

Health care

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the wrong question. We've been asking about the subsidies and who pays," he said. "Instead we should be asking, 'Why does health care cost so much in the first place?'"

He said price points in the U.S. are higher than most anywhere else in the world. "Why?" he asked the group.

Kitzhaber ticked off several reasons. Private equity investors are buying up the most profitable parts of the system, driving up costs. Insurance companies have cut eligibility and lowered reimbursement rates. The national debt increases to pay for hikes in Medicare and Medicaid costs.

"The insured uninsured" have \$5,000 deductibles and "don't really have insurance at all," he quipped. "Cost shifting is the way we avoid confronting reality."

One way out, he said, is funding health care from a specific pot of money indexed to a sus-



EO Media Group/Kathy Aney
Former Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber shares his thoughts about health care delivery in Oregon on Thursday at the EOCCO Clinician & Staff Summit in Hermiston.

tainable growth rate. "That's exactly what we're

trying to do in Oregon with the CCOs," Kitzhaber said.

In 2009, as a state senator, Kitzhaber helped pioneer the Oregon Health Plan. He later helped birth the state's system of 15 coordinated care organizations, locally governed networks of health care providers who deliver care to the state's most vulnerable residents. The idea is to focus on prevention to get people healthy, reduce visits to expensive emergency rooms and lower costs. The EOCCO serves Umatilla, Morrow and 10 other Eastern Oregon counties.

During the first five years, some CCOs performed better than others, but the state saved more than \$1 billion. There were bumps, too, including the Cover Oregon disaster, and the state's Affordable Care Act insurance exchange website designed by Oracle Corp., which failed spectacularly.

Kitzhaber is unhappy with recent reforms to Oregon health care, which he called CCO 2.0. Last week, he sent a letter to Gov. Kate Brown, House Speaker Tina

Kotek and Senate President Peter Courtney to weigh in on two developments he considers especially worrisome.

He opposes new reporting requirements that will force CCOs to hire more personnel, increase costs and "appeared to have been copied and pasted from the current insurance code."

"I am concerned that this increase in rules, regulations and reporting will be particularly burdensome on smaller rural CCOs which have become important community assets," he wrote. The reforms, intended to increase oversight, may squelch the ability of locally based CCOs to operate.

"These provisions and others appear to retreat from the community model based on local control and a sense of local ownership in favor of a more punitive top-down approach," he wrote.

Kitzhaber also objects to the state granting Trillium Community Health, owned by Fortune 500 company Centene Corp., to contract to administer the Oregon Health Plan in Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington coun-

ties, in addition to Lane County, which it already administers.

The governor said Oregon has much to lose if the CCO model goes south, including 30 years of collaboration and a chance to pioneer health care policy for the country as a whole.

"If we lose this model, we lose the opportunity to steer the national debate," he said. "Right now, the model is in question."

Kitzhaber resigned in 2015 under a cloud as the FBI investigated his fiancée and first lady, Sylvia Hayes, for influence peddling. He left office barely a month into his fourth term as governor. Still, Kitzhaber remains a strong voice in the world of health care reform policy.

A health policy publication called "State of Reform" recently quoted Kitzhaber comparing himself to Don Quixote during a private dinner in Washington, D.C., where he goes frequently to talk about health care reform.

"I think of these trips as 'Don Quixote goes to Washington,'" he said. "Health care reform is probably my windmill."

Name

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notable civic contributions.

Lupien requested the spelling for two streams in Grant County be corrected — the 11-mile-long Wiley Creek that flows from Johnson Saddle to Fox Creek and the 3-mile-long Wiley Creek that flows from near Sagebrush Spring to the John Day River.

Both creeks should be named for the Wyllie family, Lupien said, and especially for William James Wyllie (1848-1928) and his wife, Edith (1863-1934), who homesteaded and raised sheep in the two areas and were active in the community.

In addition to completing an official form, Lupien submitted pages from a Grant County history book by George R. Miller and a family history by Laurie A. Wyllie.

He also submitted a page with an incorrect spelling for William Wyllie from the seventh edition of "Oregon Geographic Names." Under the listing for "Wiley Creek," the book states, "In 1877, William Wyllie homesteaded at the mouth of this tributary of John Day River west of Mount Vernon." How "Wyllie" became "Wylie," or "Wylie" became



Contributed photo
Laurie A. Wyllie, grandson of William James Wyllie, wrote a history of the Wyllie family.

"Wiley," is not explained.

Wyllie family

The history of the local Wyllie family begins with James Wyllie, who was born in Ayrshire, Scotland, in 1818 and immigrated to Pennsylvania via Canada 20 years later. He married Margaret McGregor in 1845 and began raising a family in West Reading, Pennsylvania.

Laurie Wyllie, James Wyllie's great-grandson, wrote a history of the Wyllie family. According to the history, the Wyllies moved to California in 1853 and settled near a gold-mining town. Their second child, William James Wyllie, left home at 14 and stayed with the Stewart family in Sacramento at a house on the corner of L and Ninth streets. Years later, after he acquired

livestock in Eastern Oregon, his brand was L9.

William James Wyllie and Billy Stewart, both young boys, bought 400 ewes and put them on a ship bound for Oregon. They stayed for a time in Dilley before herding the sheep in 1868 to Dayville and Murders Creek — to ranch land Stewart's father had located in 1862 during the Canyon City gold rush.

Lobby

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population in their towns and schools, they still have the same number of buildings and roads to maintain.

"Revenues have decreased, especially with the reduction in timber receipts for our county because, historically, we would have been getting 25% of all the timber receipts," he said. "Now we have to have that SRS money to try to fill that stopgap in funding, and PILT is really just a way for the federal government to pay property taxes on their federally owned grounds."

Hamsher said they met with members of the Senate and House of Representatives, including officials from throughout the United States, asking for their support.

"They find it very helpful when we share our personal stories of our county and our communities here," he said.

Hamsher said he and other Oregon commissioners also met with other federal officials, including Chris French, associate deputy chief, U.S. Forest Service, speaking with him about issues concerning the regional forest plan and travel management.

Palmer said they and other members of the Eastern Oregon Counties Association who were in attendance came together "on a united front" in all the meetings.

"I really drove home the simple fact, in meeting with some of the most influential people in the free world, that their decisions have real life consequences to real life humans in the rural areas and how important that this



Contributed photo
Members of the Eastern Oregon Counties Association visit with Congressman Greg Walden in his Washington, D.C., office, including Grant County Commissioners Sam Palmer, seated at the far left and Jim Hamsher (back, center).

is that they get their problems figured out for real life people because it is affecting us, not just in Grant County, but in the West now," Palmer said.

He said he felt their voices were heard "loudly and strongly."

"I'm very optimistic," Palmer said, adding this was his first trip to Washington.

"They know our problems and will work on them and address them."

"I was amazed at the response we got," he said. "In more than one meeting with these people, they actually said that if you don't get responses back from our people, we want to know because they'll see fit that they do or they'll be gone. Their jobs are at stake."

Palmer said the PILT fly-in usually has 20-30 in attendance, so having over 100 from several western states was significant.

On Sept. 16, a bipartisan group of Western senators, including Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley, introduced legislation to reauthorize the PILT program for 10 years.

"The PILT program is a critical lifeline for rural counties struggling to pay for essential services like law


enforcement, jails, mental health and libraries," Wyden said. "Congress and the federal government have a moral responsibility to provide stable and reliable funding for this important program. Rural counties in Oregon and across America deserve certainty. It's time to end the financial roller coaster they face each year."

"Rural communities shouldn't have to wonder if they will have the resources they need to pay their firefighters, emergency first responders, or law enforcement officials," Merkley said. "It's time for Congress to reauthorize the federal support counties need to pay for these critical services on a long-term basis — so families across Oregon and America have the peace of mind they deserve."

About two dozen descendants of William James Wyllie continue to live in Grant County, Jamie Lupien said, including the Layton Wyllie family, the Kelly Wyllie family and Jamie's mother Donna Wyllie.

She is especially proud of brothers Russell and Lindsey Wyllie who took over the Pass Creek Ranch near Long Creek and have continued the Wyllie family's ranching traditions.

Eric and Jamie say they are so happy now that the Wyllie name will be correctly displayed, giving honor to her ancestors and their efforts in contributing to the beauty of community in Grant County.



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