

## OUR VIEW

# Vaccine lottery is worth a shot

Gov. Kate Brown's plan for using a lottery giveaway to encourage more people to get the COVID-19 vaccine got praise and criticism.

It may encourage some people to get vaccinated for a shot at the \$1,000,000 grand prize or one of the \$10,000 prizes awarded in each county. There's even a special drawing for Oregon residents aged 12 to 17 who had a shot. There will be five \$100,000 contributions to Oregon College Savings Plan accounts in their names.

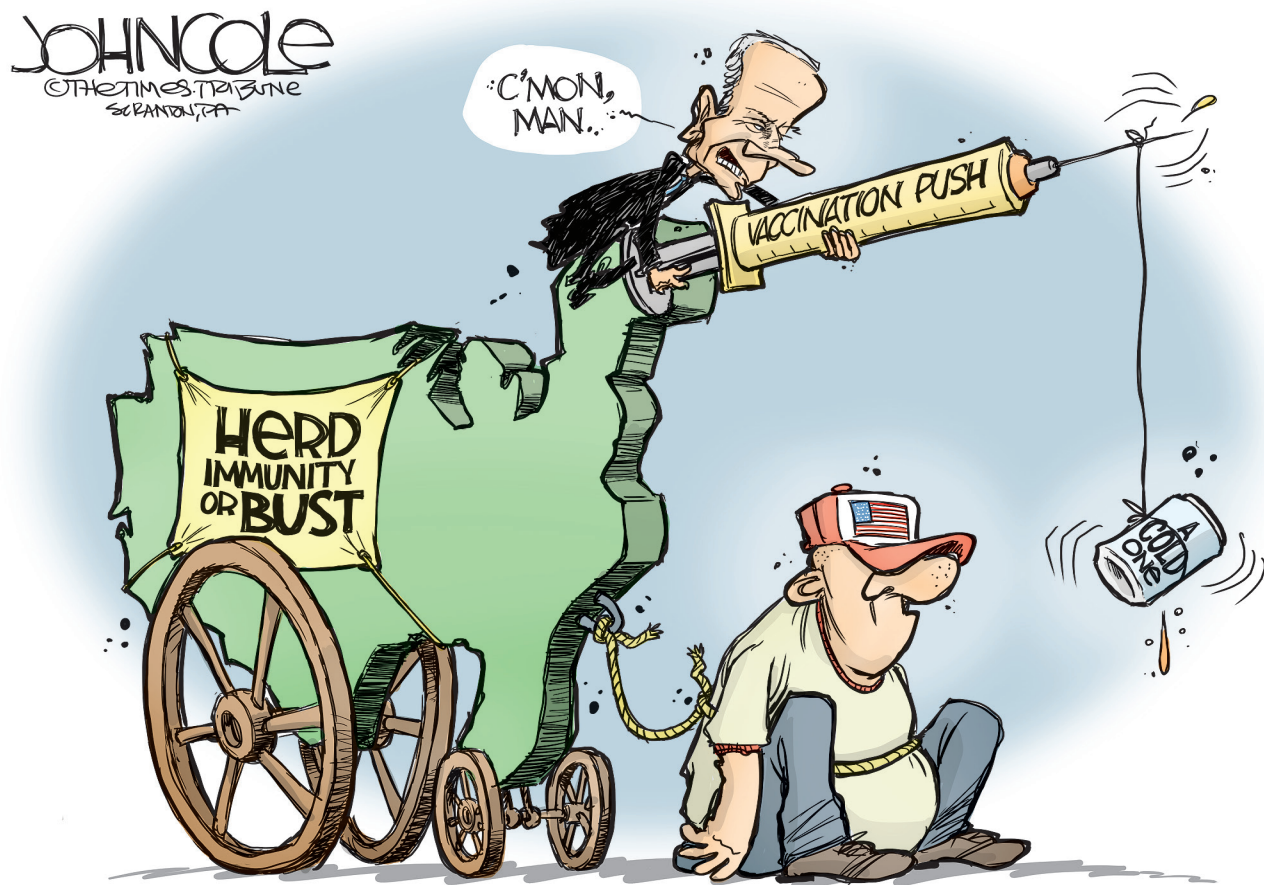
The Take Your Shot, Oregon campaign also was criticized for being wasteful and "the worst lottery odds in human history." Actually the odds of winning the grand prize in Oregon's vaccination lottery, while very small, are an order of magnitude better than winning any of the national grand prize lotteries.

The vaccine lottery is a prized-based social policy. It tries to feed off the lure of a lottery prize to give people a nudge to do something. Many people are eager to spend a few bucks or more every week to buy lottery tickets. There's usually only an incremental chance of winning big. What the ticket buys is the opportunity to dream big.

The lottery prize idea has been used as a way to encourage people to save money. Some people don't have enough money set aside for emergency expenses. So what if you gave people a prize if they did?

Credit unions in Michigan joined forces to offer prizes to people who saved money and kept it there for a year. There were smaller prizes and a \$100,000 grand prize. People wouldn't necessarily lose anything and could win an outsize prize.

Savings made exciting. Getting vaccinated made more exciting. What's so wrong with that? Of course it would be better if such incentives weren't necessary. And maybe they aren't necessary. They don't seem wasteful if they encourage more people to save or help bring the pandemic to an end.



## 'I am a student and I seek teachers'



BRIGIT FARLEY  
PAST AND PROLOGUE

This month, another memory of a semester's study in Leningrad, USSR, 40 years ago, during the Cold War.

Our group of 25 American college students traveled to Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) to improve our Russian language skills. But we came away with considerable insight into Soviet society, too, just by being students at Leningrad State University.

Once we were settled in, it was time for our ceremonial convocation. The university rector grandly urged us to be worthy of alumni gone before us. I thought he was going to mention such luminaries as Mendeleev and Shostakovich, but no: he was referring to the founder of the Soviet state, Vladimir Lenin.

In fact, Lenin was never formally admitted to the university. He challenged the law school curriculum and earned a degree without attending. That didn't matter to the rector. He directed our attention to a giant painting of the young Lenin before his examiners, putting them to shame with his genius. It was hard to miss the allusion to the young Jesus Christ in the temple. And here we had thought that there was no religion in the Communist world.

After our official welcome, we queued up for the obligatory paperwork. Universities were not public places in the USSR. Everyone on campus had to have a propusk, or pass, to show the guards at each entrance. If you wanted to use the library, you had to have a separate picture identification. As the stacks were closed, patrons showed ID, submitted requests and waited for the verdict of the library staff.

Books with controversial content were forbidden unless you had official permission. Access to information, we concluded, was a privilege rather than a right in that culture.

When classes began, we buckled down to grammar, phonetics and literature. Our societal/cultural education continued, too, often not in ways that would please university officialdom. For example, we learned about Soviet attitudes towards physically challenged people through the experiences of our group member, Suzanne.

Blind since birth, Suzanne had made herculean efforts to adapt to the sighted world. She had nearly finished her undergraduate Russian degree at UC/Santa Cruz and was contemplating grad school. Suzanne was thus outraged when Soviet officials balked at allowing her on our program. After they finally relented and okayed her application, she was chagrined when she would travel after class to visit the nearby House of Culture for the Blind.

Blind Leningraders awaited the institution's van in back alleys. The van had curtains drawn, so that no one could see in the windows. When it arrived at the House of Culture, it pulled around to the back. Once inside, the residents were "protected from prying eyes," according to the director, by thick window drapes. Suzanne often wondered who was protecting whom from what.

American students weren't the only ones learning that spring. Our demeanor in the classroom revealed a lot to our instructors about the culture we came from. They were taken aback by our boisterous and freewheeling behavior. My cohort was very lively. Everyone was always "on" in class, joking and laughing.

One day, our phonetics instructor, a reserved and prim 40-something woman, began to teach us how Russian animals talk. The idea that dogs and cats speak Russian, too, was somehow

so hilarious that we all began loudly gaff-gaffing and miu-miuing to one another. The outburst so unnerved our instructor that she began to flap about with her arms, like a large, awkward bird, trying to regain control of this rowdy company.

"Students, stop this," she squawked. "I will be forced to separate you."

Afterward, she always retreated behind her desk when we breezed into class, somewhat discomfited by this unruly group.

American reaction to Soviet classroom methodology also proved instructive. Like their colleagues everywhere, Soviet instructors highly valued correction and criticism. Ours went a step further. They wanted us to critique each other.

If one of the instructors felt that Brigit Farley spoke Russian like a turkey, garbling the most elementary phrases, they also wanted to hear fellow students make their own pointed observations and criticism. Of course, we were not going to do that because we thought it harsh and overly personal. Our refusals left the instructors questioning our seriousness of purpose.

"They won't criticize each other — they aren't interested in improvement," I overheard one of them say. We in turn marveled at Soviet education's high tolerance for insult and indignity.

In 1991, after the fall of the Communist regime, Leningrad became St. Petersburg again, the city founded by Peter the Great. A man of many interests, Tsar Peter took as his motto, "I am a student and I seek teachers." As students in our Leningrad University semester, we followed in his footsteps, sought teachers and learned a lot from them — and they from us.

*Brigit Farley is a Washington State University professor, student of history, adventurer and Irish heritage girl living in Pendleton.*

## YOUR VIEWS

### State hospital should be a last resort, not first choice

The Oregon State Hospital is nearly full. Members of the military have been called in to care for patients in need of 24-hour on-site nursing and psychiatric care. What led to the crisis unfolding before our eyes?

Our mental health system is meant to provide a range of care.

Tragically, we have not yet built a key piece of this system: treatment services that people can access in the community.

People are surging into the level of care that's meant as a last resort — our state psychiatric hospital — and stressing it. This is a natural and foreseeable consequence of not building the other essential part of the system.

In less than 10 years, the aid and assist population — people who do not have the mental capacity to stand trial

because they are unable to help their attorney defend them in court — has more than tripled. As a portion of the OSH's overall patient caseload, the percentage of aid and assist patients climbed from 11% in 2012 to 69% in 2021.

People who could have been treated in the community are ending up at OSH. Because OSH is the most restrictive, least cost-effective part of our system, the human and financial tolls of this practice are enormous. People do better when they can access treatment in their community. Subjecting individuals to unnecessary segregation and institutionalization is unconscionable.

We solve this by providing people housing, support and the treatment they need where they live.

**K.C. Lewis**  
Disability Rights of Oregon  
Portland

### Sports fan wants to know where the courts are

I have a couple of questions for the Hermiston City Council.

Why is there no public tennis court in Hermiston? I checked; all belong to school district. Hermiston has a large tennis community that plays year-round. Compared with other outdoor sports, tennis courts would be used more frequently than fields for other sports. Please build at least a group of four.

The baseball field next to the Field of Dreams was named Shockman Field to thank the family for the construction of the field with their heavy equipment and many man-hours of labor. The sign that named the field is now gone. What happened? Please replace the sign to continue honoring their hard work.

**Mike Mehren**  
Hermiston

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