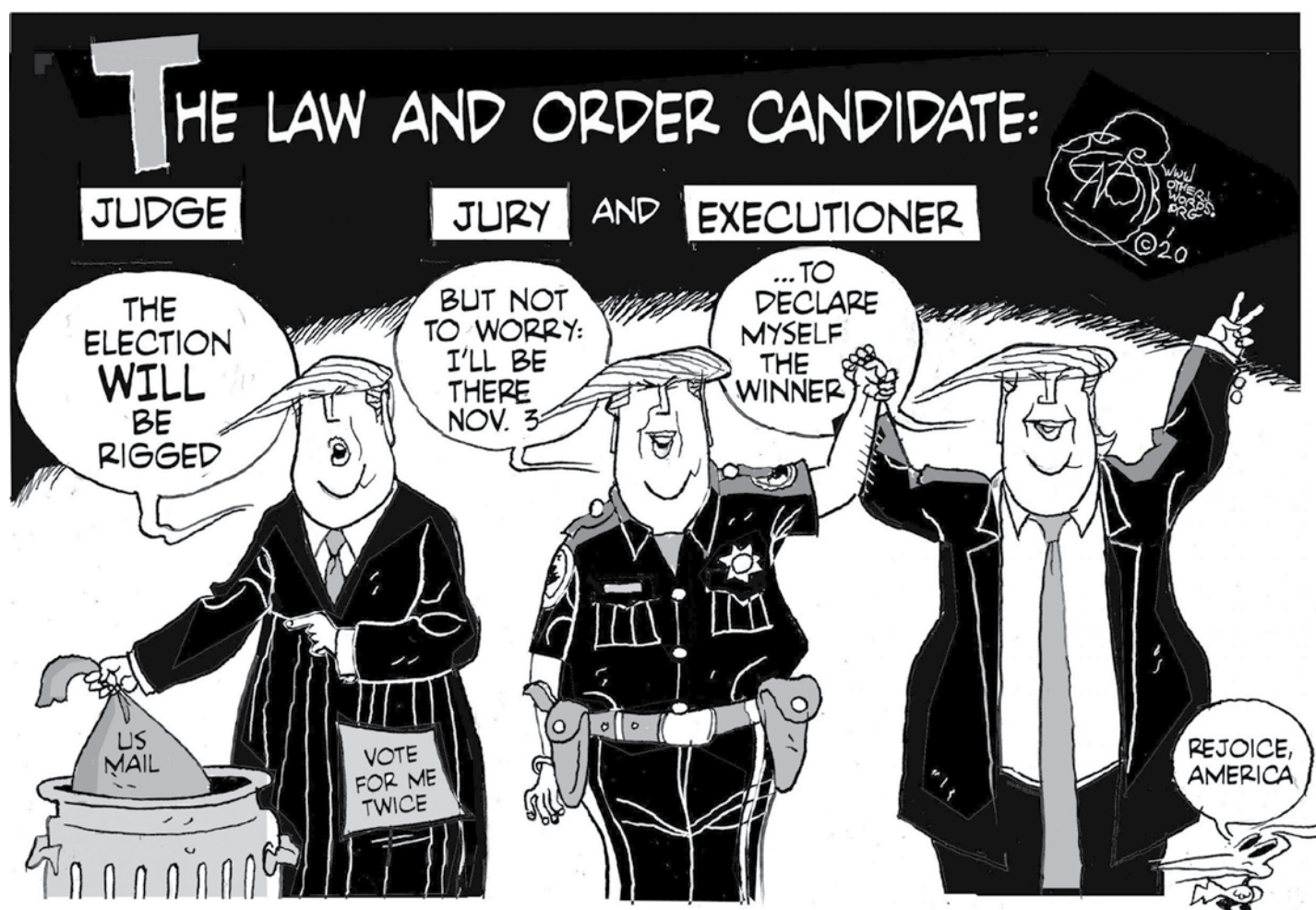


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# OPINION



A Portland demonstrator is arrested during a Black Lives Matter protest on Aug. 30.

## Complaints on Police Tactics Reviewed

Portland's Citizen Review Committee is now reviewing if police are using appropriate tactics for crowd control during protests. Crowd control tactics used by Portland Police responding to recent and past protests are being investigated by citizens serving on Portland Citizen Review Committee. The workgroup is seeking feedback directly from the community. For more information, email [crc@portlandoregon.gov](mailto:crc@portlandoregon.gov) or visit the Citizen Review Committee website at [portlandoregon.gov/ipr/53654](http://portlandoregon.gov/ipr/53654).

## Keep Politics Out of COVID-19 Vaccine

### Interference in process erodes public trust

BY MARC H. MORIAL



Maintaining the American public's trust in the Food and Drug Administration is vital. If the agency's credibility is lost because of real or perceived interference in the process to approve a vaccine for the coronavirus, people will not rely on the agency's safety warnings.

Erosion of public trust will leave consumers and patients doubting public health recommendations, making them less likely to enroll in clinical studies or to use FDA-regulated products when they should to maintain or improve their health. This is problematic under normal circumstances but especially if we are to ultimately overcome COVID-19.

Protecting the FDA's independence is essential if we are to do the best possible job of protecting public health and saving lives.

It's no secret that the White House believes the approval of a vaccine or treatment for COVID-19 would be a boon for the President's reelection campaign. From the moment the novel coronavirus first reached America's shores in January, the president has regarded it first and foremost as a political inconvenience.

Without evidence, he has portrayed anything that delays the "magic bullet" he believes will end the pandemic – or at least appear to end it – as the result of a conspiracy to damage his candidacy. This includes

the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approvals process.

If we have any hope of developing a safe, effective vaccine that brings the virus under control, it depends entirely on the FDA's resolve to resist this shameful political pressure.

In an encouraging move, eight top FDA officials and doctors last week published an op-ed in USA Today pledging that all "decisions will continue to be guided by the best science" and maintain independence from political pressure.

Their statement came a day after executives representing nine companies working on coronavirus vaccines pledged to submit the vaccines for FDA approval only after they're shown to be safe and effective in large clinical studies.

"We believe this pledge will help ensure public confidence in the rigorous scientific and regulatory process by which COVID-19 vaccines are evaluated and may ultimately be approved," said a statement signed by the CEOs of AstraZeneca, BioNTech, GlaxoSmithKline, Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Moderna, Inc., Novavax, Inc., Pfizer Inc. and Sanofi.

It's worth noting that many of the regulations that still govern the FDA's drug testing process were developed in the wake of the thalidomide scandal of the early 1960s. The drug, taken by pregnant women, killed thousands of babies in the womb and caused at least 10,000 others in 46 countries to be born with severe deformities. The U.S. escaped this tragedy largely due to the determination of FDA medical officer Frances Oldham Kelsey who fastidiously blocked its approval while drug company officials maligned her as a bu-

reaucratic nitpicker, according to the New York Times.

Widespread vaccine use has helped eliminate deadly and disabling diseases in the U.S. The last natural outbreak of smallpox – which killed three of every 10 people who contracted it – was in 1949, and the disease was declared eliminated in 1952.

Measles was declared eliminated in the U.S. in 2000, although outbreaks among the unvaccinated are triggered by infected travelers bringing the virus from other countries. Rubella, a typically mild illness that can cause serious complications for pregnant women and their babies, was declared eliminated in the U.S. in 2004. Prior to 1955, polio permanently paralyzed thousands of children every year. No cases of polio have originated in the U.S. since 1979.

I have faith that one day, coronavirus can be added to this list. But only if we can maintain faith in our public health institutions. A poll from the Kaiser Family Foundation released this week found that 62 percent of Americans are concerned that a COVID-19 vaccine will be rushed to the market before it's ready because of political pressure from the Trump administration.

A smaller majority, 54 percent, said they wouldn't take a vaccine that is approved before Election Day.

It's hard to estimate how much damage the Trump administration has done by allowing politics to override responsible public health policy. The FDA and the pharmaceutical companies must invoke the spirit of Frances Oldham Kelsey and stand as a firewall against his interference.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer for the National Urban League.

## Unpaid Rents Grow during COVID-19

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pandemic, and since May, between 12% and 15% of Portland renters have been unable to make their monthly rent payments. Among "Class C" properties, which tend to be older buildings and located in Portland neighborhoods farther east, the rate of non-payment during the pandemic has been closer to 20%.

It's estimated that unpaid monthly rent totals have grown to between \$22 - 28 million in Portland and are expected to grow to \$120 - \$125 million in another 12 months. And with disparities based on income, employment, and housing, the impacts from missing rent have a substantially greater impact on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities who are disproportionately renters and overrepresented in service industry occupations, where they are most vulnerable to the health and economic impacts of the pandemic, officials said.

"Even prior to the pandemic, too many Portlanders were just one medical crisis, or family emergency, or job loss away from homelessness. We need to protect renters and we also need to make sure that local property owners who rent their homes to Portlanders are not foreclosed on because these circumstances make it impossible for them to pay back their loans," said Mayor Wheeler. "These are temporary measures, but ensuring Portlanders stay in their homes may be the most important and effective action we can take right now."