

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 their Government for a redress of grievances.



Difficult decision made to close local Habitat ReStore

Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, communities and hope. Thanks to the hard work of many committed volunteers, staff and generous donors, Habitat for Humanity has been well represented in the Cottage Grove Area since 1992. At the end of 2017, as many of you may be aware, Cottage Grove merged with the Springfield/Eugene affiliate to form Habitat for Humanity of Central Lane.

Through this merger, the leadership from both affiliates have come together into one organization to focus on supporting families to build and improve places to call home.

There is an increasing need for services like the ones Habitat provides in Lane County. The cost of rent is increasing faster than wages, housing stock is scarce, and homeownership is increasingly out of reach for local families.

Habitat for Humanity believes that affordable housing plays a critical role in strong and stable communities. Later this summer, we will break ground in Cottage Grove on the second Habitat home in 2018 for a local future homebuyer.

This is a significant commitment to building home ownership in the community and demonstrates our goal to serve the Cottage Grove Area as part of the greater Habitat for Humanity of Central Lane.

We recognize the housing crisis in Lane County, and

building materials, décor, appliances and more. The revenue generated through the ReStore is invested back into the programs supporting home building and small home improvement projects.

While many see the ReStore as the face of Habitat, and

operations of this location.

We have spent the past six months working to improve our bottom line in Cottage Grove, but the store remains in the red. As such, we have made the difficult decision to close the Cottage Grove ReStore.

It is important that the community understand that the long term goal of the ReStore was always intended to be a revenue source for building and improving homes. We cannot in good conscience continue to operate a store that is taking funding and staff time away from that primary mission of our organization.

Thank you to the community for your long standing support of Habitat for Humanity.

We look forward to building a new home with you this fall, and continuing to partner with you to build and improve places to call home.

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Guest Viewpoint

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Habitat for Humanity

across the state, is much bigger than the number of individuals and families we can serve. We know that building home ownership for a handful of families a year is not going to make a substantial difference in the county, but it is going to make a measurable and significant difference for those homebuyers.

We are a small, but important part of the puzzle that needs to be put together to address the need for affordable housing in Lane County.

A critical tool that has evolved in Habitat for Humanity across the country is the ReStore. The ReStore sells quality new and gently used

despite providing a valuable service for affordable home improvements, the selling of goods is not the primary goal of Habitat.

Habitat for Humanity runs ReStores across the country for the purpose of supporting the mission of building homes, not as a service in and of itself to the community.

Despite significant effort, the ReStore location in Cottage Grove has proven to be a challenge to make successful. The staff and volunteers have worked hard and have demonstrated a level of commitment that is appreciated and commended, however, multiple fac-

Congress still asking the wrong health care question



While watching the renewed debate in our nation's capitol over healthcare, I couldn't help but be struck by the irony of knowing that the same people haggling over what kind of health care Americans should receive are the same people who have complete health care paid for 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 health care 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, if that \$3 trillion healthcare sector was its own country, it would be the fifth-largest economy in the world according to Consumer Reports.

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.

In preparing this editorial, I spent time researching the reasons behind healthcare's astronomical costs in this country.

While there are many factors, from defensive medicine practices for avoiding lawsuits,

and only 900 beds. The reason?

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

Why the need for multiple insurers?

Because more and more, single insurers can't cover the rising costs of medical procedures

to the "branding" of healthcare providers similar to designer clothing (the bigger the name, the more money they can demand from insurance companies), the same two cost factors rise to the top of the list: Administrative costs.

Drug costs.

WHO studies, Consumer Reports and even health economists like David Cutler at Harvard University agree that those two factors are the driving forces behind skyrocketing healthcare costs.

On average, 25 percent of healthcare dollars go to cover administrative fees. In an interview on the PBS News Hour, Cutler gave the example of Duke University Hospital, which has 1,300 billing clerks

and drug prescriptions, particularly at a time when the median age in America is 40.

In most countries, government 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 Congress's own 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.

From the Managing Editor's Desk

Ned Hickson

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 is so opposed to weighing in on controlling the cost of prescription drugs and healthcare as a whole, and what — if any — role those who benefit most from that \$3 trillion industry play in that decision.

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 stake physically and financially.

Rather than bickering over ways to pay for the astronomical costs associated with healthcare and prescription drugs, Congress needs to slow down and address the issue of controlling those costs in the first place.

Establishing affordable healthcare isn't about how to pay more but about how to pay less.

(Write to managing editor
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Letters to the Editor Policy

The Sentinel 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.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or without documentation will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside The Sentinel readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

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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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