

K PUBLIC SQUARE

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Hold the line just a bit longer

Mask mandates in Oregon are expected to be lifted by March 31, if not sooner. That is welcome news to everyone, especially students and their parents, who have been vocal about those requirements.

Oregonians have a month yet to adhere to the mandates that have done so much to keep COVID-19 from ravaging Oregon as it has done in other parts of the country. Surely we can all wear masks indoors for four more weeks.

Some say that government can't be trusted to keep to a March 31 deadline for lifting mandates. But we do not know today what COVID-19 variants may be lurking, waiting to take advantage wherever it can.

No one likes having to wear masks, or social distancing, or waiting longer because

Senator Thatcher votes for safety

To the Editor:

State Senator Kim Thatcher voted against a bill that would let thousands back on the streets. The last several years Oregon has seen a large increase in crime. SB1511, which is in the Ways and Means Committee would let thousands more of the criminals back on the street. The criminals know they won't be punished for their crimes so they just do what they want. Why should the citizens work hard to buy their home? Or buy a car, when someone can just come by and steal it. Our children are not safe even in their parent's homes because of these criminals. This will retraumatize crime victims and their families by just knowing that the criminals are back on the street

Portland is overrun with shootings and Salem is going in that direction.

We need people like Thatcher in the legislature that will vote against these terrible bills.

Ruby Pantalone
Keizer

Are candidates any better than Gov. Brown?

To the Editor:

Heavy with disappointment but without malice, a near-the-end assessment of Kate Brown as governor of Oregon has found her short on leadership skills.

Brown arrived at the top political job here by the wayward and irresponsible behavior of her predecessor. Of course, she could have declined it; however, she didn't and then ran on her own to win in a state where from the outset, since Democrats count the largest number of voters, practically assured her a victory unless she had immediately proven herself not equal to the demands of the job, a condition she kept under wraps for a while.

Besides inadequate leadership skills, she has displayed a knack for getting a whole lot of people really burned-up and superhot under the collar. One standout among her repertoire of stumbling around has been the chronic, endless bungling of unemployment benefits to those in desperate need, having duly earned her 'We're just mad-as-hell' status. Then there was, among the examples, her action over COVID-19 protections where, apparently, her union pals were placed at the front of the vaccination line ahead of seniors or those determined to be at greatest risk. Meanwhile, her mask mandates have made bitter enemies out of

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businesses are short staffed. We all need to be patient, and just like the celebrations after the Allied victory in Europe in 1945, we will all be able to tear off our masks and get back to some sense of normalcy.

Once masks are no longer required, we should all be responsible how we dispose of them; throwing them on the ground, with a feeling of freedom, won't be good for the planet.

Hold the line, we're almost there.

— LAZ

Letters

former congenial Oregonians.

Oregon's current secretary of state Shemia Fagan and members of the state's Supreme Court, arguably, are human just like the rest of us. So, of course, they may err in their duties, acting on their responsibilities. Heavens to mercy, they may even allow political influences and self-serving considerations to enter into their decision-making. I'll say no more here because they have powers that could make my personal life a living hell but reserve my right of opinion to say that there are profound misgivings when it comes to denying a person to run for Oregon governor who has displayed considerable intelligence, knowledge and insights, rather likely to make a real difference in outcomes in the job now held by Kate Brown.

The line-up of those who want to be governor of Oregon provides opinion on the list: it appearing to be a collection of persons weighted by partisan baggage and the inevitable favors to buddies and pals, ending us again with a governor doing the same that been done, again and again and again, expecting a different outcome (the definition of insanity). The Democrats among prospects look like warmed-over versions of the incumbent while Republicans have made it known they want our nation (followed by Oregon), to move quickly from democracy to autocracy. And, if the average Joe and Jane thinks their freedoms have been infringed of late over the pandemic, just wait until this kind of government happens.

Gene H. McIntyre
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A pathetic response

By MARC A. THIESSEN

Remember the uproar last month when President Joe Biden declared that the U.S. response to a Russian invasion of Ukraine would depend on whether it was a "minor incursion"? Critics rightly pointed out that Biden had effectively given Russian President Vladimir Putin a greenlight to invade eastern Ukraine. President Volodymyr Zelensky quickly rebuked Biden, tweeting, "There are no minor incursions." Biden had to quickly backtrack, declaring the next day that "any—any—any assembled Russian units move across the Ukrainian border, that is an invasion."

Well, on Feb. 21, Putin sent assembled Russian units across the border into eastern Ukraine. And what was the Biden administration's immediate reaction? To excuse Putin's actions and downplay them as nothing more than a minor incursion.

In his address to the nation last week, Biden finally acknowledged that "this is the beginning of a Russian invasion." Before then, *The Washington Post* reported that Putin's actions had forced the administration "into an uneasy dilemma about whether that constituted an invasion." One senior administration official "repeatedly refused to say whether Putin's decision to send 'peacekeeping' troops into the two Russian-backed separatist areas constituted a red-line invasion in the eyes of the Biden administration."

This is beyond belief. After his "minor incursion" gaffe, Biden drew a clear red line. He said that if "any"—and he repeated the word "any"—Russian units crossed those borders, that would constitute an invasion. Well, Putin did exactly that. He crossed the border—and Biden's red line. But instead of responding decisively, his administration pathetically twisted itself into knots, looking for excuses not to call it an "invasion."

Then, after belatedly acknowledging an invasion was underway, Biden failed to respond with the crippling sanctions he had promised. In his address, Biden announced personal sanctions on Russian elites and their family members, as well as some limited sanctions on two Russian banks. But he failed to announce any sanctions targeting Russia's two most significant exports—oil and natural gas. Why? Because Germany now gets more than half of its natural gas imports from Russia, while the rest of the European Union depends on Russia for about 40%. And because Biden knows that oil and gas sanctions could impact energy prices in the United States as well.

Indeed, while Biden failed to announce energy sanctions, he delivered an extended soliloquy on his determination to blunt the impact of sanctions on energy prices here

other VOICES

at home. "As we respond, my administration is using every tool at our disposal to protect American businesses and consumers from rising prices at the pump," Biden said. "I am going to take robust action to make sure that the pain of our sanctions is targeted at the Russian economy, not ours." What kind of message of resolve is that? What Putin hears is that Biden is afraid to impose crippling energy sanctions because he does not want to be held responsible for driving gas prices up even further just months before the midterm elections. That will only embolden the Russian leader.

Worse still, Biden failed to deliver on his promise, made earlier this month to "end" the Nord Stream 2 pipeline if Russia invaded Ukraine. Biden had declared that "if Russia invades," which "means tanks or troops crossing the border of Ukraine again," then "there will be no longer a Nord Stream 2. We will bring an end to it." Standing beside Biden, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz repeatedly refused to echo his declaration or even mention Nord Stream 2 by name.

Well, Russia just did what Biden said—sending its forces across Ukraine's border. So, is Nord Stream 2 ended? No. On Tuesday, Scholz announced that he was halting the certification of the pipeline, so he could "re-evaluate this situation, in view of the latest developments." Halting and re-evaluating Nord Stream 2 is very different from ending it. In his speech, Biden said that "we've worked with Germany to ensure Nord Stream 2 will not, as I promised, will not move forward." He did not say "there will be no longer a Nord Stream 2."

How does all this come across to Putin? As weakness. Putin has long believed Biden is bluffing when he threatens serious consequences -- just like he correctly assessed that the Obama-Biden administration was bluffing in 2014 when it warned of repercussions if Russia invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea.

So far, he has been proved right. If Biden does not immediately reimpose sanctions on Nord Stream 2—killing the project once and for all—and place crippling sanctions on Russia's energy and banking sectors, then American credibility will be shattered beyond recovery.

(Washington Post)