

# Bangor Daily News

Founded in 1889

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## SHIFTING THE BURDEN LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT TAKES UP SLACK

“We’re asking cops to do too much in this country.” This is a simple sentiment voiced by law enforcement and emergency officials for years. But, when Dallas Police Chief David Brown uttered those words earlier this month, they took on new importance and, hopefully, reached a new and receptive audience. “Every societal failure, we put it off on the cops to solve. Not enough mental health funding, let the cops handle it. ... Schools fail, let’s give it to the cops. ... That’s too much to ask. Policing was never meant to solve all those problems,” Brown said just days after five Dallas law enforcement officers were killed by a gunman.

The consequences are dire: Police arrest, over and over, the same individuals they know should be receiving mental health treatment or enrolled in treatment for substance use, but there are no spaces available. The result is overcrowded jails filled with people suffering from mental illness or addiction, or both. Inmates don’t get the services and treatment they need for long-term stability, and the jail system costs taxpayers an ever-increasing sum each year.

The Penobscot County Jail in Bangor has a capacity of 157 inmates. Last year’s average daily population was 176. On Wednesday, it held 202 inmates. Seventy percent of the jail’s inmates are on medication for mental health issues.

“Keeping people within cinderblock walls is not the way to deal with these issues,” said Penobscot County Sheriff Troy Morton.

Many of those in custody at the county jail need basic help managing their medications. When they take them as prescribed, they can function. When they can’t afford their medications, or they simply stop taking them, they follow one of two paths: They commit a crime, which leads them to jail, or they end up in the emergency room. Since the emergency room is no stand-in for long-term treatment, and long-term treatment for mental illness or substance use is hard to come by, discharge from the emergency room can often lead someone down that first path.

Our overreliance on emergency personnel can take on more mundane forms that are problematic in the same way. Last month, the Bangor City

Council approved a set of fees that the Bangor Fire Department can charge to people or institutions that make excessive calls for non-emergency and unnecessary aid.

The Bangor Fire Department, which requested the fee plan, routinely receives calls requesting “lift assists,” and firefighters or emergency medical technicians must help a person who has limited mobility but is in no immediate danger back to his or her feet or move from one place to another within the home.

“They’re calling us to basically be their in-home health care service when our primary mission is emergency services,” Bangor Fire Chief Tom Higgins said in March.

The problem of asking law enforcement and emergency personnel to do too much is compounded by a shortage of people interested in doing this work.

Morton, who has been in law enforcement for more than 25 years, recalls a time when 100 people applied for each vacancy. Now, openings in his department attract a dozen or fewer applicants. This problem will be exacerbated as the baby boom generation ages and retires.

Brown, the police chief in Dallas, had a direct answer to this problem and to those criticizing police work: “We’re hiring. Get off that protest line and put an application in.”

Because much of their work happens outside of public view, community members are only vaguely aware of the growing, diverse demands placed on law enforcement and emergency personnel. Too often, it takes a tragedy to get people’s attention.

It’s crucial that citizens, as taxpayers and voters, become more aware of these stresses and think of them the next time they cast a ballot for a candidate or a local budget. Lawmakers have, for years, passed laws lengthening jail sentences and fines for numerous crimes. They’re traditionally more hesitant to boost the funding needed to deal with the consequences — jails and treatment services, for example — or to pay for the early-in-life interventions that can prevent or lessen many of these problems in the first place.

Brown’s appeal to protesters to apply for Dallas Police Department jobs resulted in a tripling of the number of applications. Policymakers need to step up in a similar fashion — and take the steps needed to restore a frayed safety net.

## OTHER VOICES TRUMP’S DANGEROUS FLIRTATION

The defining features of Donald Trump’s foreign policy agenda thus far have been obliviousness and instability. Either is disqualifying in a potential commander in chief. Encouraging Russian espionage and interference in a U.S. presidential election, however, represents a depressing new low.

“Russia, if you’re listening, I hope you’re able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing,” Trump said at a press conference Wednesday, referring to emails sent and received by Hillary Clinton when she was secretary of state. “I think you will probably be rewarded mightily by our press.”

Some Republicans with deep foreign policy experience have already abandoned Trump because of his erratic ways. Whatever’s left of the Republican for-

eign policy establishment needs to make it clear that Trump’s flirtation with Russia — especially President Vladimir Putin’s strongman ways — has gone too far.

Politics is a tough business. No one, least of all Trump, should give Clinton a pass for her poor judgment in using a private email system while she was the nation’s chief diplomat. Her actions are the subject of legitimate debate and deserving of criticism.

But inviting Russia to participate in that debate — and to influence it through treachery — is well beyond the pale. If there is no outcry about Trump’s behavior from responsible Republicans, the party will be setting a dangerous precedent that its members, not to mention the country, will come to regret.

*Bloomberg View (July 28)*



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Wrong choice for blind

Years ago, I received rehabilitation service from the Iris Network, a statewide agency serving blind and visually impaired people over age 14. The staff was exceptional, and the skills I learned were life changing. I know where to go when I need questions answered.

The Iris Network is appealing the recent decision by Maine’s Department of Labor Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired to award a five-year contract for community-based blindness rehabilitation services for adults and youth over the age of 14 to Catholic Charities Maine.

I do not understand how Catholic Charities Maine can be awarded this contract when they have no accredited staff to do this work.

The Iris Network has nationally certified vision rehabilitation therapists to teach transition-age youth, working-age adults and senior citizens how to be independent. Many newly blind are over the age of 70. These skills can assist them to stay in their homes and thrive in place.

I would prefer increased funding be used for direct service, not administrative costs. The Iris Network’s bid was about \$225,000 per year less than the Catholic Charities Maine’s bid of \$1.3 million. Catholic Charities Maine’s annual budget for compensation of direct service professionals was \$30,000 more than The Iris Network, which would increase administrative costs by about \$195,000 per year. My hope is that this conditional contract awarded to Catholic Charities Maine will be reversed because it is essential to avoid serious harm to the public interest in high-quality and cost-effective community-based blindness rehabilitation services.

**Nancy Matulis**  
*Dover-Foxcroft*

### Alzheimer’s hope

Alzheimer’s disease does not begin at a specific moment. It creeps into a family’s awareness. Who knows exactly when we noticed my husband was changing. I started to be aware of subtle differences four or five years ago. Things he could do as a second nature became difficult. Last year, my husband was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer’s at age 62.

I am sure some people would be surprised to learn this disease can affect someone so young. Alzheimer’s is not just a disease of old age. Everyone is at risk. Of the 5.4 million Americans with Al-

zheimer’s, nearly 200,00 are younger than 65.

Alzheimer’s still has a stigma around it. We have found some people are uncomfortable with the changes. My husband loves to have friends call and suggest a day of fishing. Others might see his personality changes, but he does not. He still is himself. We so appreciate all our friends.

Our hope is that his story will find its way to someone struggling with Alzheimer’s symptoms and encourage them to seek a diagnosis. An early diagnosis helps a family navigate this devastating disease and advert crisis.

My husband and I would like to thank Sen. Susan Collins for co-sponsoring the Health Outcomes, Planning, and Education (HOPE) for Alzheimer’s Act. We also would like to thank Sen. Angus King and Reps. Bruce Poliquin and Chellie Pingree for co-sponsoring this truly bipartisan effort to allow Medicare to cover critical comprehensive care planning support for those newly diagnosed with Alzheimer’s may help or maintain quality-of-life for the individual, their family and caregivers.

**Mary Dysart Hartt**  
*Hampden*

### WRITE TO US

Letters must be 250 words or fewer and include a full name, town of residence and daytime phone number. OpEds may be 700 words. Letters may be edited or rejected for clarity, taste, libel and space. If a letter or OpEd is published, submissions by the same writer will not be considered for 60 days.

**Letters** may be sent to letters@bangordailynews.com. **OpEds** may be sent to OpEd@bangordailynews.com or P.O. Box 1329, Bangor, ME 04402-1329.

### Monument needs King

My family owns and runs a small set of cabins in Millinocket that cater to visitors to our region who come to hike, fish, snowmobile, hunt, or just relax and enjoy our beautiful region.

Last winter, my family went up to check out the land that is now proposed to be a national monument. It was beautiful, and I know that our guests would love the opportunity to visit this land. They might stay a couple of extra days to do so.

A national monument in the region would bring more visitors. It would help all the businesses where visitors stay, eat and shop in the region. And some of those visitors may even decide to move to the region year-round. Our population would go up, and

our tax rate would go down. This proposal is a no-brainer for those who want to see a prosperous Millinocket.

My wife went to Orono when Sen. Angus King and National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis held a forum for which 1,200 national monument supporters showed up. She was thrilled to see the huge show of support for the national monument.

I went to the meeting in East Millinocket held by Rep. Bruce Poliquin and members of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Natural Resources. I bet he was really surprised to see the supporters dramatically outnumbering the opponents.

It is past time for King to provide some leadership and publicly express his support for a national monument. He’s got practically every business in the region in support. What is he waiting for?

**Skip Mohoff**  
*Millinocket*

### Turkey’s witch hunt

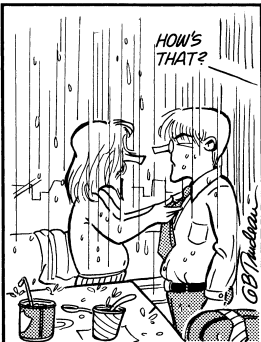
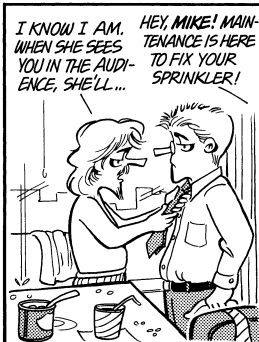
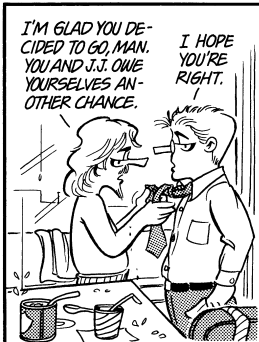
After a wide-reaching anti-corruption investigation in 2013, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that the government would pursue those involved even if it took a witch-hunt. Witch-hunting is very well known in the United States. But Sen. Joseph McCarthy’s communist witch-hunt in the 1950s would seem trivial compared to Erdogan’s version.

Not only in Turkey but even in the U.S and Europe, it is hard to predict what Erdogan’s followers, some of whom are sympathetic to Islamic State, will attempt to do. I have talked to dozens of Turkish-Americans living in the U.S., and they have stated their fear of contacting even their parents or relatives. There are numerous cases in which people were sentenced because of a single Twitter or Facebook share.

I do fear the damage an elected dictatorship would do not only in Turkey but also in Europe, the U.S. and the Middle East. Calling the coup attempt on his regime a “gift from the God,” Erdogan has already dismissed more than 60,000 public officials, including 10,000 police officers, and the number grows daily. Also, the first state of emergency decree signed by Erdogan authorizes the closure of certain public and private institutions. Now even dozens of media outlets are being shut down in the wake of the failed coup. It is the biggest witch-hunt in the history of Turkey.

**Eyup Sener**  
*Portland*

### DOONESBURY



### GARRY TRUDEAU