East Oregonian

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14, 2021

Bentz casts 'no' vote on impeachment of Trump

U.S. House approves impeachment 232-197

By GARY A. WARNER
Oregon Capital Bureau

WASHINGTON — Rep. Cliff Bentz, R-Ontario, voted against impeaching President Donald Trump on Wednesday, Jan. 13, joining most House Republicans in a losing effort to avoid a stinging rebuke to the president in his last week in office.

The impeachment was approved 232-197, with 10 Republicans joining all Democrats in the equivalent of an indictment for inciting a mob to violently invade and ransack the U.S.

Bentz

Capitol on Jan. 6, killing five people.

The article of impeachment for incitement of insurrection would normally be sent to the Senate for an extended trial to convict or acquit the president. Three presidents have been impeached in U.S. history: Andrew Johnson, Bill Clinton and now Trump twice. In the prior three trials, all were acquitted.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-California, can send the impeachment to the Senate. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Kentucky, said the earliest he would

consider the impeachment would be Jan. 19. That is the day before Biden replaces Trump as president during ceremonies at the Capitol.

Bentz did not speak during the two-hour debate and spent much of the time off the floor due to attempts to limit COVID-19 exposure in the House chamber.

Bentz said on Jan. 13 the attack on the U.S. Capitol by pro-Trump supporters was inexcusable.

"I continue to share the emotions many are feeling in the aftermath of the unprecedented and unacceptable violence this past week," he said.

Bentz said the "rush to judgment" impeachment would only divide the nation more and undercut efforts

to get both parties working on key issues, such as COVID-19, as soon as possible.

"I voted against impeachment because our focus should be on unifying our nation, ensuring a peaceful transition to the Biden administration," Bentz said.

With less than two weeks since he was sworn in, the bulk of Bentz's time has been taken with the Electoral College vote, the riot and opposing efforts to oust Trump as soon as possible.

"I came to Congress to stand up for rural communities across my district by addressing the terrible damage caused by recent wildfires and to reform the laws that govern our

water rights," he said.

As the lone Republican in Oregon's House delegation, Bentz was at odds with the state's four other Congress members — Suzanne Bonamici, D-Beaverton, Earl Blumenauer, D-Portland, Peter DeFazio, D-Springfield, and Kurt Schrader, D-Salem, all voted yes.

"Donald J. Trump encouraged and incited the violent attack that occurred on Jan. 6, when Congress was gathered to certify the results of the 2020 presidential election," Bonamici said in a statement. "It was an attack on our Capitol and our democracy. Today I voted to impeach

Doing its part

Life Flight Network keeps patients moving during the COVID-19 pandemic

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — As rising COVID-19 numbers spark worry about hospital capacity in Oregon, the ability to quickly move patients between hospitals has been an important part of planning for surges.

In 2020, Life Flight Network transported about 600 confirmed COVID-19 patients across its service region, which covers the Pacific Northwest and part of Western Montana. A news release from the "largest not-for-profit air transport service in the United States" stated in total it used full COVID-19 protocols in about 1,300 transports where patients had COVID-19 symptoms.

Tim Beard, one of the flight nurses who cares for patients as they're being transported via plane or helicopter, said in some ways, his job is the same as it has always been: transport critically ill patients. But while flight nurses have always worn surgical masks around patients with flu-like symptoms, they now wear N-95 masks with all patients and a head-to-toe set of personal protective equipment when transporting patients with symptoms of COVID-19.

"It's a very confined space, so it's hard to distance," he said.

Beard has been a nurse for more than 20 years, and been flying with Life Flight Network since 2016. He has flown out of various parts of Eastern Oregon and Southern Washington during that time, and is currently in Spokane.

Flight nurses work two, 24-hour shifts a week. Sometimes, they pick up patients directly from the scene of a car crash or other emergency. Other times they transfer current hospital patients to a facility that

is better equipped to handle their needs. During the pandemic, Beard said, that has often involved transporting COVID-19 patients from rural critical access hospitals to a larger hospital with more specialized equipment and personnel.

So far, he said, he hasn't personally seen patients being moved from a large hospital to a small one because the hospital in the big city has overflowed its capacity. But what he has seen is patients having to be flown farther than usual because the hospital Life Flight would usually take them to isn't able to take them. A patient from Idaho, who would usually be taken to a hospital in Spokane, for example, had to go to all the way Wenatchee in Central Washington instead.

That holds true for both seriously ill COVID-19 patients and those who need care after suffering some other kind of medical emergency.

"This has impacted more than just the patients that are sick with COVID," Beard

Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

A Life Flight Network air ambulance lands at St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton on May 1, 2020. Pendleton's airport serves as the base for Life Flight Network's aircraft in Umatilla County.

said. "I don't think the general public really realizes the impact. If they or a family member don't have a COVID-19 infection, their health care can still be impacted."

Life Flight's air ambulance in Umatilla County is stationed at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton. When Life Flight announced it was adding a Pendleton base in 2012, it stated that Pendleton's airport was a good location because it had a long runway, a fire station on-site and was on a hill that sees less fog than some of the other locations it was considering.

Mike Weimer, Life Flight Network regional vice president of Region 2, said someone in Umatilla County who was transported by Life Flight could also end up on an air ambulance stationed in other locations, such as La Grande, Walla Walla, Washington, or Dallesport, Washington, if the Pendleton aircraft is already on a flight.

Good Shepherd Medical Center in Herm-

VACCINE UPDATE

County officials caught in a bind

Confusion lingers locally over state's fumble of COVID-19 vaccine rollout

By BRYCE DOLE
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — As state health officials look to ramp up and broaden vaccination efforts across Oregon, Umatilla County officials are concerned that the efforts won't be a cure-all for the already dwindling quantity of vaccines making their way to the arms of county residents.

The shift on the state level comes as Gov. Kate Brown announced on Tuesday, Jan. 12, that she will

permit Oregonians older than 65 and childcare, preschool and K-12 school employees to start receiving the vaccine on Jan. 23 in an effort to speed up immunizations to 12,000 daily by Sunday, Jan. 17. The effort comes as state health officials endure mounting pressure due to the sluggish start to vaccination efforts.

Umatilla County Health Director Joe Fiumara and Umatilla County Commissioner George Murdock each said the county is seeing little indication of how these efforts will come to fruition in Umatilla County, and it is unclear what exactly is holding up further shipments of the vaccine.

Each said the county was intending to hold multiple weekly events

to immunize hundreds of residents at a time, but for now, there are no assured vaccination efforts on the horizon.

"The people of Umatilla County are counting on us to give them accurate information about when we have vaccines available, where we're able to vaccinate people, and how much we have to give," Murdock said. "And we cannot get that information (from the Oregon Health Authority)."

Fiumara said he is confident the health department alone has the resources to immunize upward of 2,000 residents each week — if provided the supply. However, the county only recently received 100

COVID-19

State could still face some hard months

Pandemic modeling predicts Oregon could still see surge in COVID-19

By KALEB LAY
La Grande Observer

SALEM — After a brief lull in daily new cases of COVID-19 provided a momentary respite from the unrelenting march of the pandemic early in the new year, Oregonians now face a projected rise in infections and deaths over the coming months on an unprecedented scale.

That's according to the most recent modeling from the Oregon Health Authority, which predicted a return to exponential spread, and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, which anticipated Oregon's COVID-19 death toll will more than triple by April 1.

OHA modeling, released Jan. 7, estimated the rate of spread in Oregon was 1.29 as of Dec. 23, 2020, indicating each positive case of COVID-19 spread to an average of 1.29 more people. For example, 100 cases would become 129 cases — 29 more — which would then become 166 cases — 37 more — which would then become 214 cases — 48 more — thus exponential spread.

That rate of spread would lead to an average of 1,780 new cases and 85 hospitalizations per day by Jan. 26. Notably, the Oregon Health Authority's prediction does not account for a possible rise in the infection rate due to spread during the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

"These projections would look even more dire if the actual transmission level increased beyond 1.29 around Christmas and New Year's Eve," the OHA stated in its modeling report.

The OHA's modeling also does not account for any potential dampening effects of COVID-19 vaccination in the state. While vaccination efforts have lagged far behind earlier goals, 115,060 people in Oregon's high-risk populations had received at least one injection of a vaccine as of Tuesday, Jan. 12.

The Health Authority's modeling also projected a potential scenario in which people became more adherent to COVID-19 prevention measures, such as mask wearing and social distancing. In that scenario, transmission rates dropped to 0.9 and new daily cases by Jan. 26 would average out at 1,400.

That scenario appears to be unlikely, however. Local daily cases in the new year jumped back into double-digit figures and statewide daily new cases have approached the 2,000 mark once again, indicating a post-holiday spike is likely occurring.

While the OHA's modeling does not extend past the end of January, modeling from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation reaches into the coming months, and it predicts an