

# 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 Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned.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.*

### Sisters looks beautiful

To the Editor:

Driving through Sisters yesterday evening, we were stuck at how very beautiful our town is all aglow with holiday lights. I have never seen Sisters looking more lovely. Many thanks to the merchants and the City for lighting up these long winter nights.

I hope this glorious display can remain in place through February at least.

Suzanne Pepin



### The Jesus vaccine

To the Editor:

I've always been taught that history is

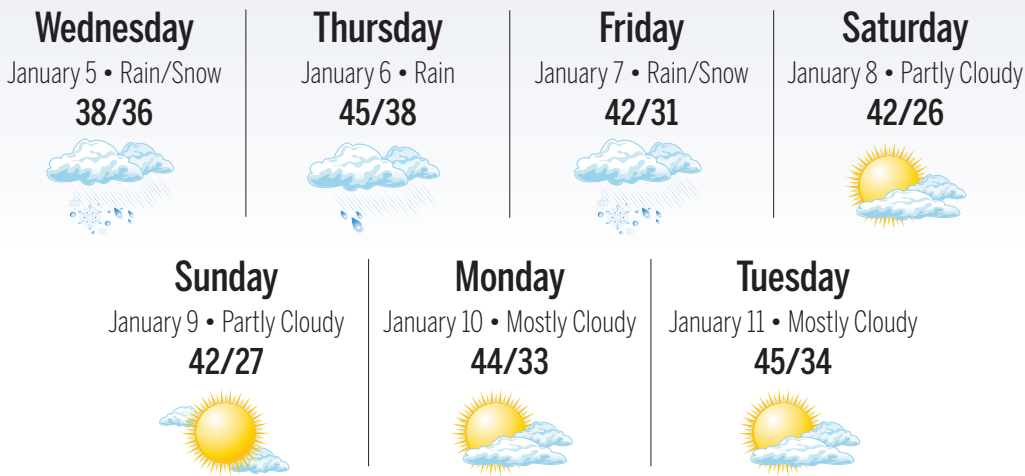
the best teacher of what not to do or how to navigate forward so as to prevent disasters/mistakes that happened in the past. It seems we humans really have a hard time with that concept from the time we learned to walk (voice of experience).

Most Americans are familiar with the story where in the beginning God created the earth, Adam and Eve, and declared: "It is good." We could have all been created mindless zombies but in my opinion God's first act of love to His human creation was the gift of free will, aka freedom to choose. Our Creator is *the* source of good and love.

When offered to become "like God,"

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## Sisters Weather Forecast



# The Nugget Newspaper, LLC

Website: [www.nuggetnews.com](http://www.nuggetnews.com)  
 442 E. Main Ave., P.O. Box 698, Sisters, OR 97759  
 541-549-9941 | [editor@nuggetnews.com](mailto:editor@nuggetnews.com)



**Postmaster: Send address changes to The Nugget Newspaper, P.O. Box 698, Sisters, OR 97759.**

**Third Class Postage Paid at Sisters, Oregon.**

The Nugget is mailed to residents within the Sisters School District; subscriptions are available outside delivery area. Third-class postage: one year, \$70; six months (or less), \$45. First-class postage: one year, \$110; six months, \$80.

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## Disinformation and democracy

By **Mary Chaffin**  
 Guest Columnist

In 1978 I spent eight months in the Soviet Union as a Russian-speaking guide on an exhibit, "Agriculture USA," sponsored by the U.S. Information Agency. The first U.S. exhibit was the site of the famous Nixon-Khrushchev Kitchen Debate in Moscow in 1959. The exhibits continued for decades thereafter as part of a program intended to counter the Soviet disinformation that poisoned the minds of their citizens, by giving them an opportunity to interact with young Americans who all had different answers to the questions they posed.

The questions we fielded on all sort of topics (mostly having nothing to do with agriculture) reflected a combination of naïve misinformation and calculated efforts to flummox us. Some of it was nonsense — lies and assumptions that didn't take our then-more-extensive social safety-net into account. People literally thought that if you were hit by a car while uninsured, you would be left to die. There was sometimes a kernel of truth in the assumptions behind the questions, making it more difficult to effectively respond to false and misleading accusations. Discussing complex topics and attempting to establish a reality-based common ground with the exhibit's Soviet visitors was a challenging task.

I have been struck by how similar the Soviet propaganda I encountered is to the right-wing propaganda that has infected our country. They both:

1. Apply incendiary labels to opponents.
2. Misleadingly lump opponents together.
3. Peddle lies, disinformation.
4. Blame opponents for things that they have little or no direct responsibility for.
5. Cynically exaggerate failures and ignore beneficial successes.
6. Reduce complicated topics to misleading conclusions.
7. Hypocritically ignore egregious misconduct by allies.
8. Stoke anger and outrage.
9. Rely on their domination of mass and social media.

Owen Herzberg's letter (*The Nugget*, December 22) is a good example, lumping Governor Brown and Speaker Kotek together and labeling them "extreme leftists" while trotting out a list of their supposed misdeeds in an effort to inflame his readers.

1. Oregon Health Plan: Brown wasn't even governor when Oracle botched Cover Oregon, intended to administer healthcare under the Affordable Care Act. After becoming governor, Brown dissolved Cover Oregon (less than \$300,000

was spent) and sued Oracle for racketeering, recovering nearly \$100 million in cash and licensing agreements. Why are Brown/Kotek responsible for Oracle's misdeeds?

Left unsaid: Despite GOP and Trump's efforts to destroy them, the ACA and the Oregon Health Plan have been a success! The number of uninsured Oregonians shrank from 17.1 percent in 2010 to less than 5 percent in 2020.

In 2017, 47,600 Oregonians (not 55,000) were removed from the Medicaid rolls following an annual audit. The Cover Oregon snafu caused that number — those who didn't respond to requests for eligibility information or were no longer eligible — to be larger than in prior years. But the system functioned, and OHP continues to provide essential health care that the GOP will try to destroy again if it regains power.

2. "No attempt" to reduce the PERS deficit? *False!* In 2019 Kotek engineered the passage of a bill reducing PERS benefits opposed by both the unions and every GOP House member.

3. Unemployment. Oregon has paid more than \$10 billion in unemployment benefits, but every GOP Member of Congress (including Bentz) voted against legislation extending these benefits and providing relief to small businesses, renters, and more. Democratic-led legislation helped people suffering from the economic shock, reducing Oregon's unemployment rate from 14.2 percent to 4.2 percent.

4. Public Health Measures. Brown's brave actions have caused Oregon's infection, hospitalization, and death rates to be among the lowest in the nation (36 percent, 52 percent, and 59 percent of the U.S. case, hospitalization, and death rates per 100,000, respectively). Measured against the U.S. death rate, Brown has kept nearly 4,000 Oregonians from dying. Yet GOP leaders viciously attack her while stoking resistance to lifesaving policies.

5. Other Random Issues. No one likes screw-ups, but how is Kotek responsible for the 8,000 unreported eldercare complaints between 2005 and 2017 or ODOT's engineering failures regarding the Wickiup overpass?

There's more, but as Mr. Herzberg said, I think you get the idea. And do follow his suggestion to connect the dots! Mr. Herzberg's letter is chock-full of disinformation, just like the Soviet propaganda I encountered was. We were able to defeat Soviet propaganda earlier. Will its right-wing successor, amplified by a complicit social and mass media apparatus, succeed today? Our democracy is at stake.

*Views expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and are not necessarily shared by the Editor or The Nugget Newspaper.*

## Winter magnificence...



Skiers had a banner holiday at Hoodoo Ski Area, with plenty of snow and excellent conditions between Christmas and New Year's Day.

PHOTO BY JAROD GATLEY