

GUEST EDITORIAL FROM THE NEWS REVIEW

Oregon Legislature right to eliminate vaccine exemptions

Seventy-five days and nearly \$1 million later, the Oregon-Washington measles outbreak is over. But thanks to growing opposition to vaccinations, it's unlikely to be the last.

The outbreak, which sickened 77 people, prompted a public health emergency declaration in Washington and prompted the Oregon Legislature to consider a bill that would eliminate all exemptions to vaccinations for school-age children, except for medical reasons. That's because the re-emergence of the disease is scary.

Measles is highly contagious and spreads through the air, lingering for up to two hours in an enclosed area. In fact, it's so contagious, nine out of 10 unvaccinated people who are exposed to the virus will contract it, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

But thanks to a highly effective measles vaccine that was introduced in the 1960s and a strong vaccination program, the measles were officially wiped out in the U.S. by 2000. Before that time, an estimated 3 to 4 million people got measles each year, according to the CDC.

But measles is much more than a fast-spreading disease — it's dangerous.

There's this understanding that even if you get measles, it isn't a big deal. And fortunately, for most people, that's true. But the problem with that philosophy is that for some, the disease is deadly.

"Three in 1,000 kids who get the measles will die," said Allison Bartlett of the University of Chicago Medicine Comer Children's Hospital. "The odds are in your favor, but if everyone is vaccinated, 0 out of 1,000 kids will die."

That's the group of people who needs everyone to get vaccinated the most. Vaccines aren't perfect, but they work much better when more people are immunized. The concept is called "herd immunity," and it's how modern science has been able to combat a number of dangerous diseases.

The concept works because once enough people are immunized, outbreaks become significantly less likely. Once a person is vaccinated, the possibility that the virus can spread to another person who is also immunized is greatly reduced, meaning the virus doesn't have free reign to sweep through communities. If fewer people are immunized, outbreaks are more common and more people can get sick.

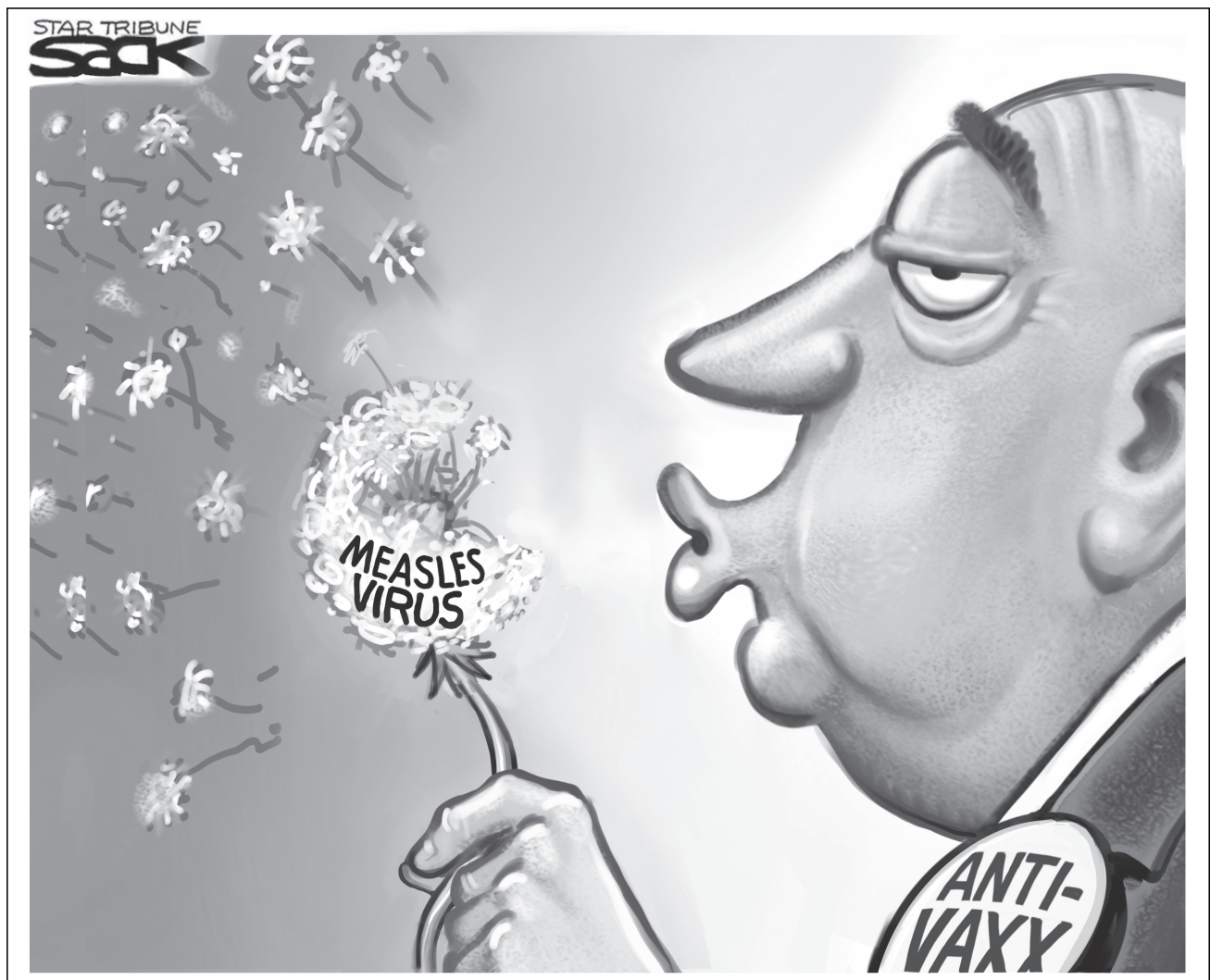
The greatest aspect of herd immunity is it protects those who can't get immunized, whether the person is too young to get a shot or is allergic to the vaccine.

Which is what's most concerning about this recent outbreak. Because of a small, but a determined, group of parents who — incorrectly — believe vaccines cause autism and other medical issues, more people are choosing not to vaccinate their children.

The sudden distrust in longstanding science is happening nationwide, but it's also happening in our own state. Just last year, Douglas County officials said they have seen an increase in the number of parents who have declined to vaccinate their kids.

"The number of kids that can't get a vaccination because of medical reasons, has continued to drop and is now very, very low ... less than one-in-a-thousand," Douglas Public Health Network Director Bob Dannenhoffer told The News-Review last year. "All of the vaccinations that kids haven't gotten (in Douglas County) have been from parental choice."

Which seems to be the case up north, too. Of the people who were sickened in the Vancouver area, nearly all were under the age of 18 and completely unvaccinated, according to The Oregonian.



Your views

Hopkins: County needs to stop the nonsense spending

To the Editor:
I note the county commissioners voted for \$3,500 to be spent on a fireworks show in the City of Union.

To a family such as ours, this means that all of the money that we save each month from our retirement and social security income to pay our county taxes in November is to be blown up in Union.

I suspect that most fiscal conservatives in Union County understand that monies must be raised through taxes to support winter plowing, road maintenance and health support for those in need. However, our commissioners must never allocate funds to "do good" organizations who try to thrust their hands into the taxpayer cookie jar.

Stop this nonsense.

*Doran Hopkins
Summerville*

Gove: Another unprovoked attack on law-abiding gun owners

To the Editor:
The Observer's article "Gun Debate Continues" (April 12, 2019) identifies Oregon Senate bill 978's supposed intent. I concur with Oregon Sen. Bill Hansel: This bill is bad legislation and violates the Second Amendment.

Were this bill to become the law, eventually it may be widely applied. Don't keep that crouchet set in the garage unless it's locked in a steel cage. You as a homeowner could be held responsible if the kid next door steals a mallet and hits anyone with it.

I'll call this bill what it is: another unprovoked attack on law-abiding gun owners. Read the rhetoric on CNN or other liberal media sources for a myriad of prohibitions, requirements and expenses suggested against gun owners.

Penny Okamoto of Portland asked us to believe this bill will save lives. Okamoto said, "That is the bot-

tom line." Ask yourself how the "war on drugs" is going with ongoing legislation prohibiting them. Consider the prohibitions against alcohol in this country years ago and the result. Enforcement of this bill isn't feasible and may be illegal.

Okamoto said taking a gun outside your home makes it three times more likely it can be stolen. If you take your car out of your garage, you will be more likely to be involved in a traffic accident. No ropes allowed in your home would mean less suicide by hanging and fewer ropes stolen by kids. You can skew numbers and percentages to reflect anything. Experts will validate any point of view if you pay for it.

Our freedom was purchased with guns, and it's ensured by guns. Your statesmen are protected by walls, fences and bodyguards with guns. When you call law enforcement for help, they come wearing guns.

The United States Constitution United States de-

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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fines the use of guns in this republic. No additional debate or legislation is needed. This bill is bad legislation. I've explained SB 978 is impractical, poorly written, not feasible, likely illegal and cannot be enforced.

Stop giving away your rights as citizens.

*Michael A. Gove
La Grande*

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Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and

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