

# OPINION



# the Astorian

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## OUR VIEW

# Bring everyone along on COVID safety

With coronavirus vaccination appointments now open for all adults, it's easy to see that by this summer or fall the nation will reach a point when most responsible grown-ups will be protected. But some significant fraction will hold out for some reason.

Vaccine reluctance or refusal will become annoying in a hurry.

To stop the spread of the increasingly infectious virus and begin cutting off its ability to mutate inside patients, we really need for something like 80% or more of the population to be inoculated. If we fall very much short of 80%, we'll continue having outbreaks here and there, with each new viral burst bringing with it the possibility of a return to the bad old days of 2020.

Why would anyone choose to remain vulnerable to a deadly and debilitating illness, and at the same time expose their loved ones and community to the same risk?

Some have obviously watched too many horror movies in which a well-intentioned therapy goes horribly awry. Others have legitimate concerns rooted in personal health vulnerabilities, or in memories of old public health missteps, or myths about autism. It's certainly true that medical interventions don't always go according to plan, and no one wants to be among those who personally encounter some unsuspected side effect.

And some are still in the thrall of conspiracy theorists who thought the pandemic was a political ploy that would just disappear the day after the presidential election.

Thankfully, most rational people will continue to note the ongoing lack of serious reactions to the vaccines. Thus far, these vaccines continue to be among the great success stories of our time. There is no indication of trouble on the horizon



Shafkat Anwar/AP Photo

Coronavirus outbreaks in the Midwest illustrate the importance of getting as many Americans vaccinated as quickly as possible. These people waited in line for their shots in Chicago.

when it comes to safety. The adverse reactions that have been reported — things like a rash near injection sites that some call “COVID arm” — probably indicate a healthy immune response to the shot, and certainly are minor in comparison to the peace of mind that comes with being immunized.

Although there are those who suggest vaccine rejectors are their own worst punishment, for their good and ours it makes sense to try to bring everyone along on the path to COVID recovery. If you're reading this and fear the vaccine more than the disease, please reach out to the county health department or your own health provider to obtain trusted advice.

To convince at least some of those who are adamant in refusing to believe COVID is serious, it's up to family members, pastors, local political leaders, business owners, social clubs and everyone else with a voice to continue urging vaccinations. Not everyone will be persuadable. But if reluctance comes down to just fearing needles or something similar, persistent nudges from all of us may be what it takes to save individual lives and put this horrible episode mostly behind us.

We may never entirely conquer COVID. It's entirely possible it will become something like seasonal influenza, require annual booster shots and nevertheless kill thousands of Americans each year. Even

this would be a big improvement over the past year, and the new vaccine technology kick-started by the Trump administration can quickly adjust to changes in the virus.

It will also become increasingly necessary for the U.S. to assist other nations in becoming fully vaccinated. It would be both foolish and inhumane to permit the virus to circulate in less developed countries, thereby sowing the seeds for a future disaster.

There is a brightening light at the end of this long, tedious, scary tunnel. The local, regional and national economies are coming back to life. It's essential for us to stay on track and make sure as many as possible are around to celebrate.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Looking back

Recently, I saw the movie “Nomadland,” then read the pictured article in The Oregonian. I felt a little of the old fire left in me.

In the late 1960s, I worked as a school counselor in a small town, Boerne, near San Antonio, Texas — a great place to raise five kids (later six).

In the early 1970s, I worked as a rehabilitation counselor in San Antonio. We saved, bought a Volkswagen van on time, and after receiving permission to pull the kids out of school, traveled across Mexico for two weeks.

We had a portable stove and other basics. The children were excited and we all pulled together. I feel I laid a lot of work on my eldest son, then 15, and my wife, a nurse, who did my wanderings with approval, work and love.

Our relatives on both sides were conservative folk. I think they thought we were living in an unstable manner. We did, however, survive this and other outings.

I look back on these vagabond years, and the adventures, as some of the happiest times of my life. We had little money, but good professional jobs. We wanted to live in the times, and contribute something to the world in that changing era.

Today, the Mexico trip is one of the life experiences the kids remember with joy.

NORM HOOGE  
Astoria

### A piece of the problem

Around 50 years ago, the U.S. went through a gasoline shortage. It is the reason for some of the laws we follow. The 55 mph speed limit is just one example.

The public was told that the the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was responsible for the higher prices.

I have been hearing a spot on the radio telling the public to say something if you see something that is not right. Why is the whole country, or at least Oregon, paying more per gallon due to the issues of primarily Texas-area oil companies' maintenance of profits? Why don't the board members of these

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greedy companies have to take a loss, like you or I have to?

As a general contractor, if my truck stops working, I can't charge my customers for another truck to finish the job I was hired to do, so why do they?

I do understand the economics of supply and demand.

The problem, as I see it, is that most American citizens worry where the decimal point is in their budget, while very few are concerning themselves about how many commas are in theirs.

We can make noise about this inequity besides not buying fuel. Write, call, text and email any and all of our elected officials, and let them know we have had enough.

TROY J. HASKELL  
Astoria

### Not expendable

If the Seaside school board feels it is not safe enough to hold its meetings in public and prefers, instead, to meet virtually, then I say they shouldn't be demanding that the schools be open for in-person attendance.

Or maybe the board should get a little outside of their comfort zone (sound familiar?) and return to public meetings. What's sauce for the goose should be sauce for the gander, don't you think?

If the Oregon Department of Education thinks it safe enough for our children to attend school in person, why are they still conducting all of their business remotely and not returning to the expensive office buildings we taxpayers fund for their busi-

ness purposes?

Our children are not expendable. Neither are they guinea pigs. Don't expect them to do something you, yourself, are unwilling and afraid to do. Either it's safe, or it isn't. You can't have it both ways.

So far, according to news reports, several students and staff or volunteers at the Seaside High School have tested positive for the coronavirus. If you, the members of the school board, think it is an acceptable risk to place the health of our children in harm's way while you maintain a safe virtual distance, then what I have to say to each of you, personally, is something I can guarantee this publication will never print.

BILL GRAFFIUS  
Gearhart