

# The devastating impact of global mask mandates

By ADRIANA COHEN

Now that the Biden administration has achieved the impressive milestone of 200 million Americans getting vaccinated in his first 100 days in office, it's time to lift all remaining mask mandates.

If you'll recall, at the outset of the pandemic, we were told by Dr. Anthony Fauci that we needed just 15 days to "flatten the curve" and to protect frontline health care workers from getting the coronavirus. We were told the goal was to protect the most vulnerable citizens from getting the virus. Now, over a year later, we've not only achieved that primary objective, but we've surpassed it in spades—with as many as 3 million Americans getting vaccinated daily.

So, why hasn't the Biden administration lifted the face mask mandate given the fact that the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are 95% effective and over 80% of Americans 65 and older have already gotten the shot?

Reinfection is very rare for both those who've been vaccinated and those who have natural immunity from already having COVID-19 and developing antibodies to it. According to a study published in *The Lancet* in April, "previous infection with SARS-CoV-2 induces effective immunity to future infections in most individuals." The study was based on the evaluation of 25,661 hospital workers throughout England from June 18, 2020, to Dec. 31, 2020. It found that those with "a previous history of SARS-CoV-2 infection was associated with an 84% lower risk of infection."

The Centers for Disease Control website states, "Vaccine breakthrough cases occur in only a small percentage of vaccinated persons. To date, no unexpected patterns have been identified in the case demographics or vaccine characteristics among people with reported vaccine breakthrough infections."

But that's not all. The CDC also reports that, as of April 13, 2021, more than 75 million Americans had been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 since December 14, 2020 yet during that time the CDC received only 5,814 reports of vaccine breakthrough infections. That's just 0.08%. So again, why are citizens still being forced to cover their faces in public?

And who are we protecting exactly when the most vulnerable among us are already protected?

Perhaps a White House reporter can

ask Biden's press secretary Jen Psaki that question while she conducts her daily televised press briefings unmasked. I'm quite certain there are many Americans who want to know why high-ranking officials in the Biden administration are allowed on federal property without masks but not taxpayers who fund their salaries.

That said, masks aren't just an inconvenience for those of us who want to breathe freely or those who desperately miss seeing our friends, neighbors and fellow humans smiling faces, which have been hidden from view for over a year. Studies have shown that masks are wreaking havoc on the environment.

Last December, OceansAsia, a Hong Kong-based marine conservation organization, estimated that 1.56 billion masks entered oceans in 2020, causing an additional 4,680 to 6,240 metric tons of marine plastic pollution being dumped into the oceans, contaminating waterways, choking marine life and other devastating effects to ecosystems. With mask mandates still in effect in many states throughout the U.S. and around the world, the profound harm to marine life and the environment continues.

The inconvenient truth is disposable masks are made of plastics that break down into microplastics that end up poisoning fish that humans then eat. "It is noted that face masks are easily ingested by higher organisms, such as fishes, and microorganisms in the aquatic life which will affect the food chain and finally chronic health problems to humans," says the National Institute of Health. "As a result, microplastics from the face mask should be a focus worldwide."

Perhaps Fauci, who leads the NIH, should be reading his own website before recommending Americans wear two masks, not one.

"Not only are plastics polluting our oceans and waterways and killing marine life -- it's in all of us and we can't escape consuming plastics," said Marco Lambertini of the World Wildlife Fund.

Bottom line: Masks are harming the environment. Why no outcry from Democrats pushing the Green New Deal? Do they only care about plastic straws entering the ocean and plastic water bottles—not billions of masks?

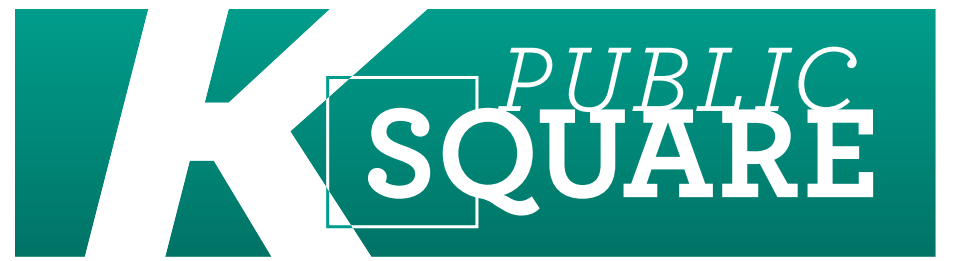
With Earth Day upon us, say it ain't so. (Creators Syndicate)

bring accountability and responsiveness to the Board.

Ashley Carson Cottingham, Osvaldo Avila, Maria Hinojos Pressey and Karina Guzman Ortiz are all highly qualified. They see not only listening to citizens as critical but really hearing what citizens' concerns are in order to craft policies to bring about the best outcomes for all students. The school board needs to be open to all voices in order to create an environment most conducive to those positive outcomes.

Vote for positive change come May 18. Vote for Ashley, Osvaldo, Karina and Maria.

**Carolyn Homan**  
Keizer



PUBLIC SQUARE welcomes all points of view. Published submissions do not necessarily reflect the views of the Keizertimes

## A world class educator

McNary High School principal Erik Jespersen was named the 2021 Oregon high school principal of the year by the Coalition of Oregon School Association of Secondary School Administrators and the Coalition of Oregon School Administrators at a ceremony on Friday, April 23.

For McNary students, parents, teachers, administrators and community leaders, the recognition for Jespersen is a no-brainer. The Keizer community has known for years that he is a special principal who has endeavored to make McNary a world class school.

In a year of disrupted in-class instruction due to COVID-19, Jespersen assured that all students had access to their education.

By most metrics, Jespersen's primary achievement is an increasing graduation rate. In six years McNary saw rates climb from 82% to 91%. The Keizer community can be proud of the culture Jespersen has created at McNary. His "1-1-1 Initiative" is key to keeping students engaged. The initiative encourages all students to participate in at least one club, one sport and one activity each

year. That gives our kids added incentive to attend and stay in school.

Surprised by the ceremony, the humble Jespersen was lauded by school and community leaders from school superintendent Christy Perry to Keizer

## Editorial

Mayor Cathy Clark and Marion County Commission Danielle Bethell.

Erik Jespersen should be held up as a paragon for educators and principals everywhere to emulate. His achievements at McNary are applauded near and far. His agenda is the success of his students and he succeeds because of what he knows but also because of who he is. He is towering figure, both literally and figuratively.

Jespersen is a world class principal and Keizer calls him its own.

— LAZ

## The purpose of Public Square

The *Keizertimes* has had an editorial and opinion page since its founding in 1979. The page is forum for the paper to express its point of view on issues important to the citizens of Keizer.

The Public Square page is available for the community to submit guest columns and letters expressing their opinions as well.

Does the *Keizertimes* get it right all the time? We certainly strive for that, to be a vehicle for discourse. To that end we don't censure comments unless they are slanderous or libelous. Free speech is a right for everyone; rarely will a submitted opinion be met with universal approval—that's the beauty of our democracy.

We have been criticized for some of the editorial cartoons we have run. We have been called out for allowing some opinions to run. The *Keizertimes* is a

community newspaper—we report the news of the city, good, bad or indifferent.

It is not just the hard news of the community this paper reports but also the good stories about the people who serve their fellow residents and those who achieve success in their personal endeavors.

At a time when everything seems to up for debate, conversations can turn ugly pretty fast. The *Keizertimes* works against that ugliness—we report news but also provide a forum for the community.

If at times our content makes people upset, we are sorry. Our mission remains the same: covering the news of the seven square miles of Keizer while offering space for members of the community to say what's on their mind.

— LAZ

## Letters

### Support these candidates for SK school board

To the Editor:

This year's Salem-Keizer School Board elections take on added importance in the midst of ongoing pandemic conditions that have so affected all schools and families with school children. There are four great candidates running for the four open seats and they have pledged to

# KEIZERTimes



**PUBLISHER & EDITOR**  
Lyndon Zaitz

[publisher@keizertimes.com](mailto:publisher@keizertimes.com)

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