

## OUR VIEW

Fences,  
wolves &  
ranchers

Wolves reintroduced themselves to Oregon. Ever since, there's been a lot of debate about what to do about them.

They aren't usually predators of people, though don't try to make friends. As for ranch cattle, wolves can treat them like a buffet.

Nobody knows that better than rancher Ted Birdseye. His Mill-Mar Ranch of 275 acres near Prospect has had more losses to wolves than any other rancher in Oregon, according to OPB. Eight of his cows and two of his dogs have been killed by wolves. It's the Rogue Pack at work.

Is that bad luck? The cost of doing business? Something the government should compensate him for?

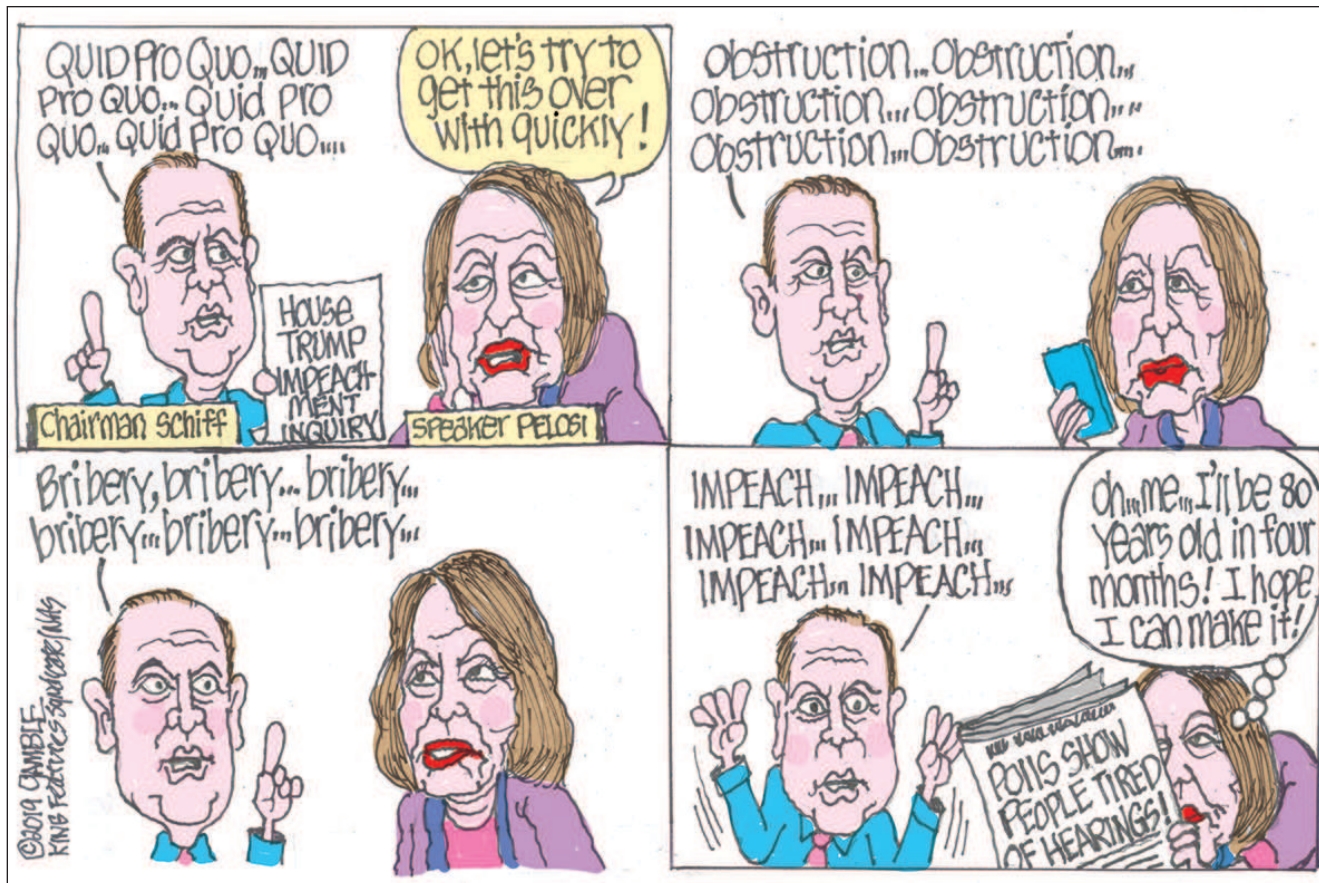
Oregon has a compensation program. It has paid out money to help ranchers hire riders, buy radios, hang flags from fences and compensate for losses of cattle, sheep and working dogs. That seems absolutely justified if government and Oregonians want this natural predator to return.

What's good is that people who want wolves to thrive in Oregon are working so hard to help Birdseye's ranch from being the place the Rogue Pack goes for meals. A school group came to his ranch and helped him remove some bone piles, according to OPB. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wolf biologist John Stephenson has spent nights at the ranch to try to keep wolves away. He helped Birdseye put up flagging on its fences. Birdseye even tried those inflatable dancing men you see on car lots.

Thanks to Oregon's compensation program, federal grants and contributions from environmentalists Birdseye is getting three miles of electric fencing around his ranch. It cost about \$40,000. The same kind of fencing has worked in Montana to keep wolves out.

The return of wolves is a welcome sign to some and a bad sign to others. But it is great to see different ends of the spectrum of views cooperate. Prevention of wolves killing livestock is key for people on all sides of the issue.

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## OTHER VIEWS

## Wildfire report can't gather dust

## Editorial from The Albany Democrat-Herald:

A month after Gov. Kate Brown's Council on Wildfire Response raised eyebrows throughout Oregon by estimating that it will take \$4 billion over 20 years to improve the state's ability to respond to wildfires, the council recently released its recommendations on how that money should be spent.

At first glance, it appears the council has done solid work. Its report suggests that the state focus on four broad goals:

- Creating fire-adapted communities.
- Restoring and maintaining resilient landscapes.
- Responding safely and effectively to wildfire.
- Developing cross-functional support systems to continue to develop these goals. (This is the spot in which members of the council make their case for continued task forces and whatnot, but this does include a reference to an intriguing proposal being kicked around at Oregon State University to develop a wildfire center to produce, capture and disseminate the best available science regarding wildfire. OSU would seem to be well suited for such a center.)

In all, the final report includes 37 recommendations and assigns priorities to each one: In all, 13 of the recommendations are rated as "highest." (The other priority levels are "very high," "high" and "moderate." Just one

recommendation earned a "moderate" rating — that one calls for the Oregon Insurance Commission to monitor the property insurance market to ensure continued access to affordable insurance.)

The council said the highest priorities are working with power utilities to create risk mitigation plans, changing building codes to require defensible space around homes built near forests, reducing fuels within forests that cause catastrophic fires and educating the public on wildfire prevention.

That \$4 billion price tag does not seem unreasonable, considering that it covers the costs of actively managing forests and rangelands and treating some 5.6 million acres. And even though the report does not identify sources for that funding, it makes a compelling case that the costs of wildfire to Oregonians are much greater; in fact, the report says, the average costs of wildfire (economic losses, lost taxes, damages to ecosystems, destruction of infrastructure and depreciated property values) are 11 times greater than the immediate costs of firefighting.

In an interview, Matt Donegan, the chairman of the council, said the state spent \$533 million on fire suppression in 2018 and estimated the associated costs at about \$6 billion. This year's fire season was milder, but it's a good bet that it also was atypical; the report says that climate change, population growth and record fuel levels have combined to create a growing wildfire threat in the

West.

But although those numbers are persuasive, they don't make it any easier for legislators and other state officials to locate an additional \$4 billion.

The problem here is that it would be easy to glance at the price tag, grimace, and set the report on a shelf at the Capitol to gather dust. That would be a mistake: A number of the recommendations in the report likely can be pursued at a relatively low cost. The report also suggests figuring out a way to treat 300,000 acres of state land each year at a cost of about \$200 million. That's not peanuts, but it's easier than finding \$4 billion at once.

The report also urges that we not wait for that long-term funding model to fall into place: These treatments should occur each year; it says, "to the full extent possible through state funds."

We've seen a tendency on the governor's part from time to time to hold off on immediate action in favor of pulling together a working group to search for long-term answers. That's not necessarily a bad impulse, but it comes with the risk that nothing happens while we wait for that long-term strategy to fall into place — or, worse, that the strategy never is implemented. The nice thing about the council's recommendations is that they're not all or nothing; they include items that we can move on almost immediately. We shouldn't wait. Wildfires won't.

## OTHER VIEWS

## Warren's Medicare for All plan doesn't pencil out

For any problem, Sen. Elizabeth Warren likes to say, "I have a plan for that." Her plan to finance "Medicare for All" doesn't add up. Not even close. Perhaps that's why Warren is changing that plan.

Warren may deserve credit for trying. Sen. Bernie Sanders, who sponsored one of the Medicare for All bills, hasn't tried to explain how he would pay for this transformation of the American health care system that would abolish private insurance. Voters associate Sanders much more with the idea.

Presidential candidates Warren and Sanders, however, are competing for the same ultraliberal Democratic voters. Warren has been rising in the polls. So she didn't merely embrace Medicare for All. She tried to own it.

But Warren's math shows that the plan relies on unrealistic assumptions. Her calculations also undermine Sanders' claim that even though taxes would rise for all Americans under Medicare for All, the middle class would come out ahead because they would save even more.

Based on a reading of Warren's plan and several credible analyses, here are the numbers:

According to the left-leaning Urban Institute, Medicare for All would

cost the federal government an additional \$34 trillion over 10 years. Warren starts by claiming to reduce that number to \$20.5 trillion.

To get there, Warren diverts \$6.1 trillion that states now spend on health care. Getting that money could require a lawsuit. Then she relies on the first of those shaky assumptions.

Warren assumes that Medicare for All would reduce the cost of prescription drugs by \$1.7 trillion. That's far more than what outside analysts — including those at the Urban Institute — have concluded.

Warren also assumes that health care spending would slow by \$1.1 trillion over those 10 years. Even though the rate of growth has slowed under the Affordable Care Act, Warren's estimate assumes much more in savings.

She predicts a savings of \$1.8 trillion from lower administrative spending without private insurance

expenses. Again, that's higher than other estimates. She assumes that payments to doctors and hospitals would decline by almost \$3 trillion. But setting those lower rates would be a huge political fight, and providers who opposed them might stop seeing patients.

Problems continue with finding that \$20.5 trillion in revenue. Warren starts with \$9.8 trillion from companies with employees of at least 50 employees. That's the money they spend now on Medicare Part A payments, with employees paying the other half.

From there, Warren has to scramble. She relies on \$3 trillion from her 6% tax on the wealthiest Americans. But tax avoidance likely would reduce that amount, and Warren also has proposed spending revenue from that tax on other programs.

Warren further assumes that tougher tax enforcement would increase revenue by \$2.3 trillion. That

is 40 times higher than what the IRS estimates. She would seek more revenue from companies by repealing the corporate-friendly 2017 tax bill. Congress would have to act first.

For the rest, Warren would impose a tax on Wall Street, cut defense spending and reform immigration. She said immigration reform, which couldn't even get a House vote in 2013, would save \$400 million.

Linda Blumberg is a health economist with the Urban Institute. She co-wrote the group's analysis of Warren's math. "We felt we were making pretty optimistic, aggressive assumptions," Blumberg told The Washington Post. "They're making more optimistic, more aggressive assumptions."

Indeed, Warren and Sanders both are being dangerously unrealistic. They contend that Medicare for All could offer more benefits than single-payer health care plans in other countries without any of

the trade-offs that are aspects of those plans, such as longer waits to see some physicians and higher taxes.

You can see why Democrats want to campaign on health care. The issue helped them take the House last year. Americans regularly complain that their policies cost more but cover less.

Yet few support Medicare for All as Warren and Sanders envision it. Last February, a poll commissioned by The Hill newspaper found that only 13% of respondents wanted a single-payer program if it meant abolishing private insurance.

A better idea for those under 65 would be a "public option" — government-run coverage that would compete with private plans. Some people might take the public option and buy a private, supplemental policy.

Warren now says that she would first seek to create that public option and to lower the Medicare age from 65 to 50. Not until the third year of her presidency would she "transition" to Medicare for All.

It's true that Republicans have only a bad plan on health care — repealing the Affordable Care Act without a replacement. But the Democratic alternative should be a good plan, not Medicare for All.

## Letters to the editor

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• The writer must sign the letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only).

Letters that do not include this information cannot be published.

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