

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
Florence, OR 97439

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.

'No' on Measure 101 will raise healthcare costs

(Editor's Note: Ballots for the Jan. 23 Special Election should be arriving, with the deadline for voter registration ending this Tuesday, Jan. 2, at 11:59 p.m. See details on page A3. Viewpoint submissions on this and other topics are always welcome as part of our goal to encourage community discussion and exchange of perspectives.)

A "No" vote to Measure 101 would repeal parts of House Bill 2391, which passed the Oregon House and Senate with bi-partisan support and a required 3/5ths majority.

While HB2391 funds the Oregon Health Plan (OHP), it also promotes reinsurance "stability" efforts to encourage insurance carriers to offer policies in more areas, with reduced premium increases.

Supporters of a "Yes" vote on M101 include numerous medical, hospital, doctor and nursing associations, such as the Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems (43 hospitals and provider centers), the Oregon Medical Association, AARP, the Oregon League of Women Voters, and the Oregon School Boards Association.

Even Republican Ted Ferrioli, the former GOP Senate Minority Leader, supported HB 2391.

The initial petitioners for the upcoming Measure 101 special election consisted of just three GOP legislators.

A "No" vote on M101 could roll back healthcare coverage through the Oregon Health Plan (OHP), which currently covers 1 in 4 Oregonians. OHP's broad-based coverage provides families and children earlier and cheaper primary

and preventative healthcare, which minimizes later and more expensive ER care and hospital visits.

Since 2012, Oregon's

Medicare, Tri-Care (Veterans) and group and self-insured plans governed by ERISA.

HB2391 then provides

tributed to carrier uncertainty and "less choice" for consumers.

The Director of Communications for the Dept. of Consumer and Business Services personally confirmed that the newly-substituted State reinsurance "stability" efforts in HB 2391 assisted carriers to offer plans to help assure every county had at least one carrier.

In turn, carriers must accept 7.5 percent reductions on any annual requested premium increase. As a result, the family purchaser of "individual" market policies will see 6 percent net premium decreases in what carriers otherwise would have charged after allowing for any 1.5 percent premium increase.

OHP, assisted by HB2391, puts Oregon in the forefront of healthcare system stability. In 2013, more than 320,000 Oregonians with a job still lacked health insurance — more than 1 of every 6 workers.

Since then, the number of uninsured working Oregonians has dropped by more than half.

In the absence of serious consideration for a single-payer system organized around the rational efficiencies of a single risk-pool, a "Yes" vote on Measure 101 is the only way to assure healthcare continues for 1-in-4 of our fellow Oregonians and their families.

Rand Dawson is a Siltcoos resident with long interest in health care reform. He is a retired litigation attorney who also represented insurance companies.

Dr. John Egar is a practicing Internal Medicine Doctor in Florence, for many years, who is active in healthcare reform.

GUEST VIEWPOINT

BY RAND DAWSON
RETIRED INSURANCE LITIGATION ATTORNEY
DR. JOHN EGAR
DOCTOR OF INTERNAL MEDICINE

uninsured rate decreased from 20 percent to only 5 percent of the population. Today, 95 percent of adults and 98 percent of children have health coverage in Oregon. This decrease in those who are uninsured benefits all Oregonians since hospitals, care facilities and providers no longer need to shift costs of uncompensated care to other insurers, which in turn raises premiums for everyone.

Expansion of OHP came after 2012, when Oregon opted to expand Medicaid on the offer of 100 percent federal financing and no state-matching funds. Now, for 2017, Oregon must provide 5 percent of funding, and approximately 10 percent by 2020.

Any "matching funds" raised via taxes or assessments must meet federal fairness standards, and "be broad based and uniform across sectors."

Retaining HB2391 collects a 0.7 to 1.5 percent charge on the revenue made by hospitals, clinics and CCOs.

Another 30 percent of additional needed funds are raised by assessing a 1.5 percent premium charge on health insurance policies in all individual and group markets, except where barred by federal law. Those barred include

return revenue incentives for these providers, who document improved care delivery to patients by providing "enhanced performance" payments.

A "No" vote to M101 eliminates \$210 to \$320 million in HB2391 state revenue, and the matching \$1 billion federal funding for OHP in the 2017-2019 budget. It also would mean future years would lose billions of dollars in federal matching funds.

A "No" vote also immediately force the Oregon Legislature into a February special session to consider possible major reductions — or alternative major funding sources — for the Oregon Health Plan, potentially impacting over 1 million Oregonians, including 400,000 children.

Any alternative funding requires a 3/5th Legislative majority vote, in an increasingly polarized political setting.

Beyond OHP, a "No" vote also eliminates HB2391's reinsurance program, destabilizing Oregon's health insurance market.

Before HB 2391, several Oregon counties appeared to have no carriers for 2018 health exchange insurance plans.

Recent Congressional failure to continue reinsurance stability funding con-

LETTERS

PAYING IT FORWARD

Dear Secret Santa,
Thank you for paying my electric bill on Dec. 1.

Your gift let me do something nice for someone else.

Thanks again, and Happy New Year.

—Ivy Meadow
Florence

WHERE ARE THE ACCUSED?

After reading the Letter to the Editor by David T. Eckhardt ("Respect Rights Under Constitution," Dec. 27), I must comment on his statement that "Al Franken, who I thought would have been better at catching dogs than in the Senate."

I think Franken was a good senator, but if he could have been a better dog catcher possibly he could have caught Trump for his sexual harassment of women before he became president.

I also want to respond to his statement that the #MeToo movement has allowed accusers to make accusations that are decades old and how "... it is not right if they did, but are not given the chance for their day in court..."

I ask you this question: Did the children sexually abused over

decades by Catholic priests get their day in court and where are the accused?

—Win Jolley
Florence

IS PORT COMMISSION'S EXISTENCE JUSTIFIED?

I read the story "Port Moves Forward on Longstanding Issues" (Dec. 23) with great anticipation about hearing some good news regarding the Port of Siuslaw.

However, after carefully reading the article, I was not surprised to learn little has changed as to the overall financial condition of the Port. Yes, it was good to hear the FEMA erosion funded grant project was off to a shaky start, unfortunately with more questions than answers.

Whichever way you look at our little port, there seems to be a constant drip, drip, drip of taxpayers' money with no payback. It seems what we can expect is a continued downward spiral in the maintenance and replacement of capital assets.

This ongoing financial erosion is directly attributable to the changing times surrounding the Port's original mission: Marine related commerce.

Over the past 100-plus years since the Port's inception, there has been a steady withering away of the economic drivers justifying its existence. Two of those drivers, the timber and commercial fishing industries, have dwindled to a shadow of their former selves, resulting in a Port under tremendous financial duress with little hope of replacement industries and revenue.

As a former Port Commissioner and now a citizen, I clearly see it's time for the Port to "come hard about" and re-think its purpose.

The Port Commission requested ideas from its citizens. But when an informed citizen suggested the Port explore privatizing the campground, there was little to no discussion.

Without a new plan or approach and at the present rate of financial hemorrhage, bankruptcy of the Port is not an unrealistic outcome. Its continued existence may no longer be justified or relevant to our community. Perhaps its assets would be better utilized by other public/private entities?

I hope the New Year brings about an epiphany regarding how the Port of Siuslaw can best serve its citizens.

—Bill Fleenor
Mapleton

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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 only be published at the discretion of the editor.

POLITICAL/ELECTION LETTERS:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn't follow the above criteria.

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