

OUR VIEW

# The two languages of climate change

The latest update by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change contained few surprises. The average worldwide temperature will continue to creep upward. However, it will increase more slowly as the production of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane is reduced.

What is notable is not the contents of the report so much as the reactions to it. Scientists agreed that there wasn't much new in it and said so. A few pointed out the need to plan for ways to offset the impacts of a warmer planet.

Politicians, however, seemed to be leaping for the panic button. They wanted drastic action now or the end of the world as we know it would soon be at hand.

It was as though they had read two different reports.

For example, Cliff Mass, an atmospheric scientist at the University of Washington, pointed out that as the average temperature rises, the snowpack in the mountains will likely decrease even as precipitation increases. The key for irrigated agriculture, he said, is to increase the amount of water storage.

"We can deal with it with more reservoir capacity," he told Capital Press reporter Don Jenkins. "We've been lazy. We've used the snowpack as a reservoir."

Such an analysis seems reasonable. We have long advocated more water storage across the West in the form of reservoirs and aquifer recharge. With smaller snowpacks likely, that only seems prudent.

"The world isn't going to end," he said. "The report's really quite underwhelming. It's not as hyped as the headlines."

Politicians, on the other hand, seemed to read much more into the report and responded in a different language.

"This groundbreaking report makes it clear that the extreme weather now being felt around the globe and across Washington state will look mild compared to what's ahead if we don't act," Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., said in a press release. "The next generation deserves to be able to enjoy the bliss of a Puget Sound summer day, not be trapped inside by triple-digit temperatures and smoky skies."

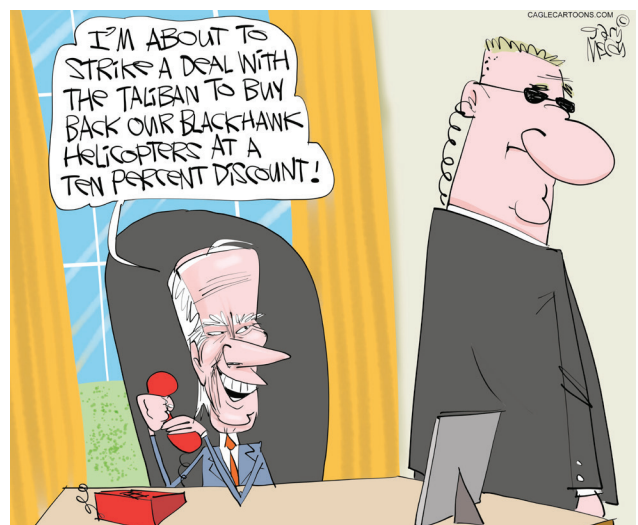
To their credit, scientists such as Mass are most interested in the facts and initiating a discussion of what we all can do to minimize the impact of climate change on everyone, including the farmers and ranchers who produce our food.

And the politicians? Well, they have their reasons to go to their grab bag of hyperbole to promote drastic measures and push through political agendas.

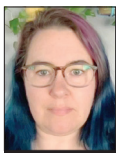
Instead of addressing the major causes of climate change — such as China, which produces 28% of the world's carbon dioxide — and seeking out the best ways to cope with climate change, they want to drop everything to pursue paths that at best will only slow climate change, not stop it.

The U.S. produces 15% of the carbon dioxide and its carbon footprint is shrinking, while China's is growing.

Providing constituents with a Chicken Little version of science will not solve the problem. It will only cause more confusion, mostly among the politicians.



## Sheriff Bowen does not speak for me



**KRISANDRA KELLOGG**  
OTHER VIEWS

An open letter to Sheriff Cody Bowen.

I am writing to let you know how beyond furious I am upon reading your recent letter to the governor. You can feel however you want to feel about mandates, but it is unacceptable for you to write a letter saying that "we the people of Union County, Oregon, have had enough!" as if you speak for all of us.

I can assure you that you do not speak for me, nor for so many other people in our community on this matter any more than you feel that Kate Brown speaks for you. Writing a letter to the governor stating your opinion is fine, even stating that many citizens here agree with you is fine, but pretending that you are doing so on all of our behalf is abhorrent and unexcusable.

Rights are not being violated with these public safety mandates, and behaving like wearing a piece of cloth on your face is worthy of outrage is absurd. COVID-19 is running

rampant in our community and in our country and it is affecting more children than ever due to the high contagiousness of the delta variant. Anything that we can do to protect our children and our community, especially when it is something as simple as wearing a mask, should absolutely be done without turning it into a political issue.

Saying that families should be able to choose whether or not their children wear masks in school is unfair to the people who are trying to be responsible in preventing more spread of this virus. If there are some people in close quarters who choose not to wear masks, it is nowhere near as effective at slowing the spread of COVID-19 than if they do. Masks work best when used both ways: I wear mine to protect the community, and the community wears theirs to protect me. When we all wear them, there is the highest level of protection for us all. Potentially sacrificing the health of others during a pandemic because you feel like your rights are being infringed upon by a minor inconvenience is simply unethical.

Claiming that wearing masks does far more harm to children than

the virus ever could is disgustingly disrespectful to people who have lost loved ones. While it may not have killed as many children as it has adults by far, it has indeed killed children, and most of the more than 600,000 adults in the U.S. that the virus has claimed had children who loved them. What has wearing a mask done that is worse than that?

No matter how you look at this problem, you have hurt our community with your letter. Best-case scenario: You have created more of a divide between those who believe that the mask mandates go against their rights and those who believe that wearing masks is responsible. Worst-case scenario: COVID-19 ends up being the winner in all of this, infecting and killing far more people than it had to.

Either way, our community suffers. I can only hope that it suffers from the divide rather than a horrifying health crisis, but it didn't have to be this way.

*Krisandra Kellogg lives in La Grande where she attends Eastern Oregon University and is a mother of four, who are all students in the community.*

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