

OUR VIEW

We all could use a boost

Let's face it — we're all tired of COVID-19. We're weary of the restrictions, exhausted by the frequent reports and becoming numb to the severe aspects of a disease no one knew about two years ago.

Our fatigue, though, is nothing like that of the hundreds of health care workers in our state who have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic for almost two years.

And now, we have the omicron variant of the disease, which is coming, and no one can stop it.

Rather than fall into the trap of being jaded by the newest manifestation of the COVID-19 virus, we must take lessons learned over the past year and a half and execute them.

We don't know a lot about the omicron variant, but what we do know isn't very encouraging.

Scientists are already alerting the public omicron could become the dominant variant of the infection by late January and trigger a fifth wave of cases.

Evidence at this point seems to show that a two-dose course of vaccines is less effective at preventing a mild infection. However, scientists also believe two doses of the vaccine will offer some protection from a severe case.

What does seem to help? Vaccine boosters. Boosters seem to be much more effective against omicron, and scientists and health authorities are urging people to get them.

We could negate the coming wave of omicron by following health guidelines and getting boosters.

Clearly a choice to get a booster — or to get a first or second dose of the vaccine — is a personal one. We hope that those who are not vaccinated, or are considering a booster, talk with their health care provider and study reputable sources to determine if a vaccine, or booster, is the right choice for them.

At the very least, we are not going to be caught off guard by the arrival of omicron. That is good news. Knowing a crisis is on the horizon is the first step in overcoming it.

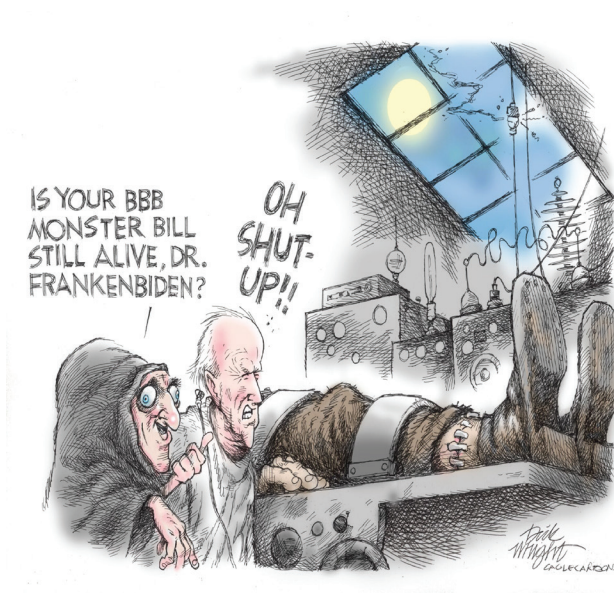
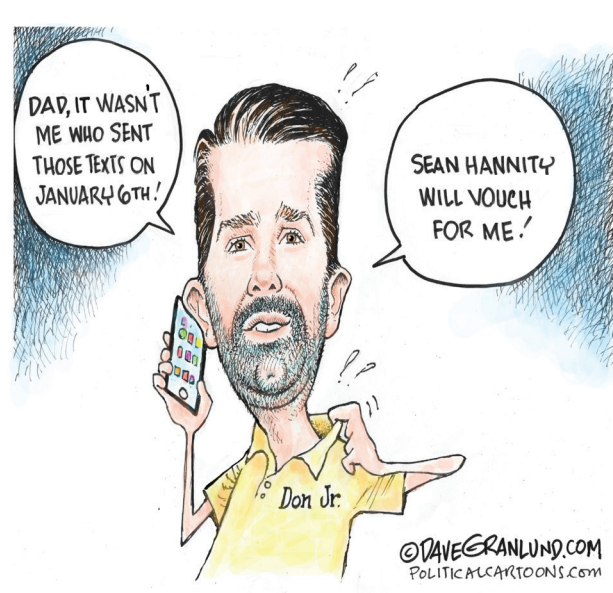
We need to be cautious about the onset of omicron but not panicky. We have the resources to defeat this latest round of COVID-19 and we, in Eastern Oregon, are a resilient group that can overcome any crisis.

EDITORIALS
Unsigned editorials are the opinion of The Observer editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of The Observer.

LETTERS
• The Observer welcomes letters to the editor. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We will not publish consumer complaints against businesses, personal attacks against private individuals or comments that can incite violence. We also discourage thank-you letters.
• Letters should be no longer than 350 words and must be signed and carry the author's name, address and phone number (for verification only). We will not publish

anonymous letters.
• Letter writers are limited to one letter every two weeks.
• Longer community comment columns, such as Other Views, must be no more than 700 words. Writers must provide a recent headshot and a one-sentence biography. Like letters to the editor, columns must refrain from complaints against businesses or personal attacks against private individuals. Submissions must carry the author's name, address and phone number.
• Submission does not guarantee publication, which is at the discretion of the editor.

SEND LETTERS TO:
letters@lagrandeobserver.com or via mail to Editor, 911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande, OR 97850



YOUR VIEWS

Misinformation to blame for lagging vaccination rates

Here is something to think about as we enter the winter months, with the potential for an uptick in COVID-19 and the variants of delta and omicron. This information was updated as of Dec. 5, 2021, and heard on NPR's "Morning Edition." The print article was headlined "Pro-Trump counties now have far higher COVID death rates. Misinformation is to blame."

Since May 2021, people living in counties that voted heavily for Donald Trump during the last presidential election have been nearly three times as likely to die from COVID-19 as those who live in areas that went for now-President Biden. That's according to a new analysis by NPR that examines how political polarization and misinformation are driving a significant share of the deaths in the pandemic.

The trend was robust, even when controlling for age, which is the primary demographic risk of COVID-19 mortality. The data also reveal a major contributing factor to the death rate difference: The higher the vote share for Trump, the lower the vaccination rate.

The analysis looked at only the geographic location of COVID-19 deaths. The exact political views

of each person taken by the disease remains unknowable. But the strength of the association, combined with polling information about vaccination, strongly suggests that Republicans are being disproportionately affected.

Misinformation appears to be a major factor in the lagging vaccination rates. The Kaiser Family Foundation's polling shows Republicans are far more likely to believe false statements about COVID-19 and vaccines. A full 94% of Republicans think one or more false statements about COVID-19 and vaccines might be true, and 46% believe four or more statements might be true. By contrast, only 14% of Democrats believe four or more false statements about the disease.

The full report can be found on NPR.org.

Dan and Jan Blair Joseph

Elk are fortunate to have economic value

"The Elk Arrive" (The Observer, Dec. 16) provides information about 10 local elk feeding stations operated by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Elk are fed to keep them out of ranchers' haystacks. Many ranchers graze cattle on public lands in summer while

their lower private land grows hay.

As noted, elk are highly adapted to survive winters by pawing through snow to grasses. But when cows eat the grass, elk are forced into the valleys and will quite naturally eat from haystacks. To prevent that, elk numbers are controlled through various hunting programs. The sale of elk tags is lucrative for ODFW. Thus government feeding stations, paid for by tax dollars, are run to benefit ranchers and ODFW. Elk are fortunate to have economic value for ODFW.

When wolves kill or harass livestock all hell breaks loose. Ranchers howl and get reimbursed. ODFW condemns repeat offenders to death. After all, there's no money in wolves. In an unregulated capitalist system only profit has value.

Respect for diverse species and healthy ecosystems is not yet prioritized by most people, particularly lawmakers taking funding from big business. For that reason, basic ecosystems are unraveling everywhere. See Norm Cimon's Other views column "Cheatgrass will take over Owyhee" (The Observer, Dec. 16).

There's a steep price to be paid for such bedrock ignorance and greed. Worldwide news is chronicling it today.

Mary McCracken Island City

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

SUBSCRIBE AND SAVE

NEWSSTAND PRICE: \$1.50
You can save up to 55% off the single-copy price with home delivery.
Call 800-781-3214 to subscribe.

Subscription rates:
Monthly Autopay\$10.75
13 weeks.....\$37.00
26 weeks.....\$71.00
52 weeks.....\$135.00

THE OBSERVER
An independent newspaper founded in 1896

www.lagrandeobserver.com Phone: 541-963-3161
Toll free (Oregon): 1-800-781-3214
Email: news@lagrandeobserver.com

Periodicals postage paid at Pendleton, Oregon 97801
Published Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays (except postal holidays) by EO Media Group, 911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande, OR 97850 (USPS 299-260)

The Observer retains ownership and copyright protection of all staff-prepared news copy, advertising copy, photos and news or ad illustrations. They may not be reproduced without explicit prior approval.

POSTMASTER Send address changes to: The Observer, 911 Jefferson Ave., La Grande, OR 97850

COPYRIGHT © 2021

STAFF

| | |
|--|---|
| Regional publisher..... Karrine Brogotti | Home delivery advisor..... Amanda Fredrick |
| Interim editor..... Andrew Cutler | Advertising representative..... Kelli Craft |
| News clerk..... Lisa Lester Kelly | Advertising representative..... Amy Horn |
| Reporter..... Dick Mason | National accounts coordinator..... Devi Mathson |
| Reporter..... Davis Carbaugh | Graphic design..... Dorothy Kautz |
| Multimedia journalist..... Alex Wittwer | Page design..... Andy Nicolais |

A division of

eoMEDIA group
eomediagroup.com