

OPINION



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GUEST COLUMN

Oregon goes with its gut

The governors of Oregon and Washington state both say that science has guided their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a Seattle Times columnist thinks that Oregon “went more with its gut” when Gov. Kate Brown moved K-12 educators to the front of the line for coronavirus vaccines.

By doing so, columnist Danny Westneat wrote last week, Oregon got it right:

“What happened is, Oregon ignored all the barbs and went ahead and got the shots for its teachers. When that didn’t lead to immediate

school reopenings as hoped, the governor last week brought down the hammer.

“Whether or not public schools should return kids to the classroom this spring is no longer up for discussion,” she said.

“How’s that for some clarity?”

Hmm. “Clarity” is not how some Oregonians would define Brown’s whip-lash approach to coronavirus leadership. Perhaps clarity is in the eye of the beholder. Or maybe it takes an outsider’s perspective to awaken us.

A year ago Brown closed Oregon school classrooms because of the pandemic. Her administration followed that up with some of the nation’s toughest state requirements for allowing schools to reopen. Later, she switched, saying those requirements weren’t mandates after all — only advice — and so it was up to local school districts and communities to determine when to resume in-person classes.

On Friday, Brown was back with a statewide mandate. She declared that all schools must reopen this spring for some form of in-person learning.

In his column, Westneat chided Washington Gov. Jay Inslee for failing to prioritize educators for vaccinations until President Joe Biden had told states to do so.

“Inslee went along, but it means that Washington is weeks behind in getting its teachers the shots,” Westneat wrote. “Meanwhile Oregon went from mocked to national policy model in the span of six weeks.”

His column concluded by calling on the Inslee administration to accelerate vaccinations for educators:

“(Brown’s) argument from the start



Ryan Brennecke /The Bulletin

Sydney Murphy, a third grade teacher at Silver Rail Elementary in Bend, receives her first dose of the COVID-19 vaccination from volunteer Val Leonardo, a registered nurse and nursing coordinator at the Shepherd’s House, during a vaccination clinic in January at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center in Redmond.

was that it would take so long to vaccinate all the seniors that by then the school year would be lost, so why not pause the seniors for a couple of weeks? She got accused of selling out the state’s old people, and maybe she got a little lucky, but she turned out to be right.

“There’s still time, barely, for us to swallow our pride and copy little-brother Oregon.”

Not speaking of California Throughout the late 20th century, Oregonians were obsessed with California, contending bad ideas flowed north from California like an infectious political disease.

For example, our infamous income tax “kicker,” which might flow again to taxpayers next spring, was created by the 1979 Oregon Legislature to stop California’s tax rebellion from taking root here. The kicker has worked to deprive the Legislature of spending unexpected state revenue. But it didn’t quell the tax rebellion, which produced

‘WHETHER OR NOT PUBLIC SCHOOLS SHOULD RETURN KIDS TO THE CLASSROOM THIS SPRING IS NO LONGER UP FOR DISCUSSION.’

Gov. Kate Brown

the infamous Measure 5 and other property tax limits.

Perhaps, we gazed south so much that we neglected to look north.

Little-brother state? That stings. It’s bad enough that Washington this week was named the best state in the nation for the second year in the row by U.S. News and World Report, whereas Oregon is No. 22.

For perspective, we’re also behind such western colleagues as Utah, No. 3; Idaho, No. 5; and Colorado, No. 16. But we’re ahead of California, No. 24; Hawaii, No. 25; Montana, No. 33; Wyoming, No. 35; Nevada, No. 36; and Arizona, No. 39.

Louisiana is No. 50.

As for Tennessee, a state that some Oregon lawmakers are rumored to be talking of moving to, it’s No. 29.

Fighting over political lines: The Oregon Legislature is deeply engaged in what might be for naught — redrawing the boundaries of legislative and con-

gressional districts using the new population numbers from the 2020 census. These districts are supposed to be roughly equal in population, though not area.

The catch — at least one of them — is that the census numbers aren’t expected until long after the 2021 Legislature adjourns. If the Legislature doesn’t redraw legislative districts, or the governor vetoes the plan, that job falls to Secretary of State Shemia Fagan. Either way, Democrats win because they control the Legislature and Fagan is a Democrat. Gerrymandering lives, whether by Democrats in Oregon or Republicans in Texas.

The courts handle congressional redistricting if the Oregon Legislature also fails there.

So rare is agreement among legislators and with the governor, that their redistricting plans have been enacted only three times in the past 110 years. 2011 brought bipartisan agreement because the Legislature was almost evenly divided between the parties.

Last week, state House Republicans and allies put forth an alternative: Follow the lead of two dozen or so other states and create an independent, non-partisan citizen commission to oversee redistricting. Creation of such a commission would require voter approval of a ballot measure, which the 2021 Legislature could write. A similar initiative from People Not Politicians failed to reach the ballot last year.

Most Democrats, who are in control, don’t like the idea. After all, Democrats make up only 35% of the electorate, yet are 61% of legislators. For them, the system works.

As former state representative Jeff Barker, a Democrat from Aloha, said, “The party in power wants to keep the power,” regardless of which party it is.

He was among those speaking at a press videoconference in favor of turning redistricting over to an independent commission. Also backing the idea were House Republican Leader Christine Drazen, of Canby; Rep. Shelly Boshart Davis, R-Albany, vice chair of the House Redistricting Committee; and Andrew Kaza, co-chair of the Independent Party of Oregon.

Full disclosure: I was born in Washington state. I’ve only lived in Oregon for 50 years.

Dick Hughes has been covering the Oregon political scene since 1976.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Still waiting

I’m not sure what your experience has been with getting the vaccination for the COVID-19 thing. For me it’s been like loaves of bread being thrown out to starving peasants. Then the feeding frenzy starts; some get fed, and some go hungry.

At this writing, I’m still waiting to be fed.

DALE FLOWERS
Warrenton

Not one

Congress has finally passed legislation to provide much-needed and long-awaited assistance that Americans have been desperately waiting for since last year. Not one Republican voted for this legislation. Not one.

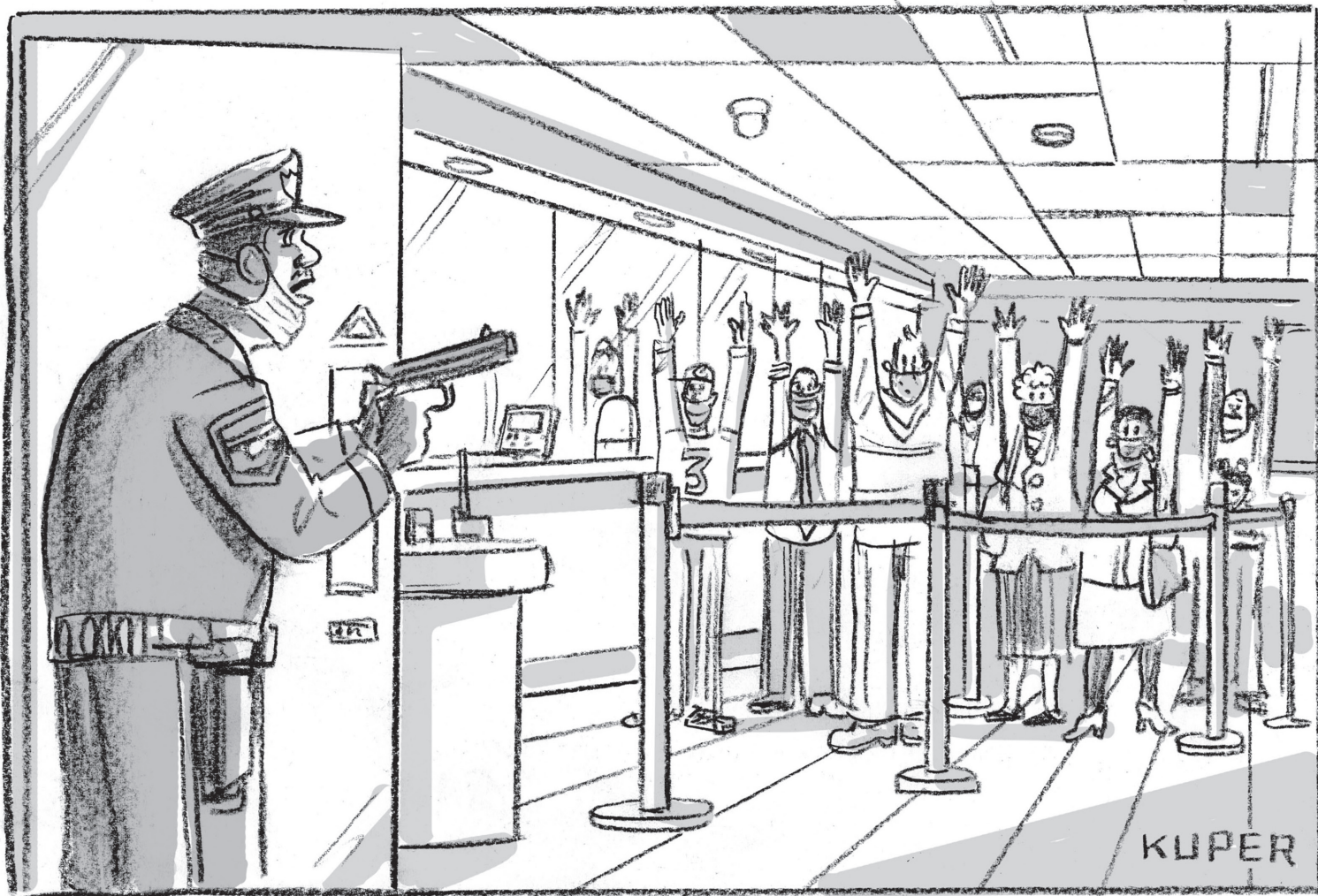
This disaster exists because the Trump administration and its supporters chose to do nothing and allowed it to happen. Nearly 30 million Americans have been or are sick, and more than 530,000 Americans are dead. Additionally, each state, and the country as a whole, is struggling to vaccinate the population and keep the number of cases and deaths not just contained, but from increasing.

This is significant, and must be at the forefront of all discussion regarding Republicans. What exactly are their priorities? Why do they care so little, not only about the people they supposedly represent, but also this country as a whole?

If Republicans want to walk out of their jobs, want to support secession, want to violate the oaths they took to uphold the Constitution and the laws of this country, and most of all, want to endlessly betray the people of this country by doing nothing that obstruct any and all legislation that does not serve them personally and financially, they need to go.

This country is going to be forever changed by the irreparable damage done by the Trump administration, and every Republican who supported it.

It is beyond time for this country to



*“ Could the person or persons **not** robbing the bank, please lower their hands.”*

get rid of the Republicans responsible for destroying this country by any and all means possible.

CHRISTINA BUCK
Seaside

Politics of personal destruction

We have a tendency to see a lot of letters to the editor disparaging our former president. He has repeatedly been compared to some of the most heinous criminals in history. I suspect that there are

few letters disparaging anyone else with such vitriol.

It is my opinion that those letter writers lack cogent arguments about the policy and achievements of the man. He was not a politician. He was not a member of the elite. For that, he must be punished.

So they instead attack his abrasive personality for the way he fought for the American people. They name-call and charge crimes without context, substance or evidence. The impeachments were a sad sham.

The U.S. Capitol riot was an expression of outrage at the unfair way he was

treated. I expect a lot of “OMG,” but more people died, and more destruction of federal property was ignored, during the summer of “peaceful” protests.

Even now, after the election, he is attacked in editorials and cartoons. They try to erase his achievements in a snowstorm of name-calling.

It is a sad reflection on today’s politics of personal destruction, and a dangerous swing toward stifling dissent and enforcing some sort of political correctness. Think and act like us, or we will hurt you.

ROBERT LIDDYCOAT
Seaside