

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

Voters want results from their elected officials

Our elected leaders on both sides of the aisle politically need to do much more to realign themselves with the middle ground of America and shun the high-powered rhetoric and shouts of the lunatic fringe.

True, everyone in our great nation has the right to express an opinion, and that right is a sacred one that must be guarded. However, during the past decade it seems those who sit on the opposite poles of the right and left have gained new prominence, their voices louder, their dogma more militant.

In the Oregon Legislature there is a clear divide between Democrats and Republicans with the GOP vastly outnumbered and relegated to an ineffective minority. The state assembly political roster mirrors our own national stage politics in the sense there apparently exists a wide gulf between what each side desires. In Oregon, the majority Democrats have the power and use it in ways lawmakers believe their constituents want.

Usually, when major political conflicts erupt, Republican lawmakers face few alternatives other than simply leaving the building to erase a quorum needed for votes.

That means, essentially, that on really critical issues, the normal discourse needed by a democracy to succeed breaks down. One side gains the advantage, or in Oregon's case at times, one side is left standing alone on the dance floor while the other is long gone.

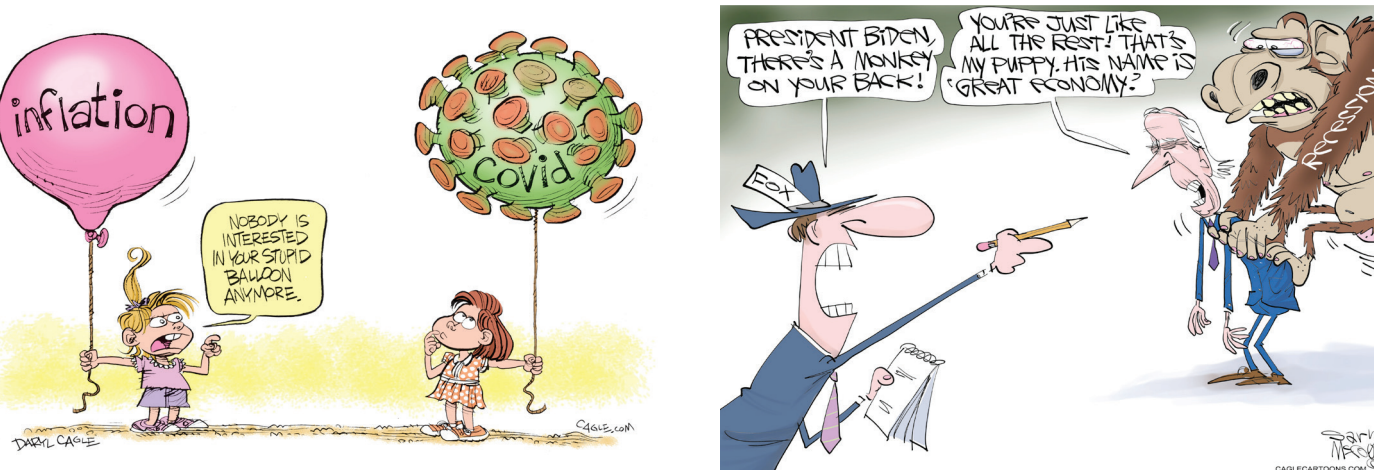
What those types of actions accomplish is to create a wider dissatisfaction that continues to grow.

Oregonians have shown in polls they want more out of this year's gubernatorial race than the usual name-calling added to a good dose of fear-mongering from the far edges of both parties. Voters don't want more fighting. They want results.

Therein lies the problem. Because results are not being measured — either here at home or on the national political stage — by practicable results but instead by which part of the far left or right can gain ascendancy.

Our elected lawmakers on both sides of the political fence need to begin to work together and to develop concrete solutions to difficult problems. Calling Democrats liberals bent on destroying the republic and Republicans as people who want to create some kind of Handmaid's Tale system is not only ludicrous but prevents problem-solving and creates more turmoil.

The future of our nation and state rests on our lawmakers' ability to work through problems. Not fighting.



Medicare for All would 'fix' what isn't broken

OTHER VIEWS

Janet Trautwein



Medicare for All remains on the congressional docket. Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vermont, recently reintroduced his bid for a single-payer system, claiming it would guarantee all Americans health coverage while lowering costs and saving lives.

That's a compelling sales pitch. However, the reality is that Medicare for All would outlaw private health insurance and force millions of Americans onto a single government-run plan. And contrary to what its proponents might suggest, Medicare for All would lead to worse care for patients at higher cost.

Even the idea's supporters don't seem to know what it entails. According to polling from the Kaiser Family Foundation, two-thirds of Medicare for All supporters believe they'd be able to keep their private insurance under a single-payer health care system.

Sen. Sanders's bill, of course, would ban private plans. That might not sit well with the 14 million Americans who purchase private plans through the Affordable Care Act's exchanges. Almost three-quarters of enrollees like the plan they have now.

Outlawing private insurance coverage also wouldn't go over well with the 180 million Americans with employer-sponsored coverage. More than seven in 10 are

satisfied with their plans.

That makes sense. Employers compete for employees in part by offering generous health insurance. Workers benefit from the great coverage, and employers benefit by being able to attract and retain quality workers.

By forcing everyone onto the same insurance plan, Medicare for All would take that bargaining chip away from employers and employees alike.

It's no surprise that overall support for Medicare for All — which usually hovers around 50% — drops to just 37% when people realize it would eliminate private health insurance.

Support drops to just 26% when people learn single-payer would lead to delays in care.

Delays are endemic to single-payer programs like Medicare for All. That's because the government would pay hospitals and doctors below-market rates in order to deliver the savings Sen. Sanders promises.

Medicare and Medicaid pay less than private insurers do. A single-payer plan would extend those low payment rates to everyone.

Providers today charge privately insured patients more to make up for low reimbursements from public plans. They wouldn't be able to do that under Medicare for All. The result would be budget deficits for 90% of hospitals, according to one study from FTI Consulting.

Providers would have little choice but to restrict access to services — if they're able to keep their doors open. Patients would face long waits for subpar treatment.

That's exactly what happens in other countries with single-payer health care. In the United Kingdom's National Health Ser-

vice, there are more than 6 million people waiting for hospital care. Thousands have been waiting for more than two years.

Similarly, under Canada's single-payer system, patients face a median wait of nearly six months from the time they're referred by a general practitioner to receipt of treatment from a specialist.

Under Medicare for All, American patients would experience similar fates. That was the conclusion of Phillip Swagel, director of the Congressional Budget Office, who recently told Congress that single-payer would increase "congestion in the health care system, including delays and forgone care."

Those delays and forgone care would cost Americans a lot of money — more than \$30 trillion over a decade.

Less than 10% of the American population is uninsured. There are far more cost-effective ways to expand access to affordable coverage.

For example, the additional subsidies provided by the American Rescue Plan Act have helped more than 3 million Americans secure coverage through the Affordable Care Act's exchanges for less than \$10 a month. Extending those subsidies permanently could continue to make private coverage affordable for millions.

The Affordable Care Act has also driven down coverage inequities, especially in states that have expanded Medicaid. That's a testament to the power of building on the parts of our health care system that are working.

Lawmakers should focus their efforts there — not on Medicare for All.

Janet Trautwein is chief executive officer of the National Association of Health Underwriters.

LETTERS to the EDITOR

Wallowa County can do better

When I moved to Wallowa County, one of the primary attributes I was looking for — and found — was a sense of community, one that promised, "If you are stuck on the side of the road, I'll stop and help." Or, if you're struggling with a health issue, "you can count on me to assist where I can." I have been on both sides of the equation and it works.

We can do better however. The Chief

Joseph Days Rodeo is a community event that is fun for locals and gives us a chance to show visitors what makes this place so special. I attended the Saturday night event and, for the most part, had a blast. The athletes (human and animal) were stellar, giving as much as they got. The fans were fun, courteous and clearly loved the show. The rodeo is a true cultural treasure.

However, the announcer, Jody Carper, needs to leave his continued cheap political shots out of the event. He seems to be playing to a TV audience in order to

improve ratings, rather than lifting up what makes the rodeo and this community special. Let's bring people together in celebrating the athletes, our community and our country.

We can do better.

Oh, and to those drivers who move to the other lane when you can safely do so in order to pass a cyclist (and that's more than 90% of you). Thanks for being drivers I brag to others about.

Mike Mercer  
Joseph