

## OUR VIEW

# Being open about universal health care

The plan for universal health care in Oregon may sound great. We wonder if people are being given enough information to judge it. The task force building the plan offers a long list of selling points for the plan:

- Everybody in Oregon would have health care.
- The health care benefits would be more generous than most current plans.
- There would be more benefits available for behavioral health treatment.
- Everyone would have dental benefits.
- Health coverage would not be related to your job.
- People wouldn't have to pay when getting care. No copays. No deductibles. People would pay based on how much they make.
- The state board that runs it would have open public meetings and report to the governor and Legislature.

The state's universal health care task force is holding meetings with the public, through Zoom. You can learn more about those [tinyurl.com/ORhealthmeetings](https://tinyurl.com/ORhealthmeetings).

In the background provided for these meetings, the possible benefits of the program are clearly spelled out. Some of the possible downsides, not so much.

For instance, this change means much of the private health care insurance industry in Oregon and any jobs associated with it likely would be wiped out. No need for them when the state is running the system. And the fact that it would be a transparent, government board running the system may not be such a plus if you don't like the prospect of the government taking over more of the private sector and attempting to manage it.

It would be nice to not have to worry about what treatment might cost when you go to the doctor or are wheeled into the emergency room. But what will people pay?

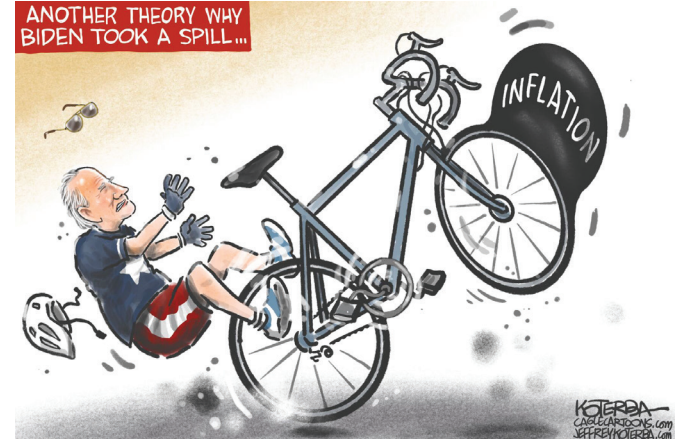
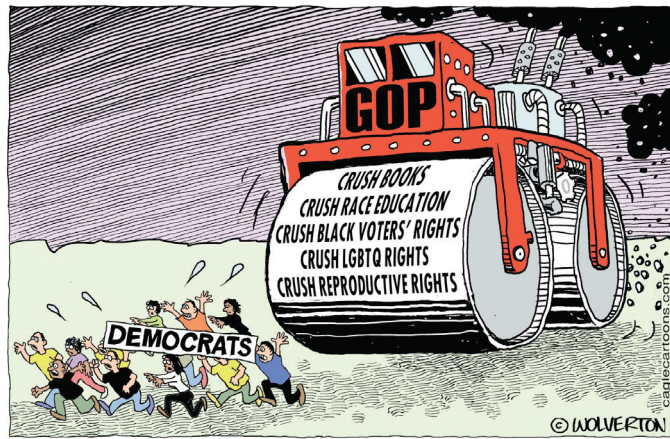
The rates of the new income taxes that families will pay are not in the background documents for the meetings. The rates of the payroll tax employers will pay are not there, either.

It's one thing to tell people that overall they would pay 13% less in premiums, deductibles and copays than they do now. It's one thing to tell employers that they would pay 11% less than they do now in premiums. They should be told upfront the expected rates for income and payroll taxes that those assumptions are based on.

At least according to some task force documents, households would pay income tax rates of up to 9.3% in addition to the income tax they already pay. There would be marginal rates based on the federal poverty level. The rates ramp up. For instance, households below 200% of the federal poverty level would pay zero. The line for a family of four to start paying would be just over \$55,000. A family of four would pay the highest marginal rate of 9.3% for income over \$110,000.

Employers would pay a payroll tax based on employee wages. Below \$160,000 a year an employer would pay a marginal rate of 7.25%, jumping up to 10.5% for income of \$160,000 or more.

A plan for universal health care in Oregon needs to be as frank with the costs as it is with the possible benefits.



# Cousins are friends for a lifetime



TAMMY MALGESINI  
INSIDE MY SHOES

There are several memes that allude to cousins being the first friends we have as children.

While I have a number of cousins, there are several on my mom's side of the family who are around the same age. As a kid growing up in California, I looked forward to our family vacations. Along with my parents and my brother, Mike, we would pile into the car and head up Interstate 5. After camping at Shasta Lake, we would continue on to the Medford area, where my cousins, Wade, Laura and Lynda lived.

I remember many fun-filled times with my cousins — and a few mishaps. There was that time we were playing baseball and I got whacked in the head by a bat. I had one big goose egg thanks to my brother's errant swing. Of course, that was nothing compared to the time Mike tried to chop off my toe with a shovel but that's a story for another time.

And we shared everything with each other — including the mumps. Already

on the road during a family vacation, I started showing the telltale sign of swollen glands. My mom consulted with her sister, Willamae, who said to come anyway. After our vacation ended and we headed home, the mumps lingered and infected most everyone in both our families.

When I was in fifth grade, my family moved to southern Oregon. It was great because I had instant friends — Laura also was a fifth grader and Lynda was two years behind us.

And I remember not long before my family moved to Coos Bay — between my seventh and eighth grade years — Laura, Lynda and I had a cousin's night out. Uncle Jim dropped us off at the Craterian Theater to see "Paper Moon." Afterward, we went to a little restaurant.

In addition to sharing French fries and sodas, we talked about our dreams for the future. Laura wanted to live in the mountains; Lynda talked about singing on stage and I shared my desire to make people laugh.

When we were all still in school, we made frequent trips between Medford and Coos Bay. And we stayed somewhat connected into early adulthood.

Although we were close as kids, my life eventually took me in a different

direction. While I ended up in Hermiston, Lynda remained in the Medford area and Laura eventually moved to Willowa County.

However, thanks to social media, I reconnected with Laura and Lynda more than a dozen years ago. I've visited with them on numerous occasions — including hanging out with Laura in her house in the Willowa Mountains and listening to Lynda belt out tunes in various venues in Oregon. The last time the three of us were all together was in 2015.

With our birthdays in February, March and April, we were going to celebrate Laura and me turning 60 in 2020. Although the pandemic delayed our original plans, and with Lynda turning 60 this year, we finally set another date.

And with more than three decades of periodic stand-up comedy gigs under my belt, I'm sure there will be plenty of laughter. We're going to rendezvous over the Fourth of July at Laura's place above Willowa Lake for our long-awaited CUZNS 62-62-60 celebration.

*Tammy Malgesini, the East Oregonian community writer, enjoys spending time with her husband and two German shepherds, as well as entertaining herself with random musings.*

## YOUR VIEWS

### B2H line is going make us pay more

The headline in the East Oregonian on Tuesday, May 24, 2022, reads: "PacifiCorp proposes rate increase." The requested rate increase is for 6.8% beginning in 2023.

Let us reflect back a short while when I wrote a letter to the editor stating there is a proposed power line — B2H — that Idaho Power Co. wants to build from Boardman to Hemingway, Idaho. In that letter I made the comment that, if the project fails, the taxpayers would be on the hook to pay the costs. I was only partially right as now PacifiCorp wants to increase rates to all ratepayers to help cover their costs of operation.

PacifiCorp is the majority owner of the Idaho Power project and, with the backing out of Bonneville Power Administration on the project, there are only two major players in the power line project — Idaho Power and PacifiCorp. PacifiCorp is

owned by Berkshire Hathaway, who's main obligation is their stockholders. When the project was begun in 2007, the power company estimated the costs at approximately a billion dollars. Now 15 years later, the project is obviously going to have much higher costs than in 2007. Interesting that PacifiCorp wants to increase the rates at the same time as Idaho Power desires to start actual construction of the line, which at this time has not been approved. PacifiCorp has applied for the increase rates to the Oregon Public Utility Commission, which is to oversee utilities and to insure ratepayers and taxpayers are protected from high costs and rates. It should be noted its own committee against Idaho Power's plan for forest fires was not adequate.

My question is why should Oregon ratepayers and taxpayers need to help pay for a power line, to benefit the stock holders of Idaho

Power and Berkshire Hathaway, to supply power mostly for the Boise and surrounding areas? I also asked, "Why would the rate/taxpayers of Umatilla County care where the power line would be built, if not in their backyards?" The answer is clear — higher rates and taxes. Yes, even though the line might not cross your front yard, it still will be the taxpayers and ratepayers who pay the bill.

John Harvey  
Stanfield

### PFLAG Pendleton expanding our Pride and uniting our community

Many of our supporters and other curious community members may be wondering why PFLAG Pendleton did not participate in the recent Pride parade in Pendleton on June 11. PFLAG chapters have shown their Pride and marched in Pride parades all across America

for more than 50 years, and it was an obvious omission for PFLAG Pendleton to not be present at this one.

The local organizers asked us not to attend, and we honored their request. However, PFLAG Pendleton continues to support the Pendleton LGBTQIA2S+ community, friends and families through guest speakers, movie nights, tabling and monthly social events.

We also debuted a fabulous drag show on June 10 at the Electric Sundown. This was made possible by the support of many local businesses and the hard work of numerous volunteers.

We continue to support, educate and advocate for anyone seeking our help or assistance. Please contact us at [pflag.pendleton@gmail.com](mailto:pflag.pendleton@gmail.com) or call us at 541-966-8414. You can also find us on Facebook at PFLAG Pendleton OR Chapter.

Patrick Cahill  
PFLAG Pendleton  
Board member