

K PUBLIC SQUARE

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Let's grow our own teachers

The Salem-Keizer School District and the community should return to a program of old: Grow Our Own. Grow our own teachers from the students at our schools.

Teaching is a wonderful profession that offers a wide variety of options, from elementary school to high school, from the arts to the sciences to athletics. By promoting teaching as a profession to those already in our schools, the district can develop the future of our schools.

Grow Our Own would create a pipeline of homegrown instructors who not only know the area, but more importantly, they would know the people. With more than 80 different languages spoken in Salem-Keizer schools, imagine how a future elementary school student can blossom if their teacher also speaks Farsi or Urdu or Russian.

Contemporary teachers and administrators can identify those who lean toward teaching and those with the aptitude for it, then offer those students the pathway to the degrees and certificates to a success in the education field.

Grow Our Our can result in a more diverse teaching staff. The program should not negate the opportunity for

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people from outside the region to apply for open positions. Diversity of educators is more than ethnicity—it is a diversity of geographical backgrounds and experiences. We can hire from outside, as always, but put an added focus on creating future teachers from people we know—today's students.

To make it viable, such a program needs dedicated and committed stewards—administrators who recognize the value of both diversity and familiarity.

A program should be designed to entice possible candidates to consider teaching as career, such as promises of financial help with education—Grow Our Own scholarships, perhaps, and a promise of where they would be assigned.

We have the best resource for future teachers sitting in our classrooms. Let's help some of them grow into teachers of tomorrow. —LAZ

Letters

accepts the plain, proven over and over fact, that Joe Biden won, Trump lost in a fair and square election and will say so publically.

In other words, choose a Republican, not a deluded Trump cultist.

May your better angels help you make a wise choice.

Martin Doerfler
Keizer

Open letter to the Marion and Yamhill commissioners

To the Editor:

The surprise departure of Bill Post gives you an opportunity to replace him with a more representative legislator—one who accepts the reality of climate change, the tragedy of gun violence, the continuing threat of COVID and would support legislation that addresses those issues.

I have no illusions that you'll appoint such a rep, but at very least select one with a firm grip on reality. One who

Vaccine resisters sacrificing their jobs are not heroes

By MICHAEL GERSON

"Poor is the nation that has no heroes," Cicero said. But poorer still is a nation with the kind of heroes celebrated on *Fox News*.

The nation's leading purveyor of lethal medical advice during a pandemic has recently elevated the resisters against coronavirus vaccines—an airline pilot here, a nurse there—as models of citizenship. These abstainers are risking their livelihoods in the cause of . . . what? Well, that depends on your view of the vaccines themselves.

For generations we've had vaccine mandates, particularly for childhood diseases, in every state plus Washington D.C. Few thought to call this tyranny because communities have a duty to maintain public health, and individuals have a duty to reasonably accommodate the common good—even if this means allowing your child to be injected with a substance carrying a minuscule risk of harm.

So there can be no objection rooted in principle to vaccine mandates, unless you want to question them all the way down to measles, mumps and rubella. The problem must be COVID-19 in particular.

If the coronavirus vaccines are risky, experimental concoctions with frequent side effects, then government and business mandates are social coercion run amok. We might as well mandate vaping.

But if these vaccines are carefully tested and encourage greater immunity to a deadly disease, with minimal risk of side effects, then the "heroism" of vaccine resisters takes on a different connotation: It means resisters are less courageous and more selfish than your average 6-year-old getting a second MMR dose. Perhaps vaccine mandates should be modified to include lollipops for whingeing malcontents.

So which view is correct? If only there were empirical means, some scientific method, to test the matter. If only there had been three phases of clinical trials, involving tens of thousands of volunteers, demonstrating the drugs to be safe and effective. If only the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration were constantly monitoring safety concerns about the vaccines. If only we could estimate the number of COVID deaths that might have been prevented if vaccine uptake were higher.

To break the suspense—we do live in such a world. "From June through September 2021," concluded a recent Peterson-KFF report, "approximately 90,000 COVID-19 deaths among adults likely would have been prevented with vaccination." So the matter is simple: Who is making vaccination more likely to take place, and who is not?

In this light, it's hard to blame the small group of workers who have been misled into



believing that liberty is the right to infect your neighbors with a deadly pathogen. The main fault lies with the media outlets that spotlight and elevate such people, and with political figures who seek their political dreams by encouraging lethal ignorance.

In the latter category, the Republican governors Ron DeSantis of Florida and Greg Abbott of Texas are the repellent standouts. If the coronavirus could vote, these men would be governors for life. Most recently, Abbott issued an executive order saying "no entity" could impose vaccine mandates in his state. So far, many Texas business entities have treated his order with contempt, preferring to comply with President Biden's vaccinate-or-test mandate.

In my political youth, conservatives praised state governments as "laboratories of innovation." Now they're graveyards of sanity and public spirit. And the actual graveyards provide evidence.

The effectiveness of vaccine mandates is demonstrated by current practice. The United States has generally high rates of coverage for childhood vaccinations. But in states that make it easy to gain an exemption—for religious or sometimes "philosophical" reasons—the rates of coverage decline. And we've seen outbreaks of preventable diseases such as measles as a result.

For my part, I'm not even sure what a "religious" exemption means in the case of COVID. I understand that a few religious traditions object to receiving medical care entirely. But I don't think this is the main excuse for evangelicals seeking exemptions from COVID vaccinations. What type or tradition of religion asserts the right to avoid minor risks and inconveniences in service to our neighbors? The Church of Perpetual Selfishness? The coven of Ayn Rand? Do Christians really want to be identified as people who permit breast augmentation but frown on vaccination? Getting vaccinated is not only good public health; it is also a small but important act of generosity.

Abbott and his ilk are seeking a morally desolate world in which people demand their autonomy even if it kills their neighbor. But there is a better world in which institutions have duties to the health and safety of citizens, and citizens have obligations to the health and happiness of one another. That is not only a better place to live—it is a place where more of us would remain alive.

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