

O P I N I O N



Pandemic preparedness — past, present, future

By **Monica Tomosy**
Guest Columnist

“Getting back to more normal life” — a common sentiment these days. I’d like to offer a perspective on how we can do that. In 2005, the Bush administration developed a Pandemic Preparedness Plan (PPP) to address the Avian Flu. They transferred the PPP template on to the Obama administration, which modified and improved it in order to handle the Ebola crisis.

As a science manager in the Department of Interior, I was engaged in the Avian Flu response, and when I later moved to the Department of Agriculture, I was involved in the Ebola response. Because pandemic risks are global, and the potential for impacts are nationwide, both pandemics were dealt with at the federal level, and in a strategic, calm, and effective manner. But soon after Trump’s inauguration in 2017, the PPP program, staff, and budget were cut. To me this was like skydiving without a parachute.

What happened next was inevitable: Another pandemic, this time in freefall.

Why inevitable? Three main reasons: People and animals are moving around the globe more than ever; land use and land conditions are undergoing dramatic changes, and human populations are growing. This triple reality is a recipe for more pandemics; a fact that has been common knowledge among scientists and public health leaders for decades.

A future with more disease is so widely expected, that a team approach called “One Health” set goals to achieve best-case scenarios. These experts recognized that the health of people is closely connected to the health of both wild and domestic animals, and our shared global environment. A big area of concern is markets where people sell wild animals, which often carry viruses that humans would otherwise never be exposed to.

Why did the Trump administration allow the coronavirus pandemic threat to slip under their radar, and intentionally end the PPP program? Because Department of Homeland Security officials didn’t see a pandemic as “terrorism” and Office of Management and Budget officials didn’t

respect science. Maybe Homeland Security is not the place to deal with pandemics, but pandemics certainly are “a thing” to “prepare” for.

Eliminating the PPP program left us with a president whose only tools were to try to bully or negotiate with a microbe. This has not worked out. The truth is, without effective leadership based in science, a microbe will win every time.

To be clear, “the Trump way” is the reason we are experiencing frustrations, inconveniences, and deaths that never should have happened. Trump’s handling of the pandemic has resulted in a nation with four percent of the world’s population having 20 percent of the infections; a politicization of masks; and Main Street economies suffering nationwide.

To this day, Trump has no plan going forward. This past Sunday, his Chief of Staff admitted on national TV that the administration has no intention of trying to control the spiking outbreaks. Instead, they are putting all their eggs in the vaccine basket. There has never been a vaccine for a respiratory virus, but hopefully this will be the first. But hoping for a vaccine is not a strategy. It is merely playing defense. We need to play offense. I’m not a sociologist or psychologist, but there seems to be a mix of defiance, arrogance, ignorance, or perhaps insanity here. Not only is it clear that Trump just doesn’t know what to do, he seems to not want to know. He repeatedly defies what the experts are saying is the best way to get this virus under control. We can’t put pandemics behind us with incurious and willfully ignorant people like Trump in the White House.

So, what now? Well, I heard Joe Biden is running! Here is a candidate with a solid plan. Joe Biden’s approach embraces scientific expertise — critically necessary in both reducing illness and death, as well as recovering the economy. He would implement simple things Trump could have done, starting with the two low-hanging fruits: testing and tracing.

Joe has a clear roadmap to address the crucial issue; please read it here: <https://joebiden.com/covid19/>. And for your family, our community, and our country, vote for Joe.

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:

If you haven’t yet voted, I am writing to encourage you to consider Elizabeth Fisher for one of the open seats on the Sisters City Council. I first met Elizabeth when she was a student in a chemistry class I taught at Sisters High School. Though that was a number of years ago, several of the personal characteristics which Elizabeth demonstrated even then qualify her as an excellent Councilor.

Elizabeth never came to class unprepared. She had always completed her homework conscientiously and thoughtfully. Though she was sometimes quiet in class, Elizabeth was intensely attentive and an astute and engaged listener. When she did volunteer a thought, Elizabeth’s words carried the gravitas of careful consideration of multiple angles. I know that Elizabeth will put in the time outside of meetings to prepare herself for policy discussions and will bring to Council a reasoned perspective informed by the experiences and opinions of many community members.

It has been an inspiration to see how Elizabeth has matured in the years since high school. Given her high standards, work ethic, and agile mind, it comes as no surprise to me that she earned an honors degree from OSU in chemical engineering. Even more impressive is the strength Elizabeth has found as a community leader here in Sisters, taking an active role organizing events, networking with regional organizations, and advocating

for those who live here whose voices are least heard.

I am inspired by the engagement of younger people who see a role for themselves in improving our community and am thrilled by the opportunity to vote for a such a capable and conscientious Sisters Outlaw. I hope that you will be too.

Rob Corrigan



To the Editor:

If you haven’t voted yet, or are planning on voting more than once, please consider voting YES on Local Measure 9-139. Our public libraries are a mecca for information, thought provocation and entertainment, and are still one of the best bangs for your taxpayer buck.

Greg Werts



To the Editor:

Many thanks to the young lady and young gentleman who recognized that I could not cross the patio at The Open Door on Thursday afternoon, October 22. I was in severe distress and my companion was unable to help me move.

The two of you lifted me up and transported me to my car. Thank you! Thank you!

P.S.: Problem was identified and treated.
Betsy Beaver

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Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Sunny 70/37	Sunny 72/39	Partly Cloudy 65/36	Partly Cloudy 65/36	Sunny 68/38	Partly Cloudy 66/38

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