

Our View

Voters deserve better from Rep. Bentz

The future looked bright for U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz in the halls of Congress. We still believe that to be true, but it's clear the freshman congressman didn't get off on the right foot last week in the wake of a mob's seditious storming of the U.S. Capitol.

After the mob dispersed, Bentz — who represents Oregon's 2nd Congressional District — joined more than 130 GOP lawmakers who voted to object to Pennsylvania election results. The vote was based on shaky data that has been proven wrong.

The objection, rightly, failed.

Later, Bentz told the Malheur Enterprise newspaper in Malheur County — where Bentz worked for decades as lawyer — that he doesn't believe President Donald Trump should resign and he shouldn't be impeached after the insurrection at the Capitol last week.

Bentz arguably represents one of the more conservative areas of Oregon, if not the nation, so his vote on the Pennsylvania results was no surprise. At the end of the day, he is an elected member of the Congress and can vote the way he feels best represents his constituents.

The only problem with such logic is the Pennsylvania results were never really in question, and courts soundly rejected legal protests to it. To still vote in protest of the results after such legal proceedings calls into question the new congressman's judgment and just exactly whom he believes he is representing.

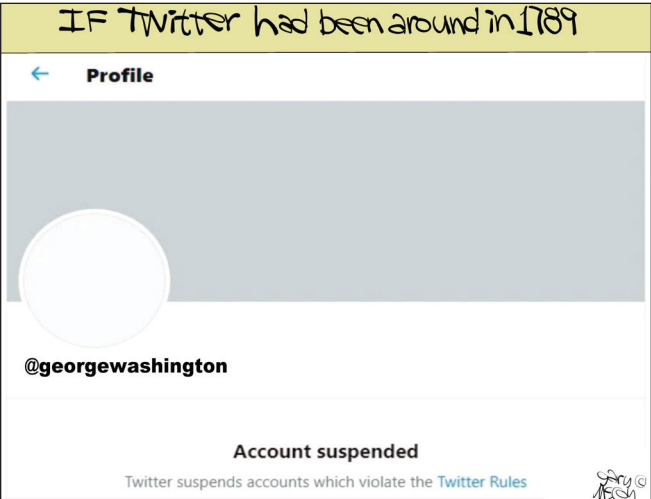
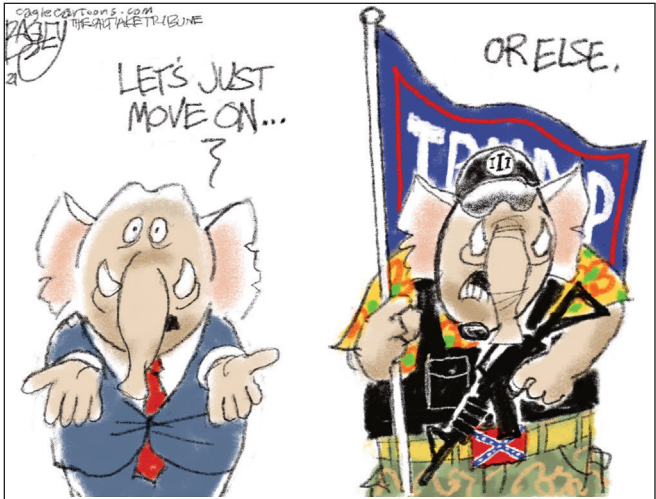
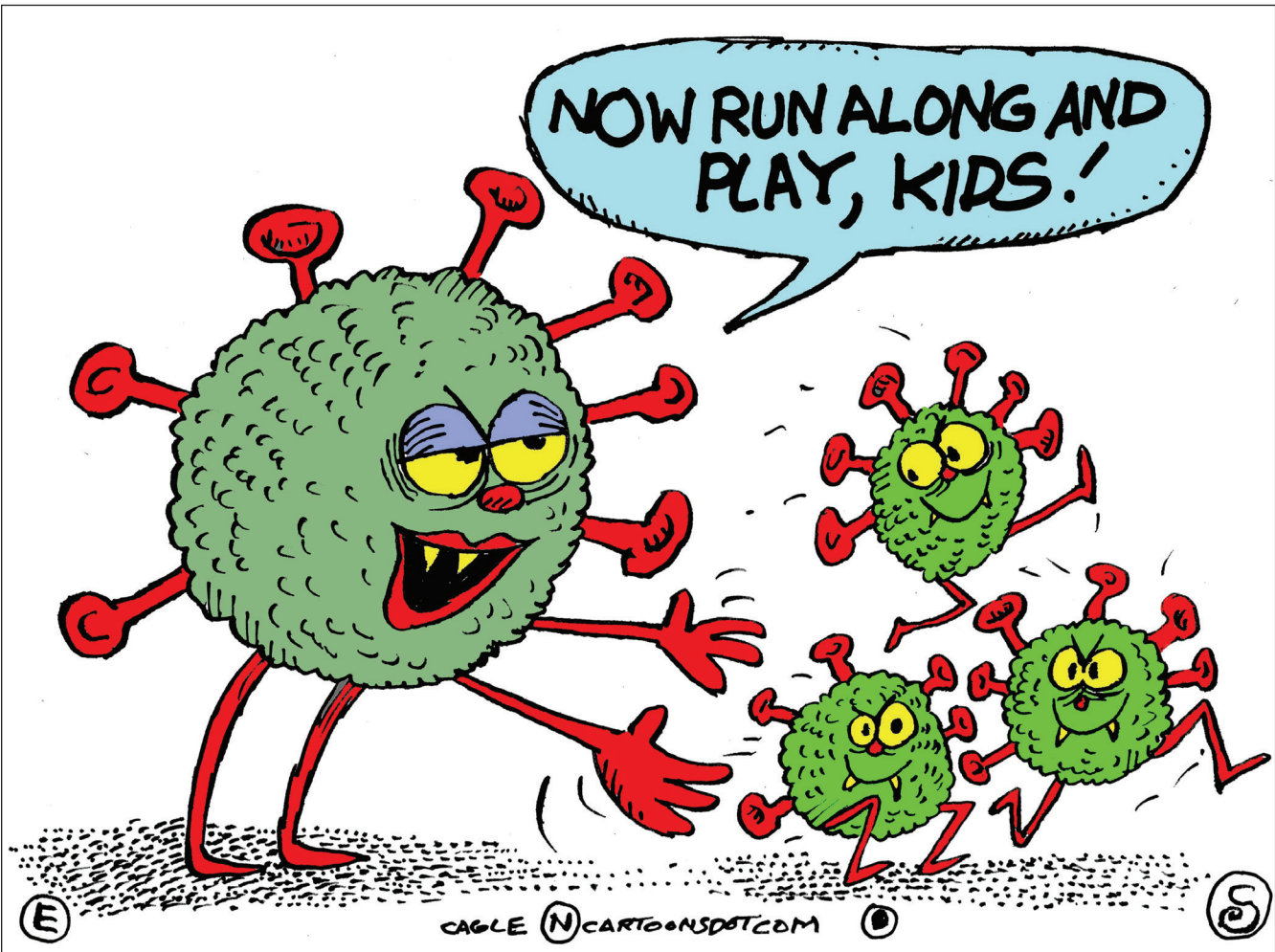
If he believes he must only listen to his ultra right-wing constituents, then he must rethink his outlook. The 2nd Congressional District is home to a good share of ultra right-wing voters, but it also is filled with middle-of-the-road Republicans and many Democrats. Their views and concerns matter too.

Bentz's views on what should occur after the president essentially incited a mob to storm the Capitol building are head-scratchers. On a purely pragmatic road, he may be correct that an impeachment of the president would be a waste of time. The president, after all, leaves office within a week. But his comment that the president will be held accountable for last week's mob "in the proper way" also is mystifying. What does that even mean?

Bentz made major missteps last week — mis-cues that raise questions about his political judgment. The voters of his district deserve better.

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Letters

Disappointed with elected officials' lack of communication

Yesterday I emailed my Oregon state district representative and senator and congressional representative to express my outrage at the events that took place at our Capitol and the need for consequences for all elected officials who enabled them. Thus far I have received one auto-reply informing me that state representatives are working from home.

What, no forwarded email? No remote checking of your official email? Regardless of your party affiliation or office, your first responsibility is to your constituents.

Any business owner or professional can tell you that listening to and communicating with your patrons is fundamental. It is wholly understandable that a majority of Americans see many in office as self-serving and attention seeking. The thousands of dollars spent on political fundraising could fund the staff to respond to every constituent communication many times over.

So disappointed. Leadership is needed at every level. We will never make headway on vital issues if we don't make basic efforts to communicate.

Mari Dominguez Cove

President Trump is responsible and must take the blame

I want to commend editor Phil Wright for his vulnerability in telling his personal story in a full page editorial in the Jan. 9 Observer. My personal story includes a phone call from my son

in tears of rage because, as a combat medic in Afghanistan, he treated comrades who were willing to give their lives to defend American democracy. It was too much for him to witness the awful spectacle of a domestic insurgence on our own Capitol.

I agree with the editor that there are things we can do locally to be more civil and engaged, but I take issue with his reluctance to think there is much point in holding President Donald Trump accountable through legislative action.

Yes, there may be others to blame for what has become of our society, but we do not all share that blame equally. Trump called for an insurrection, and he got it. He is responsible and must take the blame. Congress needs to act and act swiftly.

There are times when it is imperative to witness to the truth. This is one of them. Our president no longer deserves the title.

I urge you to let your congresspersons know where you stand. The Observer regularly prints their contact information.

Colleen Nelson
La Grande

People suffer without access to health care

The Observer editorial "Small steps better in Oregon's single-payer plan" was a frustrating read for me. I disagree that small steps would be smarter. I, and hundreds of others, have been working to bring universal, publicly funded health care to Oregon for more than a decade. With the Task Force on Universal Health Care in place, now is the time for action.

Physicians led efforts for universal health care in Oregon. In 2009 "Mad as Hell Doctors" trav-

eled 6,000 miles through America's heartland from Portland to Washington, D.C., stopping at 40-plus venues in 17 states. The late Bill Whitaker coordinated tour logistics. I joined him for the last half of the tour. The more than 40 community town halls were eye opening. Long lines of people stood waiting for their "minute at the microphone" to share how lack of access to health care was affecting them and their families. Unnecessary escalating illness, loss of employment and death were common stories. Staying in bad relationships to keep health insurance was life for many women. Stopping medical care so the family home would not be sold to pay for the next round of treatment was heartbreaking in 2009 and still happening in 2021. Add to this the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and it's time for unmet health care needs to change.

People want health care coverage for all. According to a fall 2020 CBS News poll, 56% of Americans think providing access to affordable health care coverage for all Americans is the responsibility of the federal government, and two-thirds favor the creation of a national, government-administered health insurance plan similar to Medicare that would be available to all Americans.

You can be part of this movement. Check out Health Care for All-Action for more information about making Oregon one of the first states to bring equitable, affordable, comprehensive, high-quality, publicly funded health care to everyone in Oregon and the United States (www.hcao-action.org/state). Contact me at cksw46@msn.com and connect to Eastern Oregon efforts.

Cheryl Simpson
La Grande

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