

# OPINION

## OUR VOICE

### Audacious action is needed on Medicare

A ray of honesty and sense shines through in the debate over cutting future deficits, as Congress and the President bear down toward the Aug. 2 deadline when the U.S. Treasury may otherwise go into default. Raising the national debt ceiling is the urgent issue, but everything about the budget is, or ought to be, in play.

While most of the politicians will probably dig in on their fixed positions through the 2012 election, two "rogue" senators actually dare to propose some changes in Medicare — which is nearly a 20 percent portion of federal spending — that will make no one happy, except perhaps our debt-burdened grandchildren.

"We can't save Medicare as we know it," states Independent Sen. Joseph Lieberman, who authored a plan with Republican Sen. Tom Coburn of Oklahoma. "We can only save Medicare if we change it."

And so they actually propose raising the age of Medicare eligibility to 67 and increasing monthly premiums for millions of current beneficiaries. The increases would be for doctor visits and other non-hospital services. And the premiums charged for Medicare Part A, which covers hospital care, would rise for more well-off seniors.

It must be audacious, since the ideas of Lieberman and Coburn got a chilly reaction from both Republicans and Democrats.

There needs to be a movement of regular citizens backing up what the two senators are saying. Serious changes are needed. We can't keep fighting to preserve a broken system. Otherwise, the Medicare fund will run out of money, like the general treasury is now, by 2024, trustees say.

Somewhere along the way, the leadership of AARP, the influential lobby for senior citizens, got the message. America's fiscal straits are so serious that AARP is willing to consider supporting cuts in Social Security, and some time back AARP had a reform plan for Medicare as well.

"Its thrust was to make Medicare funds available for catastrophic illnesses and conditions but leave paying for the ordinary stuff like annual physicals, flu shots and the like up to the individual. It's about time (we) realized we're all going to have to give a little and stop trying to make the wealthy foot the whole bill," adds veteran Washington columnist Adele Ferguson.

Let's quit expecting things to be preserved as they are and start working to make necessary changes, and sacrifices.

## PUBLIC MEETINGS

**Wednesday, July 6**  
Lynden Municipal Airport Advisory Board, airport office, 8635 Depot Rd., 9 a.m.

Lynden City Council Public Works Committee, second floor conference room, City Hall, 300 Fourth St., 4:30 p.m.

**Thursday, July 7**  
Lynden City Council Public Safety Committee, Lynden Police Department, 203 19th St., 4 p.m.

Mount Baker School Board, district offices, 4956 Deming Rd., Deming, 6 p.m. (one week earlier than normal)

Lynden Regional Parks and Recreation District Board of Commissioners, southeast conference room, City Hall Annex, 205 Fourth St., 7 p.m.

**Friday, July 8**  
Whatcom County Purchase of Development Rights Oversight Committee, Planning and Development Services office, 5280 Northwest Dr., Bellingham, 8:30 a.m. Contact: Samya Lutz, 676-6907.

**Monday, July 11**  
Lynden City Council Parks Committee, southeast conference room, City Hall Annex, 205 Fourth St., 4:35 p.m.

Sumas City Council, City Hall, 433 Cherry St., 7 p.m.

Fire District 1 Commission, Fire Station No. 1, 101 E. Main St., Everson, 7 p.m.

There will be reports from the two station assistant chiefs.

**Tuesday, July 12**  
Whatcom County Council, council chambers, County Courthouse, 311 Grand Ave., Bellingham, 7 p.m.

**Wednesday, July 13**  
Lynden City Council Community Development Committee, second-floor meeting room, City Hall, 300 Fourth St., 4 p.m.

**Thursday, July 14**  
Whatcom County Planning Commission, Northwest Annex building, 5280 Northwest Dr., Bellingham, 6:30 p.m. *The commission is holding a public hearing on proposed amendments to reduce the size of the Ferndale Urban Growth Area and address sewer and fire protection capital facility planning. This is in response to a state Growth Management Hearings Board ruling, in consultation with the City of Ferndale. Documents relating to this process, including a staff report and recommended amendments to the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan, capital facilities plan and zoning map, are posted on the county's website at <http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/pds/2031/uga/ferndale.jsp>.*  
Lynden Planning Commission, main chambers, City Hall Annex, 205 Fourth St., 7:30 p.m.

## Let's think a new way through our illogical 'justice' system

### GUEST OPINION



Irene Morgan

namely Restorative Justice. Are you also aware of the cost of incarceration — \$35,000 to 50,000 per year per prisoner? Does it make more sense to be proactive and restore calm and harmony or confront with force and legalities? If Mr. Groen were to make it to a prison, he will forever be branded as a felon by our society with many

challenges that are often insurmountable. This, I believe, is how our Criminal Industrial Complex is fed and why there has been a 300 percent increase in the number of federal, state and private prisons built in our communities since the 1980s. And, by the way, prisons are continuing to be built today. Consider the proposed 2,400-bed facility near Slater Road with your tax dollars that has been temporarily stopped by Whatcom County citizens.

There are at least two brand-new facilities being built in our state. One is on tribal land in Pierce County. Also, the Department of Corrections, for some reason, feels we need a new Receiving Center for everyone entering our system. This puzzles me, as for several years our crime rate has been diminishing. So why are we still investing in prisons when we are cutting back in every other segment of our societal

systems?

There are many alternatives to prison. There are Re-Entry and Aftercare programs across our nation that are very successful. Are you aware of Delancy Street in San Francisco? Mimi has been running this program on a full city block for 30-plus years, with housing, education, employment, life skills, and a network of businesses that support all it takes to be successful in living life. She has an 85 percent success rate and people are fully functional and tax-paying citizens.

If Mr. Groen were to be imprisoned, who would suffer along with him? Will it be the 14 taxpayers it takes to pay the tax bill for one year? Will it be his family who will not be intact with his absence? Will it be the community that is bitter and not understanding our system? Will it be our system when he is not working and paying taxes as he always has? The re-

percussions of this insanity are countless.

If all these questions leave you with more questions, I invite you to go to our website, [www.whatcomrec.org](http://www.whatcomrec.org) or call me to find out how you can help to bring some common sense into the way we do business in our police, legal, court and prison systems. We are pressing forward on many fronts and would ask that you join us and focus your confusion, anger or frustration in a positive way and choose a segment of our program that can help us in our cause.

*Irene Morgan is the founder and current secretary of the Whatcom County Re-Entry Coalition. She is a longtime Pole Road resident where she and her husband Gary ran a custom meat business. Now her passion is "to educate and inform on a very unpopular subject, though one that eats away at our tax budget," she said.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Lynden Lions Club puts out new challenge

EDITOR, *The Tribune*

As some of you may be aware, the Whatcom County Parks Department has made some major staffing cuts this year. One of the cuts included the senior center manager position at the Lynden center. Whatcom County is providing money to hire a manager through December 2012. However, it has pulled back on virtually all other support of the community center.

When the manager position ended on March 31, the county removed its equipment from the center. The center has requested that the Lynden Lions Club either purchase a computer with current software programs or contribute to that purchase. This purchase will cost in the range of \$1,000.

The Lynden Lions Club has committed to contributing \$250 toward this purchase and is challenging other service clubs or individuals to do likewise.

Our newly elected President Galen Laird's goal this coming year is "to do service locally for the citizens of this area."

*Charlotte Bovenkamp, past secretary  
Lynden Lions Club*

### Border Patrol supports us

EDITOR, *The Tribune*

I am constantly amazed at the hateful letters written about the U.S. Border Patrol agents.

I live a few hundred yards from the border and have for several years. The agents have always driven up our private road slowly. They wave and stop to talk if I need them to. I feel much safer knowing that they're close by. It's like having a private security company keeping an eye on my house when I'm away.

If I were a drug smuggler, I would probably begin crossing the border at the properties where I knew the landowners had posted signs saying "no govern-

ment agents allowed." What an invitation!

I'm sure if anyone has a problem with one particular border agent's actions, you can call in a complaint and the officer will be dealt with by his superiors. It's petty and mean to lump them all together and treat them poorly. That will only hinder them in performing their job, which is to protect people like myself and my family.

*Rosemary Anker  
Blaine*

### Proud of the Border Patrol

EDITOR, *The Tribune*:

I would like to voice my opinion regarding the U.S. Border Patrol. I am extremely proud of them. I appreciate their hard work

and them serving our country. Thank you! They put their lives on the line every day to protect us. For this, I am grateful.

The Border Patrol agents arrest terrorists, massive amounts of drugs and illegal immigrants. Despite many opinions and whining of things that do not matter, they protect us! You may "see them in their vehicles behind dark windows," as I heard one person say. But I know that they are working day and night behind the scenes to keep us safe.

And people want them to communicate every move that they make? That does not even make sense. Do we forget that there are criminals out there that they are trying to stop? Does it really make sense for BP agents to reveal their plans to potential criminals? Just

because this is Whatcom County (Lynden specifically) does not mean that bad things do not occur here.

I have seen first-hand their hard work and dedication to guard our borders. Just like in the medical profession, we use universal precautions (meaning that you assume everyone has something, so use barriers). BP agents too must do this. How many times do we hear that a routine traffic stop goes bad and ends in someone's death? BP agents never know what they are going to face when they go out each day. They could use some support and honor from people. Cut them some slack when they do not wave.

Yes, that man who is facing trial, I believe, should be punished for his actions. He might be a nice guy and

very likeable, I do not know, but there are consequences to pay for the decision he made. This was not the first incident for him. This man in question, I have heard and seen with my own eyes and ears, made obscene hand gestures and curse words to BP agents (prior to the incident in question). So this man is not a model citizen. In my opinion, he has issues with authority.

So those of you who say that it was just a flashlight, think again. It was an intense spotlight with the intention of causing the helicopter to crash. Not a flashlight. Justice will be served, whatever the outcome.

Come on, people, get it together. Support your U.S. Border Patrol. They are here for us!

*Leann Williams  
Whatcom County*

## EDITORIAL IN PENCIL



## Lynden Tribune

USPS 323-160

The Lynden Tribune is the official community newspaper for Lynden, Everson, Nooksack and Sumas. Published weekly every Wednesday by Lewis Publishing Co., Inc. • 113 Sixth Street, Lynden, Washington 98264. Periodicals postage paid in Lynden, WA. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Lynden Tribune, P.O. Box 153, Lynden, WA 98264. Phone: (360) 354-4444, fax: (360) 354-4445

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES  
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\$34 per year in advance  
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Senior.....\$30  
Student (nine months).....\$22  
Snowbird.....\$39

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