



# THE OBSERVER



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Good day to our valued subscribers Tom & Leslie Kenny of La Grande

## COVID-19

### Pandemic modeling predicts hard times ahead

By KALEB LAY  
The Observer

SALEM — After a brief lull in daily new cases of COVID-19 provided a momentary respite from the unrelenting march of the pandemic early in the new year, Oregonians now face a projected rise in infections and deaths over the coming months on an unprecedented scale.

That's according to the most recent modeling from the Oregon Health Authority, which predicted a return to exponential spread, and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, which anticipated Oregon's COVID-19 death toll will more than triple by April 1, 2021.

OHA modeling, released Jan. 7, estimated the rate of spread in Oregon was 1.29 as of Dec. 23, indicating that each positive case of COVID-19 spread to an average of 1.29 more people. For example, 100 cases would become 129 cases — 29 more — which would then become 166 cases — 37 more — which would then become 214 cases — 48 more — thus exponential spread.

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### Vaccination to expand to seniors

COVID-19 vaccines also to be available to educators, child care workers starting Jan. 23

By KALEB LAY  
The Observer

SALEM — Oregon will expand its COVID-19 vaccination efforts to include all Oregonians older than 65, K-12 educators and staff, and child care workers on Jan. 23, according to a press release from Gov. Kate Brown.

The news comes as the U.S. federal government announced it would be releasing its entire reserve of vaccine doses for distribution.

"While this is an unexpected change in course from the federal government, receiving more vaccines is welcome news for states — and Oregon is ready to devote all resources necessary to ramp up distribution with our health

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## Reflecting on insurrection

Locals express their views on the violence in the nation's Capitol

By DICK MASON  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The deadly storming of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2021, has left people all along the political spectrum in La Grande feeling distressed and angry.

"To see citizens fighting each other just broke my heart," said Sharon Porter of La Grande, a retired educator. "I believe in the goodness of the world and this was not it."

Porter is one three people who shared their perspective on the incident after responding to a post on The Observer's Facebook page.

Porter, 70, has seen the majesty of the Capitol firsthand.

"The building is a thing of beauty," Porter said. "To see the building desecrated was too much for me. I was almost in tears because of the pain of seeing this. This is our Capitol."

She also said she felt dismay that some of the people involved in the attack were carrying American flags.

"The flag represents all Americans, not just those who are secessionists," Porter said.

The retired educator also was upset to see some of the rioters carrying Bibles.

"They were not doing what Jesus would want us to do," she said.

Porter, who considers herself part of America's mainstream, said she believes it is crucial everyone strive to keep an open mind regardless of where they stand in the world of partisan politics.

"It is very important that we try to understand everyone's opinion. This is critical," Porter said.

President Donald Trump is being blamed for the insurrection primarily because during a rally he asked his supporters to go to the Capitol and protest the counting of electoral votes on the floor of the U.S. Senate.

Lori Hoagland, 48, of La Grande, believes it is wrong to hold Trump's speech responsible. She said she does not believe Trump said anything that should have incited violence.

"I listened to every word (of Trump's speech)," said Hoag-



J. Scott Applewhite/AP Photo

Hundreds of National Guard troops inside the Capitol Visitor's Center prepare to reinforce security at the Capitol in Washington, D.C., Wednesday, Jan. 13, 2021. The House of Representatives on Wednesday passed an article of impeachment against President Donald Trump for his role in inciting an angry mob to storm the Capitol last week.

land, an Independent and an ardent Trump supporter.

Hoagland said Trump asked his supporters to march peacefully to the Capitol.

A homeschool teacher, Hoagland said she thinks the people responsible for the Jan. 6 violence, which claimed five lives,

were individuals who oppose Trump. Hoagland said she believes they damaged the Capitol in hopes that Trump supporters would be blamed for it. She said Trump's supporters are too patriotic to resort to the violent steps the insurrectionists took.

"We love our country. To take over the Capitol would be un-American," she said. "We are Americans, we do not burn up a town and destroy and occupy."

Hoagland said she believes the antagonists were financed by wealthy members of corporate America who oppose Trump.

"The past few days will go down in history as the time when half of our country cheered the use of corporate power to silence the other half of the country," she said.

Denise Elizabeth Stone of La Grande first learned of the riot at the Capitol while working on her computer at home and listening to a television news report.

"I was pretty horrified by the violence, but I was not surprised because anger has been building up for a long time," Stone said. She said this has been occur-

### House votes to impeach President Trump, again

WASHINGTON — A majority of the U.S. House voted Wednesday, Jan. 13, to impeach President Donald Trump for a second time, just a week after he encouraged loyalists to "fight like hell" against election results and a mob of his supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol.

The House vote on an article of impeachment for incitement of insurrection still was underway Wednesday, but the Democratic-led House had secured enough votes to impeach Trump. Some Republicans joined Democrats in voting to impeach the president.

During debate before the vote, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi asked Republicans and Democrats to "search their souls."

Trump is the first American president to be impeached twice.

The impeachment proceedings came one week after a violent, pro-Trump mob breached the Capitol, sending lawmakers into hiding and revealing the fragility of the nation's history of peaceful transfers of power. Five people died.

Trump has taken no responsibility for the riot.

— Associated Press

ring for decades as people have become more partisan. Stone said many have developed the mindset that if individuals do

not think like they do then they are the enemy.

Stone, 67, compared the attack on the Capitol to the Watergate scandal, which forced President Richard Nixon to resign in 1974. She said she supported Nixon and thought he should stay office. She changed her mind later after the public learned the truth about what

Nixon had done. Watergate was terrible, she said, but it does not compare to what happened on Jan. 6.

"This is so much worse than Watergate," Stone said.

She believes social media is largely responsible for today's highly charged political atmosphere, noting it tends to bring out the worst in people, some who make rude and cutting remarks on it.

"This encourages anger and divisiveness," Stone said.

She noted Trump, with the

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## Black Lives Matter billboard defaced

By KALEB LAY  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A billboard in La Grande featuring a Black Lives Matter logo was defaced with white paint last weekend.

The sign was erected after a crowdfunding effort in August 2020 raised \$5,000. Maria Carmichael, who led that effort, said she'd expected the billboard to be vandalized sooner or later.

"I'm disappointed, but I'm not at all surprised," Carmichael said. "If anything, I'm surprised it didn't happen sooner given all of the vitriol that was spewed in response to the sign going up in the first place. There were



Maria Carmichael/Contributed Photo

A billboard in support of the Black Lives Matter movement stands defaced on Jan. 11, 2021, on Interstate 84 in La Grande. The defaced vinyl has been removed and will be replaced in the coming weeks.

threats to shoot it, to paintball it, to burn it down, and it wasn't just a few people saying that."

A tidal wave of social media engagement — much of it emotionally charged — also met

The Observer's coverage of the then-incoming billboard.

The Black Lives Matter sign was initially slated to be put up in a different location but was moved to the billboard along Interstate 84 because it was "less accessible" and would be more difficult to vandalize, Carmichael said.

She indicated she would support reporting the vandalism to law enforcement, but the decision ultimately fell to Meadow Advertising, the company based in The Dalles that owns the billboard.

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### WEATHER Full forecast on the back of B section

Tonight 27 LOW Partly cloudy  
Friday 40/30 Showers around

### CONTACT US

541-963-3161  
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3 sections, 22 pages  
La Grande, Oregon  
Email story ideas to news@lagrandeobserver.com. More contact info on Page 4A.



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SATURDAY MENTAL ILLNESS CRISIS

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