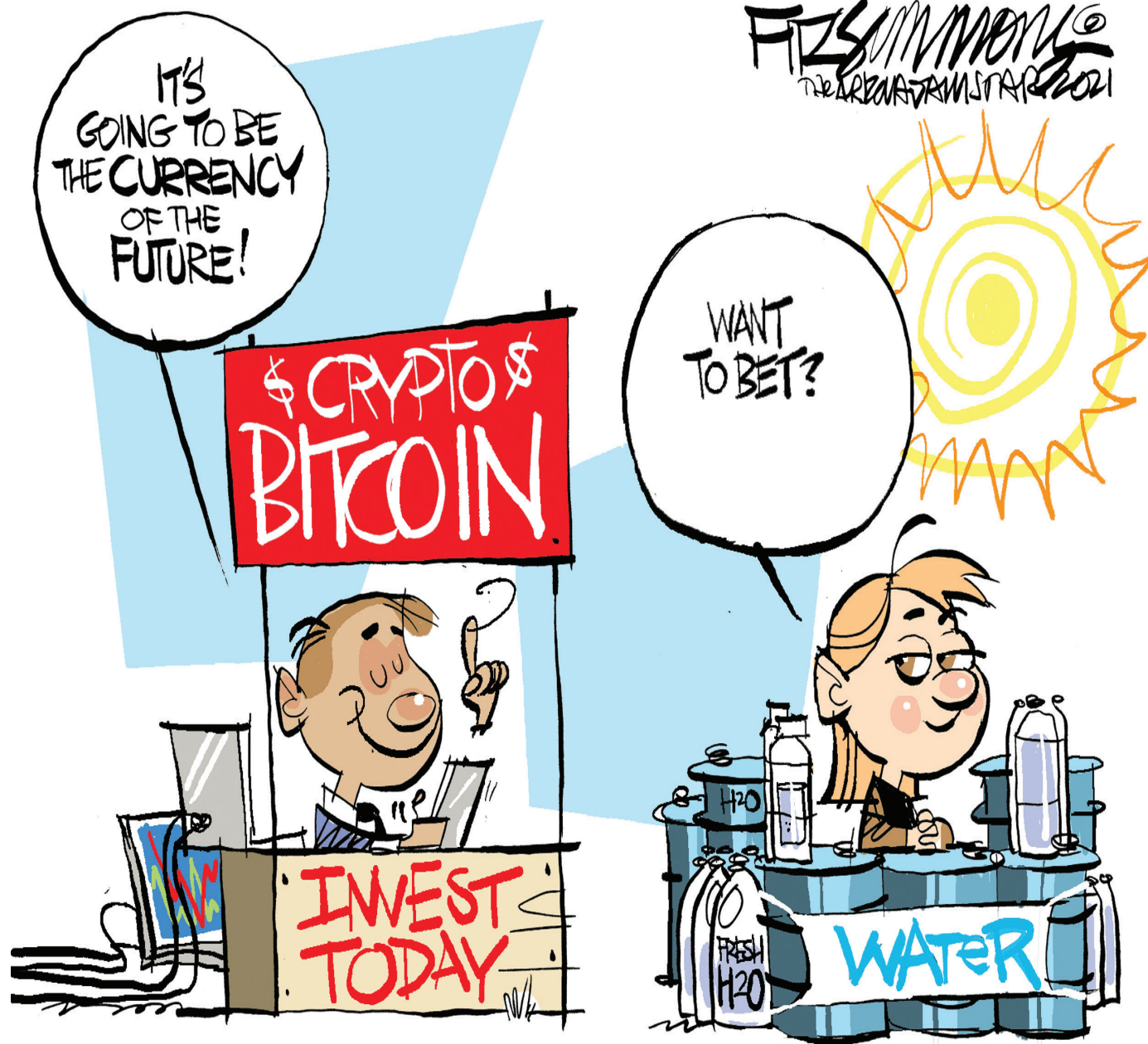
Members of local law enforcement have reported in recent years they are spending an increasing amount of time responding to calls for disturbances or trespassing involving people who are mentally ill or impaired by drugs. We agree with them that police are not the ones that should be at the forefront of dealing with our mental health crisis. A CAHOOTS-style program could be the solution.

Of course, there are a lot of important details the county would need to get right. Counselors being put in a position of responding to violent situations they're not trained to deal with isn't any better than police being asked to respond to mental health situations they're not trained for. But this shows promise and we're glad the county is being proactive about looking for a way to better deal with the problem.

A kick in the pants to anyone being careless with fire right now.

Drought conditions and record-hot weather are combining for what experts are predicting will be a particularly nasty fire season this summer. This is absolutely not the time to throw a cigarette out the window, light fireworks over dry grass or leave a burning pile of yard waste unattended.

Please, be careful with anything that could spark a fire, from charcoal grills to lawn mowers. Follow recommendations from fire departments and insurance companies for creating a defensible space around your home. We can't control the weather, but we can do our part not to make hot situations worse.



YOUR VIEWS

The border is a travesty

In Sen. Jeff Merkley's recent virtual town hall, he dismissed concerns about rampant illegal immigration and repeated the adage that immigrants have lower crime rates than citizens.

One has to wonder what the senator would say to the parents of Mollie Tibbets of Iowa who was brutally stabbed to death in 2018 by an individual here illegally, or the parents of Sara Root killed by a man here illegally from Honduras who was street racing while legally intoxicated and ran into Sara's car, killing her.

It is estimated by Pew Research that over 12 million individuals live in the U.S. illegally and the number is growing, with more than 178,000 apprehended at the border in April.

According to the Oregon Department of Corrections, more than 6%

of the felons in Oregon's prisons are here illegally and cost taxpayers \$33 million per year.

Under President Joe Biden's "open border" policies, many are simply released into the U.S.

A majority are looking for higher paying jobs, but if only 1% of the 12 million commit a serious crime, that adds up to 120,000 crimes that would not have been committed had these illegal migrants been prevented from entering the country.

Most citizens support legal immigration with reasonable numbers allowed in who will be vetted and required to learn about our government and laws.

What is occurring on our border now is a travesty and should reflect badly on our senators and president.

Larry Nelson
Bend

Some freedom, at last

In Ryan Haas' story published in the East Oregonian ("Oregonians who are fully vaccinated mostly do not need to wear masks," Friday, May 14), I was pleased to read that Oregon residents who are fully vaccinated, and who have waited the full 28-day duration, are able to be in public without wearing masks (with the exception of certain facilities/circumstances).

This is exciting news and is great for human morale as we look toward getting back to normalcy and trying to get social networking and our economy back on track. I myself have received the Pfizer vaccine. I'm excited to have the freedom to not have to wear a mask, especially with graduation over and summer right around the corner.

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