O P I N I O N

Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is 10 a.m. Monday.

To the Editor:

Central Oregonians deserve leaders who understand how to protect our communities from wildfires — and who will take decisive action. Commissioner Henderson is not such a leader. In *The Nugget's* August 5 story, "Defending Sisters Against Wildfire," he blames inadequate wildfire preparedness on one factor — too few days to implement prescribed burns — and suggests that additional funding will not make a difference.

In these statements, Henderson has missed two other important ways that we can reduce hazardous fuels near Sisters: thinning small trees and mowing dense brush in the understory. In 2019, the Deschutes National Forest reported that it has 141,000 acres of thinning and mowing through environmental review and ready to implement *when funding becomes available*. So when Henderson says that burn days are the key bottleneck on

reducing fuels to make us safer, he ignores the fact that thinning and mowing don't depend on available burn days.

Prescribed fire is an excellent final step after thinning and mowing, but even on their own, thinning and mowing are proven to be helpful in containing the spread of wildfires.

Insufficient funding for thinning and mowing is already making us less safe. For example, this March the Forest Service reported to the Deschutes Collaborative Forest Project Steering Committee that they have insufficient funds to offer a contract for a stewardship project (called Peso) west of Bend and south of Sisters in 2020. Implementing those thinning and mowing treatments in 2020 could mean the difference between being able to contain a fire in that area next summer, or that fire escaping and burning towards our homes.

Sisters Weather Forecast
Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Partly Cloudy
77/46	82/49	89/54	95/59	96/59	92/55

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Life in the new normal

By Carey Tosello
Guest Columnist

The slow strangulation of American life as we knew it continues, as the government imposes lockdowns/restrictions on businesses they deem "non-essential."

To a small business owner, the business they have poured their life into is essential. To the people they hire, and who depend on that business to support their family, that business is also essential.

While our Governor has managed to avoid the disaster that Washington and California have imposed on their population (to her credit), there are many other states that are under the rule of what is essentially martial law. One person (the Governor) in these states has complete control over civilian life with no check and balance on them.

To keep the population from revolting against this authoritarianism, the government floods the economy with cash. Stimulus checks, forgivable loans to businesses, and unemployment benefits that allow 2/3 of those receiving them to earn more by NOT working. May have been a good idea at the time, but now we see the unintended consequences.

Some examples of Governors needlessly ruining the lives of Americans include: California is forcing schools to go online, but told private schools (with smaller enrollments and easier to social distance) they could receive a waiver. Then the county denies the waivers because of a lack of testing. Minnesota allowed restaurants to re-open at 25 percent capacity — regardless of social distancing policies that were instituted. New York allowed strip clubs to reopen, but not bowling alleys. Seriously.

Where is the "science" in any of this, or just common sense?

For those that say we are in an existential crisis and need to give government complete authority over our lives, I would remind you of what FDR did to Japanese Americans in World War II. These citizens were stripped of all their rights and property and were forcibly relocated to internment camps. It was a crisis they said, and the press ginned up enough fear of the "yellow peril" that good people remained silent. Even our Supreme Court, in their supreme wisdom, gave their approval.

Allowing our government to pick winners and losers is called central planning. It is what they do in Cuba, Venezuela, and yes, Russia. What if, instead of central planning, the government simply said that you must do "these things" to open your business. "These things" might include wearing masks, social distancing, sanitization procedures, etc.

Doesn't matter if you run a taco stand or breed zebras, if you can comply you can be open. Allowing one person, a governor, to have absolute authority over which businesses can remain open, and dictating how they must run their business, ends up destroying people's livelihoods, and jeopardizing the well-being of their employees.

Each of us would be free to decide whether we want to patronize these businesses. If you have one of the comorbidities that 94 percent of all COVID-19 deaths have, you may choose to stay home and shelter until there is a vaccine. The rest of us could return to work and school to help support the economy, as a strong economy will be needed to continue to aid and care for those who are unable to work. But the choice would be yours.

Pandemics like COVID-19 sweep thru the world population, always have and always will. It took the 1918 pandemic about 18 months to work its way through the population and ended up infecting 1/3 of the people on the planet. Our health care system is vastly superior today, and the survival rate for those that contract COVID-19 is close to 99 percent, which is far higher than in 1918.

Remember that sheltering at home was to "flatten the curve" so that our medical system would be ready to handle the pandemic. It was *never* intended for us to hide until the virus passes by, or until we found a cure. Our health system has had plenty of time to be ready to care for the influx of patients.

We can re-open all parts of our economy, if we provide clear safety rules that apply equally to all, not just to those with the biggest political clout.

Time for Americans to return to life in the new normal.