

OUR VIEW

Congress:
Pass No
Pain Act

Blake's opioid addiction began after a motorcycle accident when he was in his teens. He needed multiple surgeries to repair his jaw and mouth. His mom, Tony Karlowicz of Sunriver, told us he was prescribed opioids for the pain.

Blake got hooked.

By the time he was 19, he was addicted to heroin. He did get into treatment. He still died from an overdose on July 23, 2019. He was 28.

More than 800,000 people have died in the United States since 1999 from a drug overdose. Opioid overdoses make up an alarming percentage.

In 2019, 70% of all drug overdose deaths in the country involved opioids. In Oregon, an average of five people die a week from opioid overdose. In Deschutes County, there were 66 overdose deaths from opioids from 2016-18.

Deschutes County Sheriff Shane Nelson told us increasingly his team have had to administer not just one but multiple doses of naloxone to help reverse opioid overdoses. He believes naloxone has helped his deputies save at least 30 lives in the last 5 or so years.

Oregon already encourages and supports non-opioid treatments. It collects better data to track the problem. Prescriptions for opioids have been declining steadily. And anyone can get naloxone from a pharmacist. But opioid addiction is still ruining too many lives here and across the country.

The No Pain Act could help. It's a bill in Congress with bipartisan support. Oregon Sen. Jeff Merkley, a Democrat, is a cosponsor. The bill shifts billing practices in Medicare to attempt to encourage more nonopioid solutions for pain. It doesn't ban opioids or eliminate reimbursement for them. It attempts to make it easier to use nonopioids.

"Across Oregon, I've seen the devastation and heartbreak in the faces of families who have lost loved ones to the illness of opioid addiction," Merkley told us in a statement. "All too often, these life-destroying addictions begin with a doctor's prescription. We should be doing everything in our power to encourage doctors to prescribe non-opioid painkillers when possible, so it makes absolutely zero sense for Medicare to make it more cost-effective for hospitals to prescribe opioids rather than other pain management alternatives."

There is a consideration about the bill to be aware of. The backers of the Voices for Non-Opioid Choices Coalition that supports the bill's passage includes funding from Pacira Biosciences, a manufacturer of nonopioid pain relievers, and other manufacturers. The coalition is, in fact, much broader — representing a range of medical professionals, addiction and recovery organizations and more.

The No Pain Act won't solve the opioid crisis. But passing it could help prevent more overdoses and family anguish.

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OTHER VIEWS

Editorial from The St. Louis Post-Dispatch:

As Missouri struggles with a worst-in-the-nation resurgence of the coronavirus, centered on unvaccinated citizens in heavily Republican areas of the state, Republican Gov. Mike Parson is once again doing his part to make the situation worse. Parson — whose infamous "dang mask" derision of pandemic safety protocols last year seemed like the height of irresponsibility — has outdone himself by implying this week that the Biden administration is threatening to "compel vaccination" of Missouri citizens. This is a potentially deadly lie that Parson should retract immediately.

Parson's statement is part of what looks like a concerted effort on the right to willfully misrepresent comments President Joe Biden made Tuesday in his effort to convince Americans to get vaccinated, saying that "we need to go to community by community, neighborhood by neighborhood, and oftentimes, door to door — literally knocking on doors — to get help to the remaining people protected from the virus."

In context, it was clear that he was talking about an information campaign, nothing more. Nonetheless, right-wingers have seized on the "knocking on doors" reference to imply Biden wants federal storm-troopers to force vaccinations on

unsuspecting citizens.

Reps. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., and Lauren Boebert, R-Colo., even invoked Nazi Germany — a deeply offensive comparison, but nothing less than would be expected from two of the most unhinged fanatics in Congress.

Parson essentially threw in his lot with those zealots on Wednesday night. "I have directed our health department to let the federal government know that sending government employees or agents door-to-door to compel vaccination would NOT be an effective OR a welcome strategy in Missouri!" he tweeted.

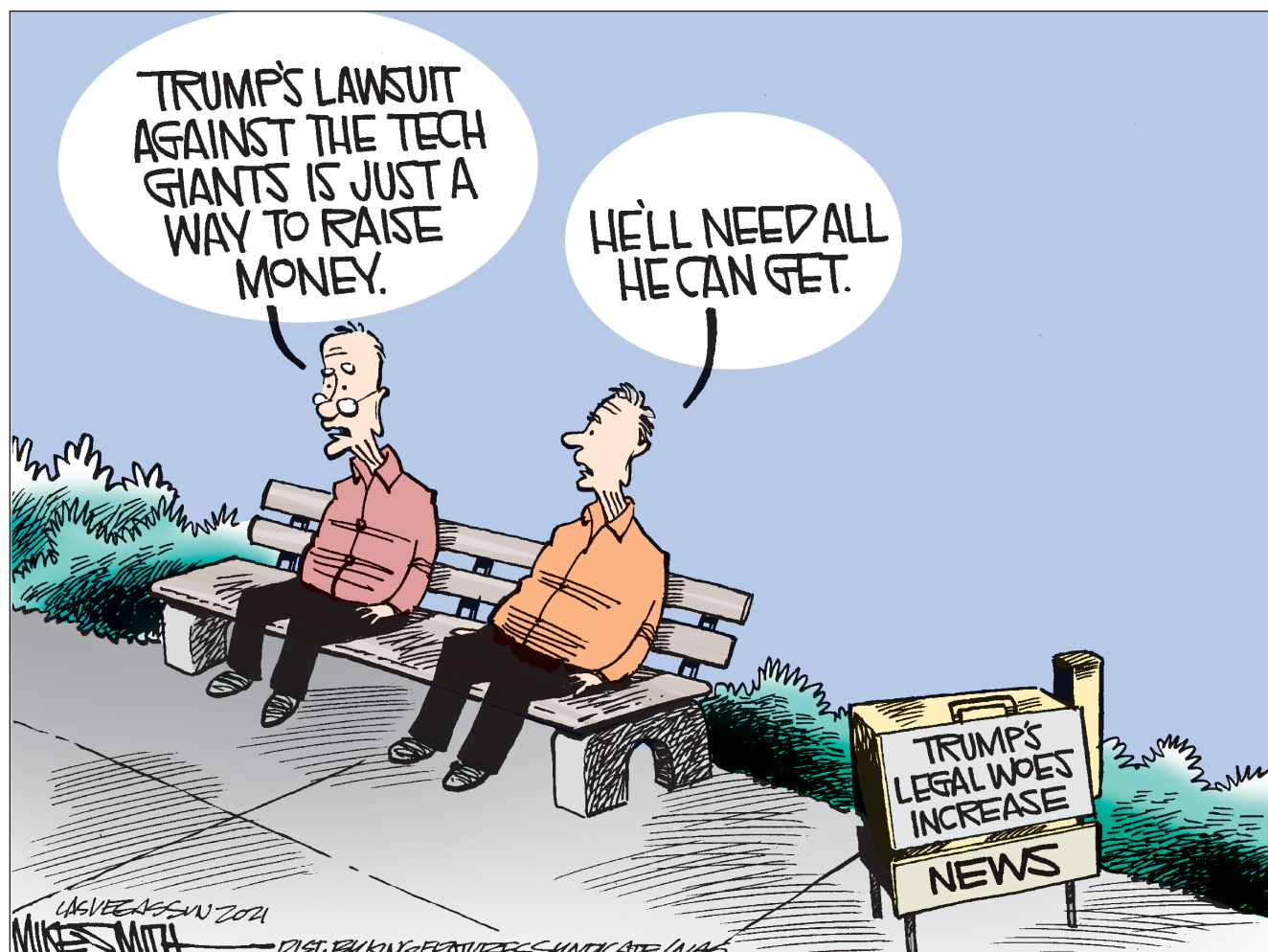
Compel? Has Parson paid any

attention at all to Biden's policy on this? The administration has steadfastly refused to mandate or track vaccinations — or to even recommend that private businesses do so, drawing criticism from medical advocates who say a more forceful approach is needed. The administration's entire vaccination effort has been properly predicated on fact-driven persuasion.

With his misleading tweet, Parson has made that persuasion more difficult. As the delta variant ravages the very portions of Missouri where conservative voices like his hold sway, he has given aid and comfort to the enemy in a war for his state's health. As of mid-week,

the rate of new cases in Missouri was tied with that of Arkansas, and greater than in any other state. How does Parson imagine that sowing anti-vaccine, anti-government paranoia will bring those numbers down?

Parson's comparatively mild public statements encouraging vaccination aren't nearly enough. It isn't a coincidence that the coronavirus resurgence, both in Missouri and nationally, is centered in politically conservative regions where vaccination rates are low. Parson's bully pulpit allows him to be part of the solution or part of the problem. How long will he continue to choose the latter?



America needs to restore the shine to the idea of patriotism

By Kevin Frazier

It's hard to be a global citizen if you've never left the country. It's impractical to champion a continent-wide community when its inhabitants share little, besides geography, in common. What's left is patriotism — a nation is the broadest jurisdiction capable of creating a sense of community, even among strangers. Only those with the privilege of traveling like global citizens, reading like global citizens, and guiding global businesses are likely to second-guess the merits of patriotism. For the rest (and majority) of Americans, the nation will remain the most proximate and most powerful source of loyalty, and, consequently, action.

Absent reviving a sense of patriotism, the American Experiment is destined to fail. Though patriotism operates at the national level, it's our best shot of solving national as well as global problems.

If you care about climate change, you should promote a strong, nationwide community that's willing to collectively sacrifice for the good of the entire country (and, by secondary effects, the world). If you care about income inequality, the odds of redistributive policies passing are much greater if elites feel a common bond and share common goals with the likely recipients of government support. Finally, if you care about the health of our democracy, then patriotism can make possible bold, nationwide, democracy-building projects like creating an expected national service program.

Yet, rather than celebrate patriotism as a tool to wield, many have come to associate any sense of allegiance to their fellow Americans as a show of moral recklessness and historical ignorance. To wear the American flag is to support white supremacy. To honor the members of the Armed Services is to condone imperialism, past, present, and future. To participate in the Pledge of Allegiance is to submit to a "Hunger Games"-esque ritual that reinforces a flawed and fundamentally unacceptable government.

The perception of an attack on patri-

tism is widespread. Take, for example, The New York Times 1619 project.

While motivated by an understandable desire to correct omissions in our understanding of the role of race in the founding of America, the perceived use of the project as a governor on anyone, at any age, developing patriotic feelings is problematic. The project contains several examples of what's flawed with the nation's founding; as with any nation, there are lots of them — especially, in the American case, egregious mistreatment of enslaved individuals. The fatal flaw of the project, according to its detractors, is citing those founding flaws as reason to forever perceive America as a nation unworthy of the public's patriotism. For some proponents of the project, its best interpretation is that no amount of progress can overcome the nation's early years and continued struggles with racial equality. In either case, the project has contributed to a troubling partisan skew to patriotism.

The unnecessary move from historical analysis to modern attack on patriotism is not only driving certain liberal families away from American affinity, it's also accelerating conservative affinity for the state as their primary political community. Texas, presumably in response to attacks on patriotism, has opted to reinforce ties to the state. The state recently adopted a new pledge to the Texas state flag: "Honor the Texas flag; I pledge allegiance to thee, Texas, one state under God, one and indivisible."

The more liberal elites push for global citizenship (which is unrealistic and uncommon — though people may say they see themselves as global citizens that belief will rarely compel meaningful action) or citizenship by identity (be it racial, sexual preference, gender conception), the more conservatives will push for even narrower conceptions of citizenship (in the best cases, at the level of the state, and, in the worst cases, by race). As a result, neither of our two major political communities will be capable of activating the broadest community at our disposal — the

nation. Instead, the best each party can hope for is to move small fractions of the public to take even more extreme steps toward partisan goals.

Attacks of patriotism generally suffer from a fatal flaw: assuming that patriotism means total and unequivocal support for a nation's history and current actions. Patriotism, though, is more akin to your relationship with your parents. Lord knows they aren't perfect (neither are you), but you persist in talking with them, learning from them, and sharing with them. Their flaws are painful and often detrimental to your own well-being, but you don't give up on them. The good they've done has made possible the opportunities available to you today, so you remain thankful for the positives, while still acknowledging that negatives exist.

It's true that new symbols, new heroes, and new stories may be necessary to make patriotism as positive and powerful as possible. The old means of encouraging love of country among Americans have grown tired and have been exposed as less unifying than previously imagined (or acknowledged). So rather than abandon patriotism, progressives should help develop new means of tying all Americans together under our national umbrella.

I'm committed to joining the U.S. Air Force Reserves not because of familial ties to the Armed Services nor because of some idea of American exceptionalism. I joined because there's something uniquely powerful about working with people of all races, incomes, backgrounds, and beliefs who share a common goal and a common willingness to sacrifice to reach that goal. Progressive policy outcomes will never be realized until the power of patriotism is revived and channeled toward the myriad issues confronting the American Experiment.

Kevin Frazier was born and raised in Oregon and is attending the UC Berkeley School of Law. In his spare time he runs The Oregon Way, a statewide, nonpartisan blog.