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Everything Oregon

Letters: pedestrian safety, health care reform, Oregon Wireless Interoperability Network

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By **Letters to the editor**

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Common sense

Regarding the Feb. 4 editorial "Needed: wary walkers": There is a mindset here in Portland that pedestrians have the right of way all the time. I cannot count the number of times I have seen pedestrians begin stepping off the curb to cross when the countdown to Don't walk is at 2 seconds, or even 1. Oftentimes pedestrians stride into crosswalks without so much as a glance in the direction of oncoming traffic. I have seen pedestrians step out into traffic in the middle of city blocks with absolutely no concern for what is going on around them. Some of these people are pushing strollers with children in them.

I have traveled extensively in the United States and abroad, and nowhere have I experienced pedestrians so cavalier as here in Portland. Why do you suppose this is?

I walk a lot. It would never occur to me to cross the street legally without making direct eye contact with the driver of a vehicle and to make certain he/she is stopping to let me cross. When it's dark, I wear a headlight front and back. I may look like a fool, but I am seen. It's just common sense.

JEANNE KRETZ FERGUSON

Northeast Portland

Health care reform

Certain politicians and courts are attempting to overturn the "Obama Cares" health plan based on the "if you don't want to, you don't have to" theory.

Next, these same folks might attempt to overturn Social Security and Medicare based on this same reasoning.

FRANK MYERS

Northeast Portland

As "Obamacare" may be deemed unconstitutional, I got to thinking: Is health care reform all we need? Is it possible we need a change in thinking as well as a change in policy? The answer is yes.

A problem that we face is that we go to doctors for everything, from a simple cough to something as terrible as cancer. While I agree, prices are outrageous, so are some of the reasons people go to doctors. Restless leg syndrome? There is a drug for it. Hair loss? There is a drug for that, as well. Sexual performance? Drug. My personal favorite? Attention deficit disorder -- specifically, how overdiagnosed it is -- causing drugs such as Ritalin to be prescribed to young children (usually male).

While these issues relate to our health, they do not all require a trip to the doctor. I propose that we change our thinking as well as our health care system so that it is not abused and so that wait times are not absurd because of people unnecessarily lining up.

JOSH HALL

West Linn

Interstate 5 bridge

It would seem that the best plan for the new Columbia River bridge would be to leave the two existing bridges for local traffic and the new span for through traffic.

One of the old spans could be for vehicles traveling between Portland and Vancouver. The second span could be for local buses, trains, bikes and pedestrians between the two cities. The new bridge for through traffic would bypass Vancouver, and the first exit northbound would be somewhere north of Vancouver.

This would reduce congestion, speed up travel and reduce air pollution. This new span could be a taller bridge, not a drawbridge, and would require fewer lanes.

MICHAEL FIELD

Southwest Portland

Learning citizenship

I'm a senior at Grant High School. This year, I participated in the annual We the People competition, organized by the Classroom Law Project. The program tests students' knowledge of the U.S. Constitution as it applies to a multitude of subjects, from its roots in the Middle Ages to its future implications.

I joined my school's team knowing that the program provided an opportunity to delve into the inner workings of the U.S. government, but I had no idea what a profound effect it would have on me. For the past several months, my teammates and I have worked rigorously, both in class and out, to prepare for the competition. Although winning was elating, I take greater pride in knowing that the experience has undoubtedly made me a better citizen.

I strongly believe that widespread participation in the We the People program is key to the continuing vibrancy of American democracy, and I would like to thank all those who volunteer their time to the Classroom Law Project.

ALLY BRAY

Northeast Portland

Caring for the elderly

It seems there are folks in our society who want to "throw Mama from the train." Some Letters to the editor fault elders for having the audacity to live a long life, and I cannot believe that some people view aging in that light. Most elders have led productive lives, contributing to the society and neighborhoods they reside in, in addition to fighting in wars and paying taxes. They deserve to be treated with dignity and get good health care in their final years.

A society that does not care for its aging population, in addition to the disabled and poor, has lost its moral compass and cannot survive. I doubt that anyone living to an old age has a quest to "consume even more resources," as one letter characterized aging baby boomers' potential effect on the nation. It need not be a choice between services for the young or the old in a country as rich as the United States.

JOAN FRAZER

Southwest Portland

Tabling OWIN

Gov. Kitzhaber made the right decision not putting the Oregon Wireless Interoperability Network in Oregon's biennial budget -- and also by budgeting a reduced amount for an interoperable communications upgrade. The right next steps will be to kill OWIN altogether and to use some of the budgeted money for open public warning systems, not just police radio.

In light of widespread cynicism about journalism and the future of newspapers, we Oregon taxpayers should take a moment to reflect on the role The Oregonian played in saving us hundreds of millions of tax dollars (assuming Kitzhaber does indeed kill OWIN in the end). Without this paper's aggressive investigative reporting and clear editorial stands, OWIN would probably still be rolling along, squandering precious state resources.

CHARLES JENNINGS

Northwest Portland