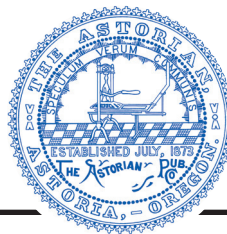


OPINION



the Astorian

Founded in 1873

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KARI BORGEN
Publisher

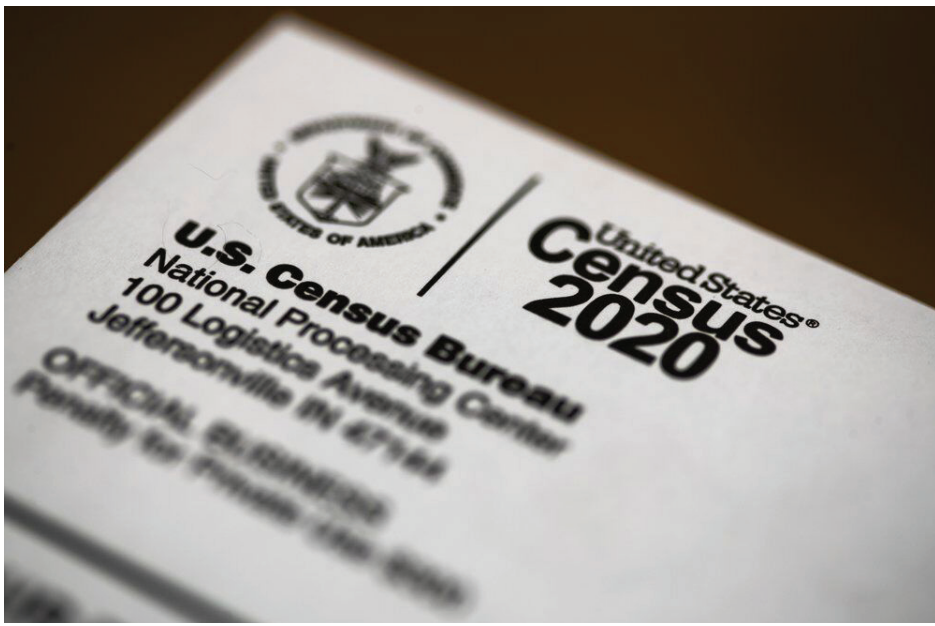
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Matt Rourke/AP Photo

Data from the census will be used to help redraw political boundaries.

LEARN MORE

- To learn more about the redistricting process and sign up to testify, visit oregonlegislature.gov/redistricting
- To view the first drafts of the new district maps, visit olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/202111/Committees/SRED/2021-09-03-08-00/MeetingMaterials

Deciding the next 10 years

By the end of this year, you might be in a new state House district or Senate district or you could even be in Oregon's brand new 6th Congressional District. That's because the Oregon Legislature will draw new boundaries for political offices in the state.

This is required by the Oregon Constitution every 10 years to reflect population changes following the census.

Legislators on the House and Senate redistricting committees will be hearing from residents across the state starting Wednesday to understand how new district lines can best preserve communities with shared common interests.

It's critical that we have as many people participate in the process as possible. Redistricting will determine your ability to be well represented in future elections for the next 10 years.

For residents of the 1st Congressional District, your chance to participate virtually will be Wednesday starting at 8 a.m. and Thursday starting at 5:30 p.m.

If you miss these times, anyone can sign up to testify on Sept. 13 between

1 p.m. and 4 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

As you consider what is important to you regarding redistricting, a collection of different criteria used across the country can be found at: www.oregonlegislature.gov/lpro/Publications/Redistricting.pdf

The U.S. Census Bureau recently announced that Oregon is getting a sixth congressional district, which makes this process even more important. This will increase Oregon's representation in Washington, D.C., from five congressmembers to six. Your voice will influence where this sixth district will be located.



SUZANNE WEBER

Oregon's current political boundaries are based off maps drawn 20 years ago for partisan gain by a single person, and that advantage has swayed heavily toward the party in power.

This is your opportunity to rebalance Oregon and ensure new district lines aren't gerrymandered. Your actions can affect the next 10 years of elections in Oregon.

State Rep. Suzanne Weber, a Tillamook Republican, represents House District 32.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Lead or get out of the way

Gov. Kate Brown handed the ball off to the counties concerning the vaccines and mask mandates, then every county with the exception of Multnomah dropped the ball by doing nothing but collectively wringing their hands.

Then to recap, Clatsop County Commissioner Courtney Bangs writes a letter of complaint because Gov. Brown had to pick the ball back up when the coronavirus numbers climbed once again.

Bangs claims she was voicing the concerns of her constituents, though I think it's time to point out that she isn't a head cheerleader and instead of calculating her next political move she should perhaps be protecting her constituents.

As for the potential of people quitting their jobs over their right to refuse vaccination and making more job vacancies, she also might want to consider that dead people make terrible employees.

MARY SCHNASE
Astoria

Deeply disappointed

As grandparents of three children attending public schools in Clatsop County, we were relieved to see our state require COVID vaccines of all school personnel. Our grandson is 12 and is already vaccinated, but his two younger sisters do not yet have that choice. The delta variant is attacking young children more than the original COVID, with disastrous and often lethal outcomes.

We were deeply disappointed to read a letter from county Commissioner Courtney Bangs to Gov. Kate Brown objecting to vaccines for school support staff, custodians, bus drivers and teachers' aides. The commissioner stated, "we need to reject the type of overarching mandates that will eventually do more harm than good."

Commissioner Bangs repeatedly refers to personal rights and freedom. As our parents and all civics classes teach, the other side of that coin is responsibility. We believe that in a just society, personal rights take second place to the safety of our neighbors and our community — especially children.

When our granddaughters get on the bus in September, we do not want them to stand in the driveway and ask their driver: Are you fully vaccinated or are you asserting your personal rights?

Thank you, Gov. Brown, for following the science and the recommendations of the medical professionals. Thank you for supporting in-person learning and doing everything you can to keep the children of our communities safe while they attend public school.

CHERYL JOHNSON and
TED MESSING
Astoria

Choices have consequences

Clatsop County Commissioner Courtney Bangs wrote to Gov. Kate Brown last week, objecting to "vaccine mandates" and expressing her concern that "many hardworking Oregonians will be required to choose between the vaccine and their personal freedom."

Even more concerning is that she was particularly concerned for support staff, custodians, bus drivers and teachers' aides at schools.

To be clear, Bangs is concerned that people who can choose to refuse a vac-

cine should be allowed to expose others, that are unable to choose, and not suffer consequences.

I am not opposed to personal choice, nor am I opposed to free speech. However, these protections are only from federal persecution, and not from repercussions.

You may choose to decline a vaccine that your employer requires. That is your right. You will not go to jail for this single act, but your employer is free to fire you for this.

This was your choice.

At this point in the pandemic, when people in Clatsop County die because they cannot find a hospital bed in the valley, or Tillamook County needs morgue trailers to hold the dead, you need to realize that your choices have consequences.

Commissioner Bangs, you missed this point.

These "mandates" are targeted towards people that work with our most vulnerable citizens. This isn't about restricting their freedoms; it is about protecting our friends and neighbors.

People are free to choose. They are not, however, free from repercussions.

THOMAS ANK
Astoria

A good idea

My oldest daughter is due to begin kindergarten this month and I am grateful for the school staff vaccine mandate from Gov. Kate Brown. It is science-based and in the best interest of our community. Since vaccines are not yet available for children under 12, I have been nervous about sending my kid to in-person school. However, knowing that school staff will all be vaccinated certainly helps relieve some of my concerns.

I do not agree with the stance of Clatsop County Commissioner Courtney Bangs in objecting to vaccines. I am not sure if it is an overreach of her position to send a letter on county letterhead to the governor without the support of the rest of the county commissioners, but I hope Gov. Brown knows that she does not represent the views of the majority of our county's citizens.

I'd rather see Commissioner Bangs focus more on the health and safety of our community and figure out a way to reframe the importance of vaccinations and encourage our neighbors to help end this pandemic. Mandate or not, the vaccine is a good idea.

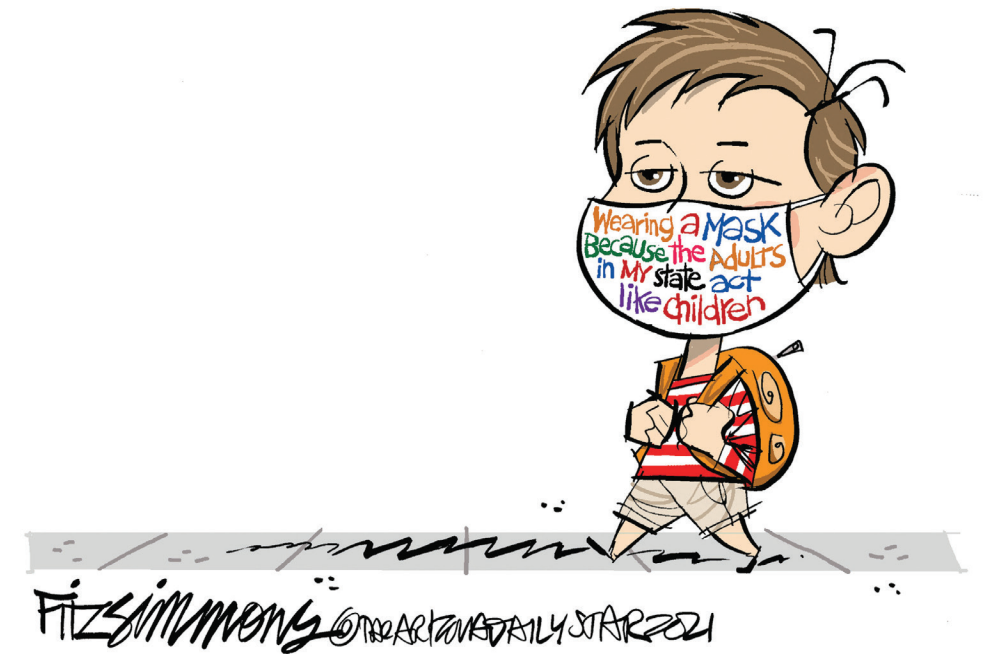
JENNIFER RASMUSSEN
Astoria

Critical distinctions

I respect several of the points made by Clatsop County Commissioner Courtney Bangs, as reported recently (The Astorian, Aug. 28). I, too, believe that local voices should be heard and represented, and that conferring with a trusted primary care provider is a great way to discuss the benefits and risks of receiving the vaccine for COVID-19.

I also believe that there are critical distinctions between "freedom of choice when it comes to medical decisions" and the public health decisions that face us during the crisis of a pandemic. Public health works to protect us all, where we live, learn, work and play.

While there is nothing more American than personal freedom, it is a value that means nothing to a virulent airborne virus.



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Let us continue to listen to each other and learn together.

Public health measures protect the "we" in "We the people."

MARY LYNN McCONNELL
Astoria

The right to live

One of the more disturbing things I have witnessed in Astoria, particularly on Marine Drive at night, are people walking across the roadway without even checking for oncoming traffic, or bothering to use a crosswalk.

I realize that these people are asserting their rights as pedestrians, and that it is the obligation of the operator of an automobile to yield to them — but it sure seems like a big gamble they are taking with their lives under less than optimal visual conditions, not to speak of the consequences for a driver who may not see the jaywalker until the last moment.

And now we have Clatsop County Commissioner Courtney Bangs penning a letter to our governor arguing against vaccine mandates because some people have "vaccine hesitancy" and they shouldn't have to choose between their jobs and their personal freedoms.

I have two friends whose jobs involve frequent contact with the public, who have been vaccinated, and because of some peoples' "hesitancy," the virus that put us all through the wringer last year has evolved into a more dangerous variant, and in this less than optimal public health environment — infected them.

As individuals in a society, we are like islands whose shores are washed by a common body of water; individual rights and freedoms come with the responsibility to respect those rights and freedoms of others — in this case the freedom to not be infected with a virus, and the right to live.

LAWRENCE JORDAN
Astoria

At the mercy of adults

I read in The Astorian (August 28) that Clatsop County Commissioner Courtney Bangs is particularly concerned about support staff, custodians, bus drivers and teachers' aides at schools.

With the school year beginning, and the delta variant driving the terrible spike in our county's COVID-19 infections, I have grave concerns as well. I am a retired teacher and spent the last 25 years of my career teaching at Hilda Lahti Elementary in Knappa. I have worked with amazing, talented and dedicated support

staff, who helped me be the best teacher I could be. They worked in the school because they truly cared about and loved the children in our small community.

I am making a plea to any unvaccinated staff in a school setting. Translate your care and dedication to students into actions that will protect them. Get the vaccine, follow the masking and hygiene protocols, continue to do the jobs you execute so well.

The kids need you now more than ever.

Unvaccinated children are at the mercy of adults who care and make decisions for them. Children of children I have taught attend Knappa schools now. I have five grandchildren, whom I adore, in the Astoria School District. These kids, and all precious children, deserve to attend schools in a safe, healthy, stable, positive and loving environment.

Let's do everything possible to make this school year safe and successful for them.

LURANA HEAVENRICH
Brownsmead

Enough is enough

Oregonians want an end to this deadly pandemic. But in Clatsop County, like in many Oregon counties, the hospitals are overrun with dramatically increasing numbers of COVID patients. More county residents are dying of COVID.

According to a local hospital CEO, other patients have also died because they cannot be transferred for specialized care.

The county Public Health Department has said the COVID outbreak is a No. 1 priority and works tirelessly to make vaccines available to every eligible resident free of charge and has offered a great deal of scientific evidence on its website showing the importance of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved vaccine and masks in stopping COVID.

Yet #TimberUnity supported county Commissioner Courtney Bangs is openly spreading disinformation and discouraging COVID vaccinations and masks. She is enabling selfishness, her talk of "freedom" ringing hollow amidst the death, suffering and economic devastation of the pandemic. She is putting her own political career and need for attention ahead of the interests of our county's families, health care workers and businesses.

Enough is enough. Let's work together, get vaccinated as we have in the past for any number of deadly diseases, wear masks during this emergency and put this pandemic behind us.

LAURA ALLEN
Seaside