

OUR VIEW

OSHA's 'temporary' permanent rulemaking

Oregon Occupational Safety and Health is working to make permanent — “temporarily” — the emergency COVID workplace rules that it first put in place Nov. 16, 2020.

This rulemaking seems necessary because of requirements in state law, to continue pandemic safeguards that were set to expire next month.

However, we are wary — as many are — of “temporary” permanent rules that are implemented without an expiration date.

In the beginning of the pandemic it was clear that something needed to be done to protect people in the workplace and the public at large. The job fell to state agencies, including Oregon OSHA, that felt their way through a situation about which little was known but immediate action was required.

The danger from COVID-19 is real. Wearing masks, maintaining social distancing and taking steps to keep surfaces clean are simple, commonsense precautions. The rules that farms and businesses must follow are anything but simple, and in many cases defy common sense.

In November 2020, Oregon OSHA set out a comprehensive temporary rule that governed behavior and safeguards in all Oregon workplaces.

Oregon farms, already reeling from earlier emergency orders, raced to comply with state-imposed guidelines aimed at curbing workplace outbreaks of COVID-19. Complying with the requirements has been a massive undertaking for small, family-owned farms that may only have a few full-time employees. Ninety-seven percent of Oregon's 37,200 farms are family owned and operated.

Those temporary rules are set to expire on May 4. Under Oregon law, an emergency rule can't be extended longer than 180 days. And, a permanent rule is temporary if it has a built-in expiration date.

OSHA says it can't anticipate how long the temporary permanent rules will need to be in place, but it will amend or abolish them as conditions warrant and health officials give consent.

Michael Wood, administrator of the state's Department of Occupational Safety and Health, told the Associated Press that the workplace rule is “driven by the pandemic, and it will be repealed.”

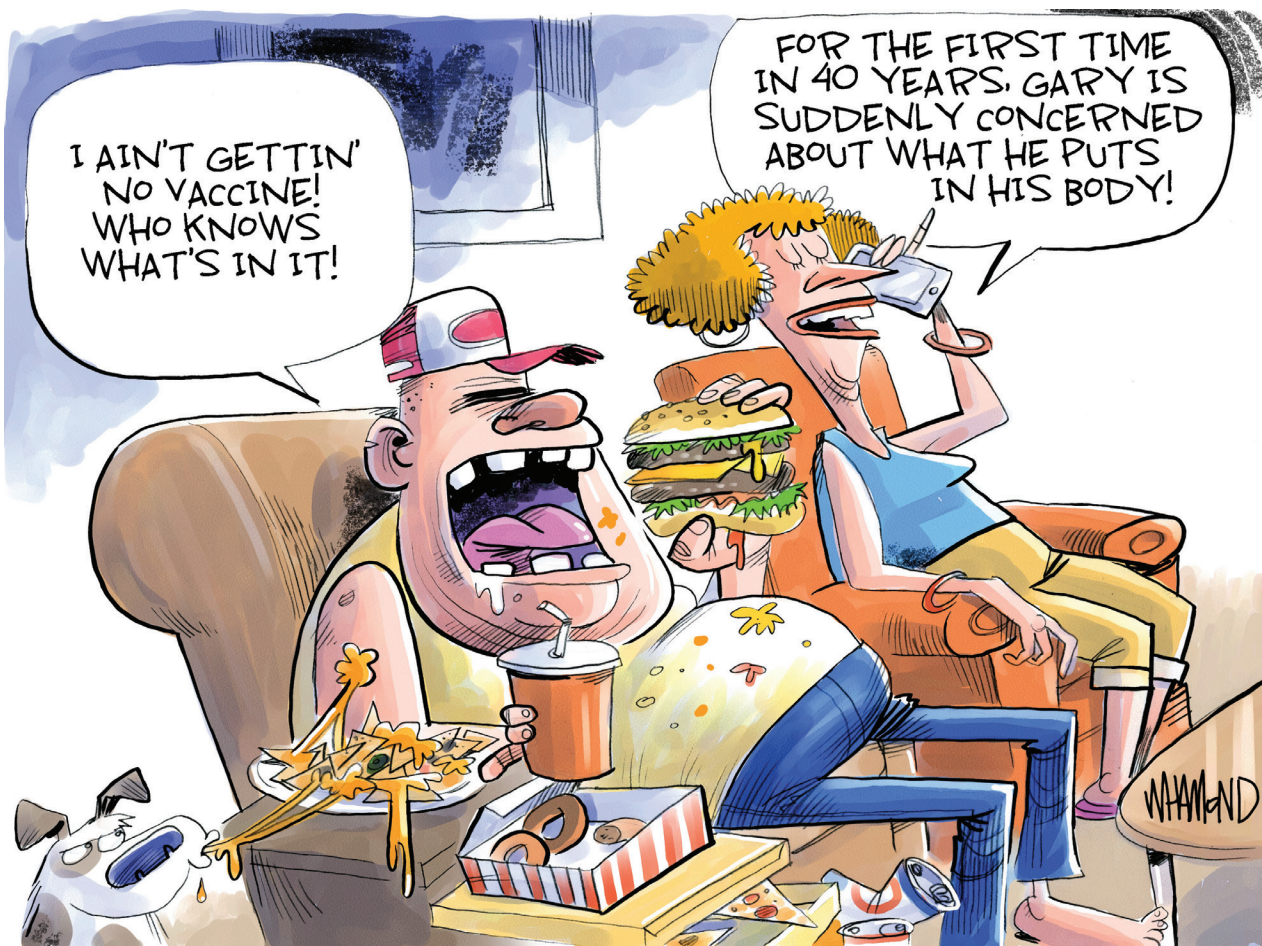
We are sure that it will be repealed. Probably.

But when? What objective standard will the Oregon Health Authority or OSHA use to judge that it's time to amend or repeal the rule?

Throughout the pandemic, the state has refused to set transparent mileposts and goals for pandemic improvement that the public can monitor. These decisions are made behind closed doors and without explanation.

Our long experience in reporting on rules and rulemaking has shown that once a permanent rule is in place, it sticks like glue. But we look forward to these rules being the exception.

Until that time, all interested parties should press Wood and other bureaucrats to reveal what improvements need to take place for the rule to be repealed.



Revisiting the family tree



REGINA
BRAKER

ANOTHER MILE

Many years ago, we traveled to Memphis, Tennessee, to visit a family matriarch, to meet for the first time the great-aunt who had sent us a wedding gift. Aunt “Tweet,” as she was called, regaled us with family stories, talking about her brother, James, my father-in-law's father, too early killed in a trucking accident, leaving his widow and young son to make their way in Seattle as the Great Depression ravaged the country.

There were details about family traditions and her grandfather the minister, whose legacy she wanted to share. Aunt Tweet had married a clergyman herself. It was sometimes difficult to follow whose story she was telling, about moving from place to place, from North Carolina to Union Church, Mississippi, where her father, Angus, was born.

Things got interesting when she told us about him, how during the Civil War, normal life was so upended that he was sent to Texas, still a boy (8-11) accompanied by someone older, someone she referred to as a slave. It stunned us to be visiting with a person who was a link to family members who had experienced the Civil War and had lived with slavery. Years later, we learned of Aunt Tweet's death, leaving any questions we still had unanswered.

That Memphis visit came to my mind this year, as family papers were sorted

after the death of my mother-in-law. A letter laid out the family genealogy in detail, written in 1943 when he was 89 by that boy whose education paused during the Civil War, making sure the remnant of the family had a record of its forebears.

He wrote about himself in third person for the sake of an impartial narrative: “born at Union Church, Miss. July 7, 1853. Grew up on a farm, attended short sessions of country schools, and during the Civil War, 1861 to 1865, there were few schools to attend. At this time he was riding a Texas pony and helping drive Texas cattle from the plains to the Confederate Army in Va. for beef.”

While in college my husband met a fellow student, Tom, from Texas with the same surname. Tom was Black and neither considered the possibility of a family connection, because of where he was from. At the time John heard about Angus' letter and Texas adventure, he did not consider that possibility, because Angus had left out the detail about who was with him.

Only after hearing Aunt Tweet elaborate on her grandfather's legacy and her father's Civil War experience did John wonder if there was indeed a link back in time, and thought about the differences in opportunity and support claimed by those who came after with the same family name, but on different sides of the slave transaction.

The historical record on Union Church, Jefferson County, Mississippi, is readily available. The place name came from the consolidation of worship of Presbyterian and Methodist congregants, who had moved there from North Carolina, families with origins in Scot-

land. Church membership rolls include their names along with those of their slaves, who worshipped in separate afternoon services.

For each enslaved congregation member, the slaveowner's name also appears. This listing calls them “servants,” yet they were not paid as household staff, skilled crafts workers, or field laborers.

A brief account of the “Scotch Settlement” notes that this euphemism was in common usage by the slave owners. There's something about that choice of words — a way to cover the guilt of enslaving people, perhaps? After the war, a new congregation formed to accommodate the newly emancipated.

Other county records document slave transactions before emancipation. The “1860 Jefferson County Slave Schedule — Mississippi” lists slave owners alphabetically and the number of people they purchased. Angus' father the minister is listed with five.

This family history challenges us to consider new options to old traditions. We consider ourselves fortunate to celebrate today's version of Angus' family. This branch of the family tree is enriched through immigration from Latin America, with the youngest adding what they learn from their Native American and Hmong heritage.

On May 8, there is “Eight o' May” to commemorate, celebrated as the date in 1865 when news of emancipation entered Mississippi.

Regina Braker, a retired educator with journeys through many places and experiences, enjoys getting to know people along the way.

YOUR VIEWS

Vote Harrison for Pendleton schools

Please join us and vote for Beth Harrison for Position 1 of the Pendleton School District. I observed Beth in our Altrusa Club of Pendleton. She was a leader in Days for Girls, an international project. She always assists where needed in Altrusa. She was an advisor with me in the ASTRA Club. ASTRA is a student leadership group from our area high schools. She is prompt, organized and bright.

She has served on other educational committees in our community and serves very well. She has “skin in the game” as she is raising her family in the Pendleton School District. Her husband Russ practices family medicine in our community, so Pendleton is their home. She will serve our district well.

Margaret and Bruce Gianotti
Pendleton

Hold the public responsible for beating COVID

The fact that COVID-19 cases in the county have rapidly increased since businesses were allowed to open up and the fact that vaccinations are now

available to everyone over 16, I am suggesting that businesses should refuse service to people who have not been vaccinated.

For years businesses have refused service to customers who were not wearing shoes or shirts. People seemingly accepted this minor offense without complaint. How could they complain about something as major as this? We need to keep our schools and businesses open, and the only way it appears this is going to happen is the general population be responsible.

Carlisle Harrison
Hermiston

Gregg would be a great school board addition

I am writing to endorse Pat Gregg for the Pendleton School District Board Position 7.

Pat will make a great addition to our school board. I have known Pat since he first moved to Pendleton in 2009 and started his family with his wife, Jill. Pat and Jill have three young children, two of whom are in the Pendleton school system.

Pat is hard working, intelligent, and able to work with everyone. Pat's back-

LETTERS DEADLINE FOR MAY 18 ELECTIONS

The *East Oregonian* does not run endorsements 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 local letters of endorsement on a first-come, first-served basis. Please submit your endorsement letters to the editor by 5 p.m. Friday, May 7. You can email them to editor@eastoregonian.com, or mail them to *East Oregonian*, c/o Andrew Cutler, 211 S.E. Byers Ave., Pendleton, OR 97801. We will publish our last letters on Saturday, May 15. Any letters received after the deadline will not run. Election Day is May 18.

ground as a lawyer makes him highly qualified to be on the school board.

Please join me in voting for Pat Gregg for the Pendleton School District Board.

Dorothy O'Rourke
Pendleton

EDITORIALS

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the *East Oregonian* editorial board. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the *East Oregonian*.

LETTERS

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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