

Our View

# Gov. Brown is right to be frustrated

In retrospect, the national response to the COVID-19 pandemic was lackluster at best and nothing illustrates that better than the recent confusion — and apparent lack of planning — over the distribution of the vaccine.

Surely we can do better. Readers may recall that late last week the state backed off on its earlier pledge to allow teachers and Oregonians older than 65 to receive the vaccine later this month. Now, because of an apparent lack of vaccine supplies, teachers and educators can start to receive the vaccine Jan. 25. People older than 80 can get the first shot Feb. 8.

Gov. Kate Brown blamed the Trump administration. She announced on Friday, Jan. 15, there will be no upsurge in vaccine shipments because there is no national reserve.

Brown said she would demand answers from the Trump administration and she was “shocked and appalled” the federal government can’t deliver on its promises regarding the vaccine.

We can sympathize with the governor. The sentiments of shock and confusion and frustration have become, by now, familiar earmarks of the pandemic. The sad fact, though, is it never had to be this way.

We are a great nation able to manufacture state-of-the-art weapons and cutting-edge vehicles. We could, if we wanted, nearly feed the world with our strong agriculture industry. Yet, we couldn’t manage to overcome a virus that should never have been a surprise.

Since the 1990s medical experts, journalists and other experts warned that a major pandemic — mostly likely the flu — would descend on the world soon. Reams of reports and a steady diet of nonfiction books carefully painted the danger looming on the horizon.

Nobody listened. When the pandemic did arrive on our shores, politics, incompetency and a misguided approach stagnated the federal government’s response. The federal government took a 19th century view of the crisis and turned over the day-to-day battle against the virus to the states.

Brown is right to be frustrated. The rest of us should be, too. The only way to fight our way out of this pandemic is through vaccinations. Without a vaccine, the pandemic rolls on.

President-elect Joe Biden has proclaimed he will release more vaccine and faster than the Trump administration. We hope that is true.

Because the nation does not need more lip service when it comes to fighting the virus. And fighting a pandemic, with essentially one arm tied behind the back, hasn’t worked and won’t work.



My Voice

## Why I will get a COVID-19 vaccine

**JADE McDOWELL**  
HERMISTON HERALD

As the first vaccines for COVID-19 are distributed to those at the front of the line, Americans have a choice about whether to receive the vaccine themselves.

I am not a doctor qualified to give medical advice, and I also can’t tell the future. But I am sharing why I plan to get the vaccine as soon as it becomes available to me.

First, I trust the safety and effectiveness of the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines, as do people in the medical field I respect, and millions of other health care professionals the world over who have so far received their first dose.

Given the way some politicians have tried to inappropriately politicize government messaging on the pandemic, I get why Americans are hesitant in trusting what they are hearing. But these vaccines were developed by private companies and have been scrutinized and approved many times over by regulatory agencies around the world, in countries across the spectrum of political leanings. Some states within the United States set up their own panels of experts to judge the vaccine, and the data from trials has been made public.

The most common doubt I hear is, “How was this vaccine developed in such an unprecedented amount

of time?” But the scale of this effort — from the funding to the number of people involved to the level of collaboration — also is completely unprecedented. If you have always put together jigsaw puzzles by yourself and one day you invite three friends to help, it would not be surprising if the puzzle came together faster than usual.

Even though this specific variety of coronavirus is new, scientists were studying the idea of coronavirus vaccines after past outbreaks of COVID-19’s cousins, SARS and MERS. Researchers say that data was invaluable in providing a head start. Medical science also has advanced greatly since the advent of vaccines for diseases such as polio.

If I asked you what would happen if you dropped a bowling ball off the roof of your house, you might confidently tell me the ball would quickly drop to the ground. It wouldn’t matter if you had never specifically dropped a bowling ball off your roof before; you know how gravity works, and you have seen how bowling balls behave in other circumstances. Similarly, despite having never encountered this specific virus before, scientists had a wide body of knowledge about viruses and the immune system.

Others are concerned about possible complications. It is true a small percentage of people have had significant allergic reactions to the vaccine. But they have recovered thanks to the EpiPens that in most cases they carried because of severe allergies to other substances. The same thing would happen if you

gave several million people peanuts, or eggs or bread.

While there is no way to 100% guarantee none of the COVID-19 vaccines have any long-term side effects, the science behind them is considered sound, and there is no indication so far there will be problems.

We have plenty of documentation of long-term side effects for COVID-19. So far, 1.7% of people who tested positive for COVID-19 in the United States have died from it. In Oregon, 5.7% of people who have tested positive have been hospitalized during their illness.

A growing number of other Americans have been disabled by flu-like symptoms going on nine months now, or have experienced permanent lung damage, heart damage, short term memory loss, loss of taste or smell, kidney failure or other lasting side effects.

Nothing in life is without risk, but the odds of living the rest of my life in good health seem far better with the vaccine than with COVID-19.

The past year has been miserable, and I want to get back to “normal” life. I’m tired of people who complain constantly about the pandemic and yet refuse to wear masks, social distance, get a vaccine or do literally anything to help things change. I’m willing to do my part to improve our circumstances, and I hope others will be, too.

*Jade McDowell is editor of the Hermiston Herald, part of the EO Media Group.*

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