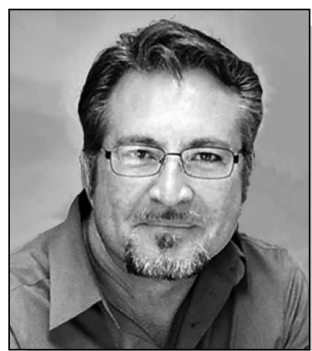


Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
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Opinion

The First Amendment
 Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.



Congress still missing the point on healthcare problem

While following the continued debate over the Senate healthcare proposal being pressed for a vote as early as this week by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, I couldn't help but be struck by the irony that the same people haggling over what health coverage Americans should have access to are the same people who are provided complete health coverage by taxpayer dollars.

It's no wonder that the real question that members of Congress should be asking has yet to be raised: Why is healthcare so expensive to

begin with?

At \$3 trillion a year, the cost of healthcare in the U.S. is nearly twice as much as any other developed country. In fact, according to Consumer Reports, if that \$3 trillion healthcare sector was its own country, it would be the fifth-largest economy in the world.

And even though we are outspending other industrialized countries nearly 2-to-1, the World Health Organization (WHO) recently ranked the U.S. a dismal 37th in healthcare systems — with The Commonwealth Fund naming us dead last among the top 11 industrialized countries for overall healthcare dollar-for-dollar.

While there are many factors contributing to the astronomical cost of healthcare, studies by WHO, Consumer Reports and even health economists like David Cutler at

Harvard University agree that administration and pharmaceutical are the two driving forces behind skyrocketing healthcare costs.

On average, 25 percent of healthcare dollars go to cover

Because more and more, single insurers can't cover the rising costs of medical procedures and drug prescriptions, particularly at a time when the median age in America is 40.

In most countries, govern-

ment negotiates drug prices with drug makers, which virtually guarantees lower prices. However, when Congress created Medicare Part D, it specifically denied Medicare the right to negotiate drug prices.

At the same time, the Veterans Administration and Medicaid aren't under the same restriction and pay the lowest drug prices.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, if Medicare Part D recipients received the same discount as Medicaid recipients, the federal government would save \$116 billion over the next 10 years.

Imagine the money American taxpayers would save if those on Medicare could benefit from the same Medicaid-negotiated drug prices?

One has to wonder why Congress itself is so opposed to weighing in on controlling the cost of prescription drugs and healthcare as a whole, and what role those who benefit most from that \$3 trillion industry play in fueling and supporting that opposition.

As taxpayers, we are America's shareholders — and Congress is our board of directors. It's time we ask why the Board of America, Inc., isn't pursuing a more cost-effective healthcare plan that will guarantee a better return on our investment, which in this case literally puts lives at risk physically and financially.

Rather than bickering over ways to pay for the ridiculously high costs of healthcare and prescription drugs, members of Congress — Democrats and Republicans alike — need to put the interests of average Americans ahead of special interests groups and address the issue of controlling those costs in the first place.

Establishing a plan that makes good healthcare affordable to all Americans isn't about how to pay more; it's about how to pay less.

From the Editor's Desk

NED HICKSON

administrative fees. In an interview on the PBS News Hour, Cutler gave the example of Duke University Hospital, where billing clerks outnumber hospital beds.

The reason? Billing specialists are needed to determine how to bill the varying requirements of multiple insurers.

Why the need for multiple insurers?

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Write Siuslaw News editor Ned Hickson at nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com or P.O. Box 10, Florence, Ore. 97439.

LETTERS

TOXIC RHETORIC LEADS TO REAL VIOLENCE

The editor of Siuslaw News, Ned Hickson, is guilty of promoting toxic rhetoric. It is almost impossible to get a right-side opinion printed.

They are few and far between.

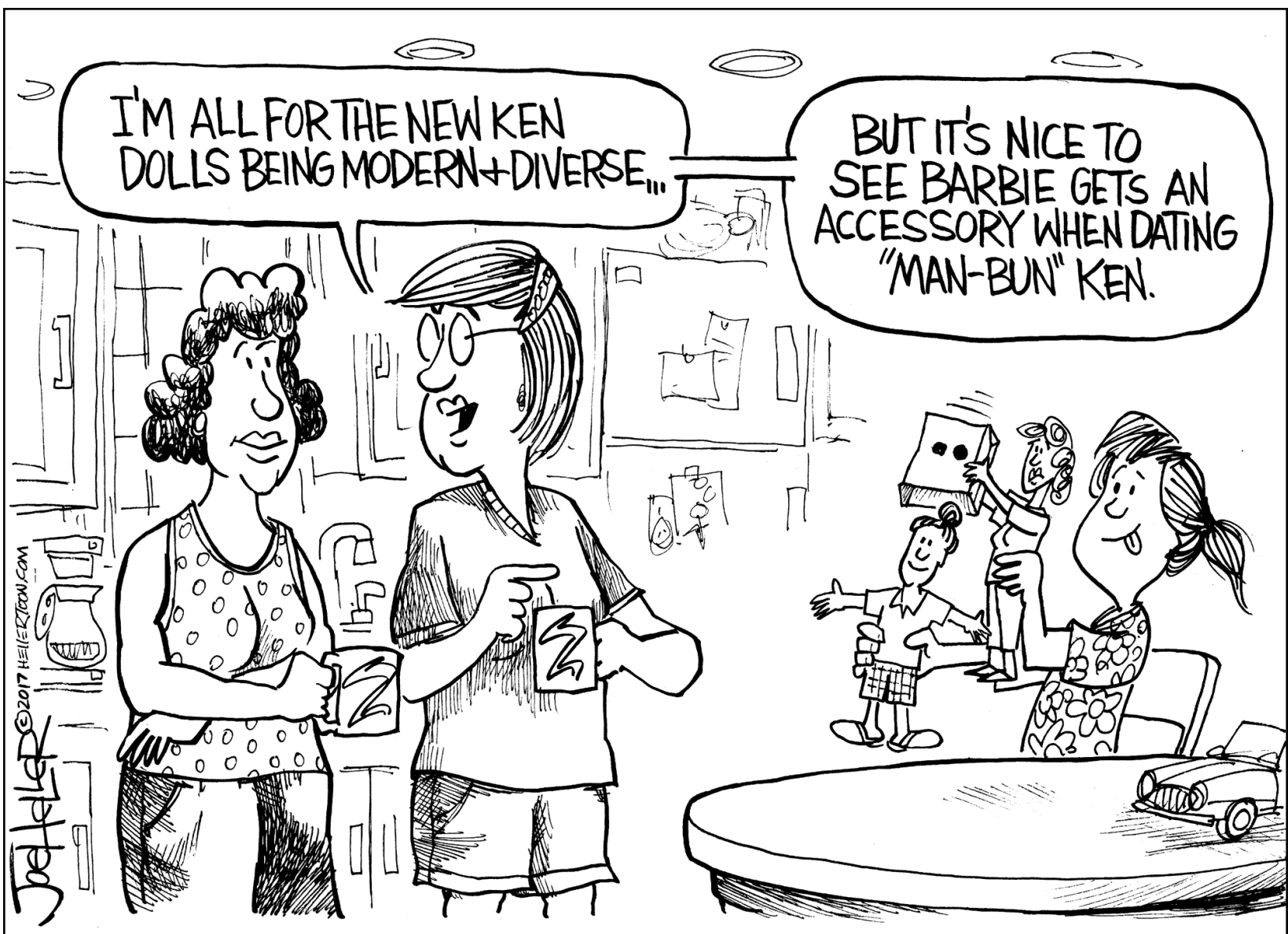
Since President Donald Trump got more votes than Hillary in Florence, and for that matter most of the state, the Siuslaw News should print more right-side opinions than left-side.

This is not the case. When you allow the rabid left to dominate, you are asking for trouble.

Even the so-called cartoons that are printed are hate-filled and certainly not even somewhat amusing political satire.

The editor needs to take a breath and remember he is talking about the President of the U.S.A.

—Martin Cable
 Dunes City



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Libelous, argumentative and anonymous letters or poetry, or letters from outside our readership area will not be published.

Send letters to:
 nhickson@thesiuslawnews.com

A COMMUNITY WITH HEART OF GOLD

The turnout for the Gifts of the Heart Silent Auction Fundraiser for Malakai Kirk on June 10 was beyond what we could have imagined.

I can't give enough thanks to the wonderful steering committee who met for a month of Tuesdays to put this event together. In addition, I'd like to share my appreciation and thank all the wonderful donors for their generous donations along with our fabulous community which attended this event in order to help a kind and compassionate young boy in need of a bone marrow transplant.

My heart fills with gratitude when I think of the outpouring of love and positive energy our community has shared with my family.

Again, to all who participated, I can't thank you enough.

Florence is indeed a community with a heart of gold.

—Debbie Pasternak
 Florence

LACK OF FORESIGHT COULD BE DISASTEROUS

Our political leaders' decision to attack Iraq in 2003 might have seemed like a good idea at the time, but little, if any, attention was paid to the consequences of regime change after the deed was done.

The GOP rollout of its plan to replace Obamacare echoes the same disastrous lack of foresight unless the goal is for potentially millions of people to lose their insurance.

When that happens, I don't see how they think voters will back them in future elections.

The disarray of an unfair healthcare system can only lead to a diminished Republican Party.

At the same time, for me it only affirms the need of a ballot measure for Health Care for All Oregon that invites all Oregonians to choose a greatly expanded equitable Medicare for all its citizens.

— Stuart Henderson
 Florence

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Siuslaw News

Published every Wednesday and Saturday at 148 Maple St. in Florence, Lane County, Oregon. A member of the National Newspaper Association and Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association. Periodicals postage paid at Florence, Ore. Postmaster, send address changes to: Siuslaw News, P.O. Box 10, Florence, OR 97439; phone 541-997-3441; fax 541-997-7979. All press releases may be sent to PressReleases@TheSiuslawNews.com.

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DEADLINES:

Wednesday Issue—General news, Monday noon; Budgets, four days prior to publication; Regular classified ads, Monday 1 p.m.; Display ads, Monday noon; Boxed and display classified ads, Friday 5 p.m.
 Saturday Issue—General news, Thursday noon; Budgets, two days prior to publication; Regular classified ads, Thursday 1 p.m.; Display ads, Thursday noon; Boxed and display classified ads, Wednesday 5 p.m. Soundings, Tuesday 5 p.m.

NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

In Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$71; 10-weeks subscription, \$18; Out of Lane County — 1-year subscription, \$94; 10-weeks subscription, \$24; Out of State — 1-year subscription, \$120; Out of United States — 1-year subscription, \$200; E-Edition Online Only (Anywhere) — 1-year subscription, \$65.

Mail subscription includes E-Edition.
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