

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OUR VIEW

# Program an important stopgap measure

It looked like the White House and Democrats in Congress were closing in on a deal Sunday to restock the popular program to help small business.

That's good news, because the nation cannot afford to waste any time to replenish the Paycheck Protecting Program. The more than \$300 billion program ran out of money last week, a stark reminder of just how serious the economic impact from the COVID-19 virus outbreak is.

Lawmakers must move quickly to solidify a deal and get the program back up and running.

That impact from the virus isn't going to evaporate any time soon, either.

The new relief package will earmark \$300 billion for the Paycheck Protection Program along with \$50 billion for the Small Business Administration's disaster relief fund. Money will also be allocated for hospitals and testing.

The money is crucial for small business across the nation, but it is especially critical for merchants in rural areas of the state, such as Umatilla and Morrow counties. While not a permanent solution, the money will keep people on payrolls and, hopefully, cut down



AP Photo/Alex Brandon, File  
**Jovita Carranza, administrator of the Small Business Administration, speaks earlier this month about the coronavirus in the James Brady Press Briefing Room of the White House in Washington, D.C., as Vice President Mike Pence and President Donald Trump listen. Democratic leaders and the Trump administration were close to a deal Sunday to replenish the Paycheck Protection Program to help small businesses weather coronavirus shutdowns, the latest step in sweeping government efforts to deal with the consequences of the pandemic.**

on the number of workers in the unemployment lines.

The Paycheck Protection Program is

— for obvious reason — hugely popular. Within 10 days of the start of the program more than 4,600 lenders made

more than a million loans to the tune of \$247.5 billion.

At any other time in our history such a huge outlay of debt would seem to be foolhardy. Now, the nation clearly faces an unprecedented set of circumstances. Such a huge outlay of money will also clearly create new challenges down the road in terms of who pays and when. Those are good questions, questions that deserve ready answers from lawmakers.

Yet for right now, the focus must be on the small businesses of this nation, our state and our county. Small businesses are, in a real way, the heart of the American success story. Their existence underpins our democracy and without them the nation will face myriad new, and yet, unforeseen problems.

The corner shop in a small rural town is more than just a place to buy goods but is part of our collective culture. Each deserves the chance to survive, and that is what the Paycheck Protection Program is all about. Is the program a cure-all? Of course not. It is a stopgap measure, but it is one that can provide an important part of our economy a decent interval while the COVID-19 virus outbreak rages.

## SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE

# Between blindness and frenzy

We are all dealing with a threat that few of us have the knowledge or skills to combat directly. Helpless dread is an unbearable feeling. What do we do?

Fear is meant to affect our systems. We are to freeze or energetically deal with palpable physical threats that are the focus of fear. Our bodies feel some degree of fear now — of the virus, the illness, the uncertainty or the socio-economic upheaval. Yet, no physical flight, fight or freezing can help us here. We are to keep calm and carry on. Still the fear acts on our system. And it can show in our thinking patterns.

Denial is a sort of a mental freeze. We conserve our energy by stating that the problem is not that big or perhaps doesn't even exist. Conserving our energy, not stressing excessively, can serve a purpose, keep us cool. Sadly, it hasn't remained that simple. We're seeing fellow citizens become so attached to their denial that they're expending energy to prove how much they deny. People have congregated together, carelessly or carefully, to show their disregard for caution. Some have sickened or even died as a result. Their illness endangered, burdened and grieved their loved ones. A natural reaction gone too far.

Sometimes people are rather energized by fear. Good effects of this energy has been the community support organizations springing up, the creation of new ways to be neighborly and the flood of lovingly sewn cloth masks. It seems to me that most people have channeled their energy within this measure. Sadly we've also seen some frenetic extremes: food hoarding; bleach gargling; fistfights for toilet paper. In a panicky desire to feel control over uncontrollable circumstances, some energized minds have latched onto conspiracy theories. Some have acted on them.

People have attacked individuals of Asian heritage, burned cellphone towers and publicly accused everyone else of manufacturing

bioweapons. I suppose even a scapegoat as large as a cellular network or a nation could feel less overwhelming than a random, invisible, mutable virus; the chain of cause and effect seems simpler. We all like to strike a blow at feeling helpless. But that's not where these blows ultimately landed. People have been hurt. A reaction gone way too far.

Why have we not been taught more about how our fear works — and how we might make it work for us? Fear, like all of our emotions, is information about our situation and should be heeded as such. And fear, like all information, needs to be fact-checked and put in context.

As much as we would like to take direct action and make this threat go away, we don't yet have the tools to effectively fight this novel coronavirus. In the current context, our success will be just making as little happen as possible. The reactive part of our brains — ask your kids about "Survival State" — can't understand this lack of action; but our problem-solving Executive State can.

We can fortify our executive state with good exercise, good music, deep breathing, prayer, meditation, dance, family hugs, all those arts and crafts you excel at and other techniques you already have. Keep calm and carry on.

There's yet one more active inactivity that may help. Foldingathome.org is a distributed computing project for simulating protein dynamics. Volunteers let software run simulations on their personal computers that can help medical researchers find the weak points of the coronavirus. It's running in the background of my computer with no harm done. We can even form local teams, letting the Pendleton-Hermiston rivalry ride again — for a good cause. Check it out at <https://foldingathome.org/covid19>.

*Vikiirna Wenzel is a learner and a teacher, somewhere in the middle of East Umatilla County.*



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COMMENT

## YOUR VIEWS

### Provide PPE to businesses so they can open again

Closing and segregating businesses, often based on misinformation or opinion, is not beneficial for helping the local economy. The advancing and improving of workplace safety and health for all workers in Oregon is the objective of Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration, yet it has become ignored as a tool to get businesses back online.

How many companies are required to follow extreme safe protocols of cleanliness and personal protective equipment as part of the allowance to operate under state safety regulations? I believe we are missing the opportunity to open many businesses by employing use of PPE, by not only the employees but also the customers, as a requirement to enter any business. Rather than employ a negative way to address solutions, should we be more solution-oriented and use scientific methods proven by many companies already?

Perhaps Gov. Brown might consider assisting the businesses by providing the

PPE rather than giving it away?

**Richard Weaver**  
Milton-Freewater

### Hats off to local educators

The current health crisis has turned our world upside down, wreaking havoc on our daily way of life in ways we never could have envisioned. Yet, it has also created opportunities, and demonstrated how our neighbors and communities can rise to a challenge.

In particular, I would like to extend a sincere thank you to the employees of our public schools — this crisis has highlighted how crucial our public schools are to our communities and sense of well-being. The role of public education is vast — classroom instruction, meals, band concerts, transportation, athletics, mental health, as well as the social component — and the recent events have made me appreciate and applaud how quickly our school staff have responded to ensure our kids get the support they need.

A sincere "tip of the hat" and thank you to all of our public education employees.

**Scott Rogers**  
Athena

## LETTERS DEADLINE

The East Oregonian will not run candidate endorsement letters of more than 400 words. The East Oregonian will institute a deadline for letters to the editor, so we can be fair with all the letters we receive and allow for responses before Election Day, if necessary. We run the letters on a first-come, first-served basis. Please submit your endorsement letters to the editor by noon Wednesday, April 22. You can email them to [editor@eastoregonian.com](mailto:editor@eastoregonian.com), or mail them to East Oregonian, c/o Andrew Cutler, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, 97801. We will publish our last letters on Saturday, April 25. Any letters received after the deadline will not run. Election Day is May 19.

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The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published.

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