

Fill the gap in caring for the mentally ill

The Oregon State Hospital has some 758 total licensed beds. Because of the pandemic and other things, its actual capacity is now closer to 671.

And that can be a problem. The Oregon State Hospital cares for people who basically fall into three categories:

- 1) People who might be in prison if they were not mentally ill.
- 2) People who need care to understand legal charges against them.
- 3) People who are civilly committed. A civil commitment is a process where a judge is convinced through evidence that a person, for instance, has a mental disorder and because of it is a danger to self or others or unable to take care of their basic needs.

By law, the state must accept people at the hospital in the first two categories — people found guilty except for insanity and patients who need treatment to become well enough to aid and assist their own defense.

The state hospital has also had to increase its numbers of “aid and assist” patients to ensure it followed a federal court order. The average daily population of aid and assist patients was about 74 in 2000 and in April 2019, it had hit 260.

That squeezes the hospital’s capacity to serve other sorts of patients. Patients with civil commitments can be left in community hospitals or at other locations that aren’t the best place to be for long-term care.

It’s happening in Deschutes County and in other places around the state. We aren’t talking big numbers of people, locally. There were perhaps five people last year who were civil commitments in Deschutes County who arguably

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may need the level of care for their mental illness that the state hospital can provide, according to Holly Harris, program manager of Deschutes County Behavioral Health Services. St. Charles does its best. Sage View Psychiatric Center at St. Charles is the only inpatient psychiatric facility east of the Cascades. It is, though, for short-term care.

The answer is not simply: Build more beds at the state hospital. That’s an oversimplification. Just waiting for the pandemic to end isn’t the solution, either.

There were problems before the pandemic.

Oregon’s legislators have heard about these problems before. Will they do something about it during the 2021 Legislature?

We hope so.

Bend council sets goals; you can have an impact

The Bend City Council is gearing up to set its goals for the next two years. If past councils are any guide, it will stick closely to those goals. So if you want to help set the direction that city government is going to go, now is an important time.

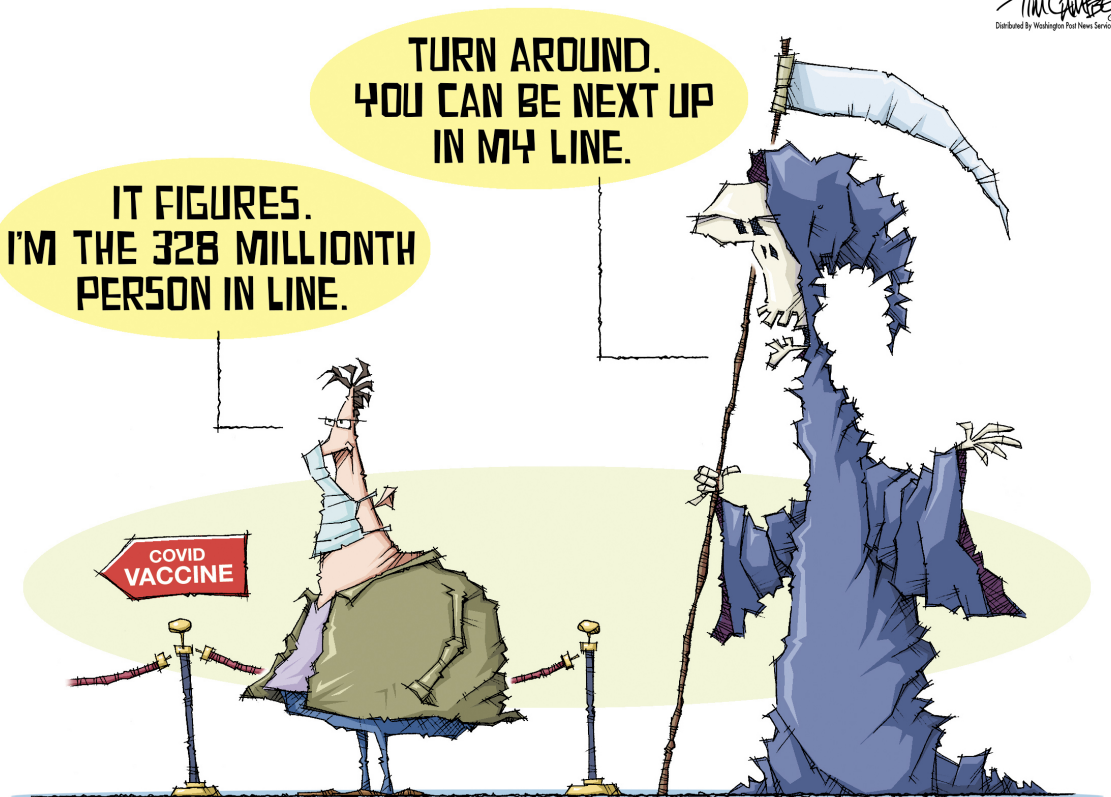
New council. New goals. New opportunity.

On Monday the council is holding a listening session. It’s really for the city’s advisory boards and community organizations to have their say. City staff has been reaching out to let people know.

What the council will do next is hold more goal-setting meetings on Jan. 20 and Jan. 21. You watch them. Check out www.bendoregon.gov/councilagenda

But you don’t have to sit through a bunch of meetings to have input. And you don’t have to be a member of a group to have your say. Send an email to council@bendoregon.gov. That goes to all of the councilors.

You know a lot more about what’s going on in your neighborhood or your business than councilors do. They can’t try to help if they don’t know about it.



My Nickel’s Worth

I agree with Bentz

Once again, your Jan. 8 editorial page published numerous letters regarding Rep. Cliff Bentz — all negative.

In his interview with your paper, he said that many of his constituents had contacted him regarding the upcoming counting of the Electoral College votes. I am one of those constituents who called his office. I wanted him to read the Constitution and vote according to the law.

He did. Our Constitution states that only the respective state can change election laws.

The state of Pennsylvania had county clerks and other election officials change the rules of how and when folks could vote. This is against the law.

I applaud my representative who objected to these votes on legal grounds.

Thank you, Rep. Bentz, for listening to at least one of your constituents.

— Sherrill Wallace, Prineville

Bulletin is biased

I am sorry to say that The Bulletin has really shown its true colors. I read the whole front and back pages of the Jan. 7 edition and was thoroughly disgusted and disappointed.

The Bulletin is obviously in lockstep with all other left-wing biased publications. I would like to know where you were while the Do-Nothing Democrats watched while the mobs burned, looted and destroyed

businesses and federal buildings in Portland, Seattle, Minneapolis and others.

Why is it that you only give this much coverage when a conservative group protests? You might notice, there were no fires and only a very, very small number that invaded the area. That’s when compared to the thousands of slugs that were throwing Molotov cocktails with their faces covered because they were not brave enough let anyone recognize them. Not the case on the 7th.

All that said, I am sad and mad about what happened; I am very disappointed in the way it was handled. I am also very disappointed with the front-page column that says, “Our president is fanning the flames.” That is not reporting; that is an editorial piece. I hope you realize that you are fanning the flames of division and not helping our country come together and heal.

— Charles Thomson, Bend

Sensationalizing the news

“Thousands could die before vaccine arrives.” This was the large and sensational front-page headline in a recent edition of The Bulletin. This type of reporting can only be described as sensationalism, inflammatory and fear mongering. Accurate and objective journalism would not come to mind for anyone who reads the article.

The first line of the article reads, “Despite the imminent arrival of the first doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, Oregon will likely have thou-

sands more killed.” It goes on to state that the total number of deaths from COVID in Oregon since the pandemic started nearly 10 months ago is 1,138. If the headline is to be credible, the total number of deaths to date will need to triple before the vaccine arrives. The only tiny thread lending any credibility to this sensational claim is one quote from the Oregon Health Authority director: “We can’t vaccinate everybody at once, so the sad truth is there will be more infections and more deaths.”

The article also states that Oregon ranks 45th among states for infection rates. Headline could have read “Oregon among most successful for fighting COVID.”

One will also find in the story that the widely media-touted and predicted Thanksgiving surge did not happen. Perhaps the headline could have been “No Thanksgiving surge.”

The story further states that there have been 91,421 confirmed cases with 1,138 deaths. That equates to a survival rate of nearly 99%. Perhaps the headline could have read “99% survival rate for COVID.”

The biggest news, quoting the story, “The biggest news is the arrival within days of the first doses of Pfizer vaccine.” Seems like a headline should reflect the biggest news in the story. Why not a headline: “Vaccine arriving within days.”

At best, this is sensationalism to sell papers. Community psyche and local businesses be damned. Or could this be intentionally instilling fear to advance a much darker agenda?

— Ron Ross, Bend

Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer’s signature, phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of The Bulletin. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

Guest columns

Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words; they must be signed; and they must include the writer’s phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere. Locally submitted columns alternate with national columnists and commentaries. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

How to submit

Please address your submission to either My Nickel’s Worth or Guest Column and mail, fax or email it to The Bulletin. Email submissions are preferred.

Email: letters@bendbulletin.com

Write: My Nickel’s Worth/Guest Column
P.O. Box 6020
Bend, OR 97708

Fax: 541-385-5804

Editorials reflect the views of The Bulletin’s editorial board, Publisher Heidi Wright, Editor Gerry O’Brien and Editorial Page Editor Richard Coe. They are written by Richard Coe.

What should we ask of our elected officials now?

BY KEVIN FRAZIER

One easy way to respond to events at the Capitol last week is to view them in a narrow timespan, through your own partisan lens, and to explain them in words we’ve all been coached to use. For example:

“A bunch of racist, xenophobic, Trump-loving white folks tried to destroy our democracy and thwart the peaceful transition of power, so it’s time to double down on (1) decimating the Republican Party and (2) making sure that anyone with a D next to their name wins in 2021, 2022, 2023 and, undoubtedly, 2024.”

It’s easy to type those words.

It feels good to identify an enemy and plot their electoral demise.

It’s calming to reduce an unprecedented series of events to one run-on sentence.

This is the easy way because it taps into all of the things our brain steers us toward: tribalism, reductionism and confirmation bias.

Sure, there’s some truth to the easy way. Those kernels of truth were correctly called out and identified by a broad range of individuals. Let me be blunt and join a bipartisan group of current and former elected officials: Those who invaded our Capitol deserve to be called domestic terrorists; the FBI’s definition of domestic

terrorism makes that clear: “Violent, criminal acts committed by individuals and/or groups to further ideological goals stemming from domestic influences, such as those of a political, religious, social, racial or environmental nature.”

For all of us, watching those acts unfold was heartbreaking and gut-wrenching, myself included.



Frazier

GUEST COLUMN

Eight years ago, I was a pimply intern leading tours around the Capitol. When I guided visiting Oregonians around those halls, I couldn’t help but beam. My West Wing dream seemed to be a reality.

Over the last eight years, the nightmare lurking behind that dream has come out of the shadows. Children separated. Families evicted. Communities on the brink of complete financial ruin. All the while, our government stuttered, stammered, and skirted its responsibility.

So, of course, I would love to let my anger boil over, cloud my judgment, and blame the Capitol attack and the past eight years since my internship on a small group of mad people.

The hard way — the way I aspire to — is to recognize that we’ve all played a part in our slide into chaos.

We’ve let social media divide us. We’ve allowed the loudest voices to command us. We’ve surrendered to the comfort of knowing we’re right. Whether or not we intended it, the result is that many of us — across the political spectrum — feel isolated, persecuted, and separated.

The hard way requires that we zoom out and see that we’ve all been complicit in letting things get this bad. The hard way requires us all to demand more from one another and, especially, our elected officials.

What can we do for one another? Step away from social media. These companies profit off our partisanship and benefit from our division.

Burst your own bubble. Schedule a Zoom with someone with a different party affiliation, background or belief system. Don’t be a passive player in a game that’s currently making us all losers.

Make politics local again. Our

neighbors are struggling. Our small businesses are failing. Don’t let national news blind you from seeing the good you can do in your community.

What can we ask of our elected officials?

Remember who you represent, not just who voted for you. The current system encourages the latter, but we deserve the former.

Put people, not party, first. Hours every day should not be spent fundraising. Every hour as an elected official should be spent thinking about your constituents, not donors.

Talk to us — all of us! Get off Twitter. Get off Facebook. Stop Twitching. Talk to us via Zoom and, when possible, in person. We deserve more than hashtags and soundbites.

The hard way has a lot of difficult steps. Will you join me and take them?

■ Kevin Frazier was raised in Washington County. He is pursuing a law degree at the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law.