

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OUR VIEW

# Oregon should address nursing shortage

Oregon has one of the lowest rates of hospital beds per capita in the country. The number of staffed hospital beds per 1,000 population is about 1.7.

That actually can be good. When there aren't too many people in the hospital, the health system isn't supporting unnecessary beds and staff.

The pandemic isn't one of those times. The bigger issue, though, has been staffing. Oregon and the nation already were facing a nursing shortage before the pandemic. The burnout and stress caused by the pandemic made it worse. The vacancy rate for nursing positions was about 10% in 2020. Hundreds of nursing positions are open across the state.

Hospitals have been relying on traveling nurses to pick up some of the slack. They can make thousands of dollars more than staff nurses, which only encourages more nurses to become traveling nurses and follow the money.

What could Oregon do?

Capacity to train nurses is one problem. Oregon Health & Science University got nearly 1,900 applications for its nursing program and accepted 420 students. The University of Portland had 2,000 applications for 260 spots. It's not just a simple matter of accepting more students. There also needs to be faculty and places for clinical placement. Shouldn't the Legislature at least discuss if the state needs to direct more resources at this problem?

In the short-term, more needs to be done to help existing nurses. More pay and benefits may not be the right answer or the only one. Many nurses feel overworked and overstressed. Doctors, dentists and physician assistants can get free counseling through the Oregon Wellness Program, a nonprofit. Nurses don't get access to that, though their employers may make other alternatives available. The Oregon Board of Nursing is scheduled to discuss funding access to it for nurses later this month.

The state also could make adjustments to its emergency licensure requirements, as reported by The Lund Report. It limited out-of-state nurses to practicing for up to 30 days in critical care units. That could be broadened, though it may be a touchy subject during labor disputes. In any case, relying on nurses to come from out-of-state isn't a permanent solution.

You can do something, too. If you are not vaccinated, please get vaccinated and any boosters. It can reduce the chances you will get COVID-19 and the severity when you do.



# Buying and selling



J.D.  
SMITH  
FROM THE HEADWATERS  
OF DRY CREEK

Here's hoping all of you readers have survived the holidays, with all the gatherings and the uncomfortable doubts about whether your Uncle Ferd really liked your gift of nose hair scissors or was just pretending to be overjoyed.

I have always enjoyed giving things to other people, more so than receiving things, because I feel I have been very lucky in this life and am surrounded by way more stuff than I need. For instance, I own two pairs of White's packer boots that I have worn and had rebuilt for 50 years. When I look at them I feel rich.

Rampant consumerism at this time of year seems to be the American way, and that is OK by me. If buying stuff excites you, have at it. What does bother me, though, is what I call micro-greed, the tendency in our society for some folks to squeeze more profit from a transaction than is merited. The following two examples illustrate my feelings.

One: When my dad died 20 years ago I went to Sturgis, South Dakota, and brought my mom and everything she continued to own back here into Wheatsville in the back of one 1986 Toyota pickup. We rented an unfurnished apartment for her six blocks from our house then went about attempting to furnish it cheaply, since neither she nor I were actually rich.

It was early fall at a garage/yard/driveway sale somewhere on Pendleton's North Hill when I located a serviceable wooden kitchen table and two chairs for \$20. There was a little burn on the corner of the table where someone, sometime, had forgotten a cigarette. I knew my Mom would not care and was about to close the deal when a 50-something woman elbowed me aside and said she would give the seller \$25 because her daughter was about to go to college and really needed a table where she could study. Rather than get into a price war, I deferred to the woman and imagined her daughter studying at the table.

Two hours later I was totally pooped out from too many garage sales and stopped by a large consignment store that was located where they distill vodka today. In one of the booths was an identical table and two chairs, carefully covered with a checkered tablecloth and decorated with place settings and water glasses, 80 bucks. I picked up one corner of the tablecloth to see the condition of the tabletop and, luck of the draw, saw the cigarette burn. A younger woman was tending the store that day, and I asked her how long the table had been in inventory. She said it had just come in. I did not purchase the table and chairs.

Two: I heard this story high in the central Idaho mountains 50-some years ago from a fellow who was the manager of a J.C. Penney Co. store somewhere near Boise. Since that time the guy has discovered that he is really a Cherokee shaman and has left the retail trades for the more lucrative consulting business. "One Christmas time I had a super

idea and constructed a large screened cage with a 4-by-8 sheet of plywood as its floor. I painted everything red and drilled maybe 20 holes in the plywood then attached little Mason jars underneath and fashioned a small fairyland castle at one end of the cage. I labeled the holes randomly with percentages in increments of five, from 10 through 40, and employed one of my son's pet mice as the star of the Holiday Mouse Discount Giveaway.

"Then I took a bunch of merchandise that wasn't moving all that well, gathered it on a few tables and racks around the cage and marked it up 15% with a sign saying that these items were eligible for the discount. The customer would choose an item from the limited inventory, bring it to the cashier and ask for the Holiday Mouse Discount.

"I would be standing by the cage and opening the little door in the castle where the mouse lived. The mouse with a little red ribbon around its neck would run out onto the plywood, be freaked out by the noise and lights and run down one of the holes. That was the discount the customer would receive.

"Well, the trick is that a mouse will not run down a hole where a mouse has never run before, so by dropping a few mouse turds down all the 10% holes I could pretty much predict where the mouse was going to hide and make 5% over normal retail. I did, however, drop a few mouse droppings down one 20% hole in the far corner just because I like to gamble."

*J.D. Smith is an accomplished writer and jack-of-all-trades. He lives in Athena.*

## YOUR VIEWS

### A couple of facts about proposed B2H line

The Boardman to Hemingway project power line, proposed by Idaho Power, is nothing but a strong arming of the 700 private landowners as the power line would cut through farms, ranches, forest lands, Ladd Wildlife Marsh, Morgan Lake and in front of the Oregon Trail Center.

It should be noted this project will be 100% on private property in Umatilla County. Idaho Power also wants to build new roads and remove anything in its path while destroying the land, wildlife habitat and water resources on the same private properties. Many of these roads they desire to build or rebuild are outside the desired route of the power line itself.

Idaho Power claims to be wanting to work with the 700 private land owners, all the while threatening the same landowners if Idaho Power is not allowed to enter the private property, prior to being issued the certificate to build by the state of Oregon, by taking the owners to court.

A couple of facts need to be pointed out.

First, Idaho Power does not have the authority needed to build the power line at this time, and it can still be denied the right to build. There is currently a couple of contested cases in the courts, and Oregon will not issue the required certificates until they have been settled, which means most likely those cases will go to the Supreme Court. Again with no certificate, Idaho Power has no authority to build the line.

Second, the fact is that Idaho Power is demanding access to the 700 private properties to do surveying and studies that they had already done in 2011.

The governments in Umatilla and Morrow counties don't seem to care about their residents but more about promised tax dollars from this badly planned project. This for-profit private corporation has some county, city and state agencies on its side as it means dollars to them and the landowners be damned. Union and Baker counties are both opposed to the line being built.

I have asked before, why zigzag across private lands as opposed to a straight line between Boardman and Idaho? The main reason, although denied by B2H, is to avoid all forms of government land and the stricter requirements it would have to meet. It is estimated that if the line was built in a straight line from Boardman to Hemingway, Idaho, it would cut the 293 mile proposed route by approximately 50 miles, but to avoid public and tribal lands, a zigzag route across private property was selected by Idaho Power.

I understand that if it doesn't cross people's land, they say what do we care? Why they should care is if at anytime this project goes broke, or drops the ball on any of their pie in the sky promises, you, the taxpayers, will be on the hook to cover the costs.

Again I ask people to contact your county, city and state officials and stop this theft of private property and the rights of the owners.

**John Harvey Stanfield**

### EDITORIALS

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

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