

OPINION

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

Legislature shouldn't let patient safety program expire

Jessica Barnett died when she was 17. She had started fainting when she was 12. It looked like a seizure. Her lips would go blue. She was put on epilepsy medication. The fainting didn't stop.

Her grandmother read an article about Long QT syndrome. The Mayo Clinic defines it as "a heart rhythm condition that can potentially cause fast, chaotic heartbeats. These rapid heartbeats might trigger you to suddenly faint. Some people with the condition have seizures. In some severe cases, LQTS can cause sudden death." The family thought that's what Jessica could have. It is treatable.

They had her tested. One test was positive. Some at a different clinic were ruled negative. Her doctors didn't believe that was what she had.

Jessica fainted again one day. It was a bad episode. Paramedics couldn't revive her and she died.

Genetic testing after Jessica was dead confirmed she had Long QT syndrome. Her parents wanted answers. They called the CEO of the hospital to try an arrange a meeting with her doctors. They were denied, so they decided to sue.

Her parents gathered up her medical records. Jessica's mother discovered the cardiologist never even looked at one of the tests. It was only sent to her general practitioner because that was the hospital's practice. Other tests were apparently misread. The family was tested. Her father had it as well, though he showed no symptoms.

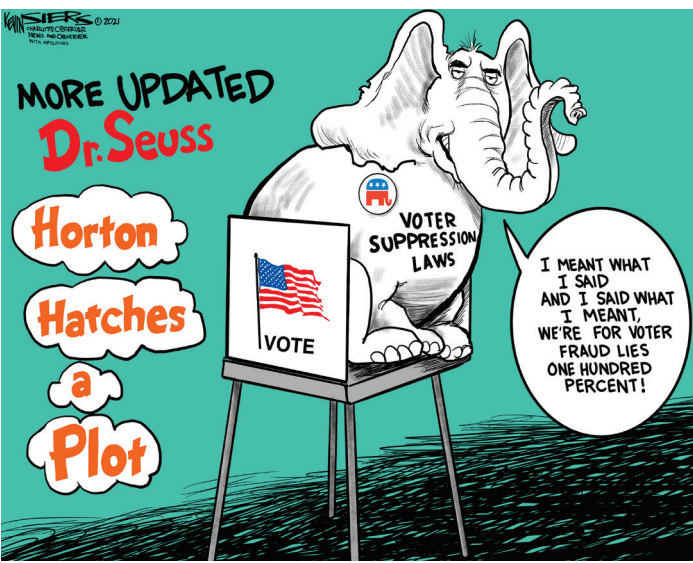
A lawsuit was settled out of court. Another 18 months after the lawsuit was settled and five years after Jessica's death, the parents finally got to meet with her doctors. They didn't know the family had requested to meet with them. They had not been told.

"The physicians jaws dropped open. They were thinking: 'If we'd actually spoken to this family we may not have had to go through litigation,'" Jessica's mother said. "They were right. All we ever wanted was to have our questions answered and know they were making changes so this wouldn't happen again."

The Oregon Patient Safety Commission discussed this case and cases like it. This case was from Canada. All those details we provided are courtesy of the efforts of the Canadian Patient Safety Institute and Jessica's family. Where it happened, though, does not matter so much as what can be learned from it.

Passed in 2013 by the Oregon Legislature, the early discussion and resolution system allows for an open conversation between patients, families and medical providers when serious harm occurs. Participants can speak candidly and reconciliation can be found without an adversarial lawsuit.

But the program will go away without action by the Legislature. It is scheduled to sunset on Dec. 23, 2023. Senate Bill 110 introduced at the request of Gov. Kate Brown and the Oregon Patient Safety Commission would get rid of the sunset provision. It was state Sen. Tim Knopp, R-Bend, who moved the bill be sent to the Senate floor for a vote with a recommendation that it pass. It should.



LETTERS to the EDITOR

Take part in Wyden's River Democracy Act invite

I ranch near Union and irrigate from Grande Ronde tributaries — Catherine and Little creeks. I was not caught off guard by the introduction of the River Democracy Act because I, like all Oregonians, received an unprecedented invitation from Sen. Ron Wyden to highlight streams worthy of protection.

Some might think that Wyden's ask was only for recreationists. However, for my ranching business, the watershed's ecological health is essential. Moreover, my hometown's water quality, infrastructure and economy depend on what happens upstream, whether the waterway is on private or federal lands.

If we continue neglecting our floodplains' health, fires and flooding will further erode infrastructure and threaten our safety. Windblown trees and ice jams are already threatening Union

due to channelization. Imagine what would happen if fire took over our forest lands with little vegetation to slow snowpack melting. With the fire-management tools offered in the act, we are less likely to see huge amounts of sediment choking creeks, flooding out private properties and silting in irrigation systems.

While some seem concerned that this legislation will negatively impact private property and water rights, this is an opportunity to build resilience downstream by restoring the waterways upstream — enhancing the value of private property and water rights.

Sen. Wyden invites us now to modify the River Democracy Act. Whether using livestock, forestry practices or enhancing recreation opportunities, the River Democracy Act gives us a voice and opportunities for regenerative management.

Cattlemen, don't be caught off guard.

Be part of the solution.

Andrea Malmberg
Union

Grass-fed beef from Wallowa County

Roy and I lived in Enterprise from 1995-2001. Roy worked in the schools and I worked at Wallowa County Mental Health. We loved living there.

We live in Newberg, Oregon now. A few weeks ago we were passing Burger-ville when we saw a sign "Wallowa Burgers from GrassFed Beef." We each had one. They were huge and delicious.

We wondered which farm they were from. Imagine our surprise to get a *Chieftain* with the Carman farm article in it. Yes, the beef was wonderful and made us feel a little at home. Lots of good memories.

Roy and Karen McConaughy
Newberg

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