

OPINION

Albany Democrat-Herald  Gazette-Times

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Editorials on this page are written by a member of the editorial board, which is responsible for shaping the opinions expressed by the Albany Democrat-Herald and Corvallis Gazette-Times. Questions and comments about this page can be directed to Penny Rosenberg at penny.rosenberg@lee.net.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters should be original and no longer than 250 words. They must include the author's name, street address and daytime telephone number for verification. All letters are subject to editing for length, spelling, grammar and clarity. Please be thoughtful with your submissions. Revision requests may not be honored. "As I See It" columns must be between 450 and 600 words. Well-written essays by local authors are preferred. Publication is at the newspaper's sole discretion. Guest columns, letters to the editor & opinion submissions should be emailed to mvopinion@lee.net with "Letter to the Editor" in the subject line or mail them to PO Box 130, Albany, OR, 97321-0041.

AS I SEE IT

Where is the accountability in health care

Walking along the Marys River, Phil stepped off a steep embankment and the ground beneath him collapsed.

As Phil landed, he heard a loud pop from his left knee. In his 70s, Phil is tall with a sturdy build. He's more comfortable navigating a fishing boat through the turbulent waters of the Columbia River than navigating the treacherous tangle of the U.S. health care system.

An X-ray revealed a severed quadriceps tendon. The surgeon described the surgery as straightforward and successful. However, Phil experienced poor communication, lack of transparency and failure to listen from the post-surgery care medical team.

These are common themes among patients, based on interviews I've conducted as a patient advocate.

After weeks of therapy, the physical therapist expressed grave concern with Phil's lack of progress. Yet the physician assistant assigned to manage his post-operative care told Phil he wasn't concerned. The PA told Phil there was no need for additional follow-up appointments.

Despite requests to meet with the surgeon who had performed the surgery, Phil was informed the surgeon had "retired" or was "not in rotation." Apart from the day of surgery, Phil never saw the surgeon again.

To control costs, hospitals are outsourcing both clinical and nonclinical departments. The surgeon who performed Phil's surgery worked for Synergy, an outsourcing agency. When medical care is outsourced, quality is less easy to monitor or enforce.

Several months post-surgery, Phil was unable to straighten his leg, causing difficulties with walking and navigating stairs. His distress skyrocketed when no one from the hospital would return his calls. Phil wanted clarification on what went wrong.

Still unable to straighten his leg at seven months, Phil scheduled an appointment with the orthopedic department. The PA and another surgeon acknowledged a "probable surgical failure and re-rupture of the quadriceps tendon."

Serious harm when seeking

medical care is not uncommon. A recent study in the New England Journal of Medicine found 23.6% of hospital admissions result in at least one adverse medical event.

When harm occurs in health care, who's responsible?

The hospital's response to Phil's note seeking accountability was dismissive: "After a thorough review of your concern and medical records, the course of treatment was complete/correct. No quality of clinical care issues was identified. I apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused you." Efforts to escalate his case within the hospital proved futile.

Phil scheduled another operation with a practice independent of the hospital. The new surgeon stated the first surgery needed stronger reinforcement of the large quadriceps tendon with better security to the patella. Delays in the diagnosis of a failed surgery resulted in atrophy, scarring and retraction of the quadriceps.

Over the past decade, the overall rate of medical malpractice lawsuits has declined. Did quality of care vastly improve, or perhaps hospitals are experts at shifting responsibility?

State medical boards are the last bastion for accountability in health care. A recent study, however, found disciplinary action by states are "woefully lax." The average total number of serious disciplinary actions taken per year (2019-2021) by all states was 1,281. Oregon ranked 21st, with a rate of 1 per 1,000 physicians per year.

A recent audit of the Oregon Medical Board called for a need to more fairly and consistently discipline the health care professionals it regulates. Such measures are welcome and necessary, but more is needed.

A health care system prioritizing profit over patients becomes expert at blurring the lines of responsibility. When this happens, accountability is challenging.

A radical change to how health care is structured in the U.S. is critical. Our lives are at stake.

Laurie Reed is a writer and patient advocate currently working on essays examining the role of advocacy and support during times of significant health challenges. She resides in Corvallis and brings more than 20 years of corporate work in health care to ensure patients' voices are heard.



Laurie Reed

MY VIEW | MICHAEL RAMIREZ



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EDITOR'S MAILBAG

City needs solution to grocery drought

In response to the April 6 article "A town in need of a grocery store":

For years, our city and neighboring communities have been devoid of a local grocery store. On Feb. 26, the Philomath City Council directed the city staff to engage actively in the recruitment of a grocery store for our community. City Manager Chris Workman assured the city council he would support grassroots efforts to attract a grocery store to Philomath.

Philomath is in the construction phase of the Downtown Safety and Streetscapes Project, designed to improve roadway safety of pedestrians, cyclists, buses, cars and freight within the downtown corridor. Some of the proposed improvements include street reconstruction, improved striping for bike lanes, bus stops, parking and ADA-compliant street crossings.

Thus, as our city becomes more pedestrian and cyclist-friendly, it stands to reason that having a local grocery store would promote a more pedestrian/cyclist-sustainable lifestyle.

There are a few locations in our area that provide access to grocery store products, yet most offer a limited selection of necessary items. Our successful Philomath Farmers Market, a community favorite held each Sunday from the end of May through the end of October in the Philomath Community Library parking lot, offers some seasonal food options.

Notwithstanding, the fact remains the city of Philomath needs a permanent solution to the grocery store drought that has long plagued our community.

Teresa Nielson
Philomath

Do we have a right to destroy climate?

I was appalled by Keith Gallagher's April 16 letter ("Let's end protected status of wolves") in which he states his support for ending the protected status of gray wolves.

To accuse wolves of being the cold-blooded killers is to ignore the entire arc of human history. Humans are the biggest cold-blooded killers of the entire animal kingdom. And we've taken over almost all the available land that these apex predators (the wolves) used to thrive in, while performing a valuable service in preserving fragile ecosystems.

We've created a huge cold-blooded, mechanized killing infrastructure for the mass slaughter of the cows that Mr. Gallagher thinks ranchers have a right to graze over huge swaths of the landscape.

Never mind that mass grazing of ruminants across the planet is a huge contributor to global warming. Or that eating animal products is the No. 1 cause of almost all chronic disease in this country.

Mr. Gallagher is adamant that people have a right to destroy the climate as we have known it, while bankrupting society with runaway medical costs and advocating for the eradication of any animal that stands in their

way of making money off of it. Personally, I'd happily take my chances in a world with an abundance of wolves.

Susan Wechsler
Corvallis

It's no wonder so many are struggling

Just read on April 11 that Moody's Analytics (a private financial analytics company) has calculated we Americans are paying \$1,037 more per month for basic items that we need than we were paying three years ago in 2021.

That's crazy bad. No wonder so many families are struggling. Of course, you realize that coincides with the start of Joe B's term as president. Did you vote for him? I did not!

Mike Clark
Albany

Grange supports ceasefire in Gaza

The humanitarian crisis in Gaza is intolerable.

Willamette Grange No. 52 of Corvallis supports an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, and that further military aid to Israel be dependent on that Gaza ceasefire.

Jay Sexton, president, and Toni Hoyman, secretary
Willamette Grange No. 52
Corvallis

Sarah has writer's vote for state rep

We are 100% in support of Sarah Finger McDonald running as a Progressive for State Representative.

We've known Sarah and her family for years. Our children attended the same schools here in Corvallis. She is an advocate for children of all needs and backgrounds, and upholds progressive values across a range of issues. Sarah is dedicated and committed to promoting policies that will make a difference in gun violence prevention. After Sandy Hook, she promised her child that she would work to make things better.

Sarah marched with our local students and community members to address gun violence, and founded the Oregon chapter of Moms Demand Action. She truly walks her talk and is willing to take on difficult problems.

Our family lost a nephew to gun violence last year in Eugene, and very recently almost lost another young family member to gun violence in McMinnville. Sarah has put gun violence prevention front and center as one of her progressive priorities.

We were already supporters of hers based on her years of work as a Corvallis School Board member, but when she stood up and listed gun violence prevention as a priority, she earned our vote.

Cathy Law and Steve George
Corvallis

Support McDonald, a leader with vision

Local citizens came together to discuss various pressing issues at a recent town hall with Sen. Jeff Merkley.

Among the many issues raised, a harrowing statistic emerged that firearms are the leading

cause of childhood deaths.

As community members, we have a moral obligation to take action and advocate for measures that prioritize the safety and well-being of our youth. Therefore, I firmly believe that supporting political candidates who are dedicated to promoting firearm safety is paramount.

One such individual is Sarah Finger McDonald. Sarah has demonstrated unwavering commitment and dedication to protecting our youth from the scourge of gun violence. Her tireless advocacy for sensible gun laws and comprehensive safety measures reflects her genuine concern for the welfare of children.

In supporting Sarah Finger McDonald for Oregon State Representative, I am endorsing a leader who will prioritize the safety of our children above all else. Her passion for promoting gun safety initiatives and dedication to enacting meaningful change makes her the ideal candidate to represent our interests in the state legislature. No other candidate on the ballot comes close.

Join me in our support of Sarah Finger McDonald, a strong leader who shares our vision for a safer, more secure future for our children.

Gerry Kosanovic, Ph.D.
Corvallis

A chance to send Biden a message

As a purposeful unaffiliated voter, I've struggled with how to embrace Uncommitted Oregon.

While my values trend liberal, even progressive, I often find the Democratic Party falls short of its promises due to big donor influence. The Republican Party's values tend to be out of line with mine.

As a humanist, I fully support Uncommitted Oregon's message that an immediate and permanent ceasefire throughout Palestine must take place, that humanitarian aid must be allowed into Gaza via land crossings, and that military aid to Israel must cease now.

Democrats in Oregon can fill in the write-in bubble and write in "uncommitted" on the line on their ballot in the Oregon presidential primary to send a message to Biden to adjust his course.

If you are an unaffiliated voter, like me, debating whether to change your affiliation for the primary, that's a decision you have to let your conscience guide you in making. Please vote your values and make your voice heard.

There's still a little time to decide, because the deadline to register as a Democrat is April 30.

Ballots are due May 21. President Biden will be the Democratic nominee. Voting "uncommitted" is simply a chance to send him a message that Oregonians won't stand idly by while he pulls the United States into participation in the dehumanization of the Palestinian people, and supports the genocide and ethnic cleansing of Gaza.

Tammy Abu-Husein
Albany

