

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

ANDREW CUTLER
Publisher/Editor

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Owner

PHIL WRIGHT
News Editor

JADE McDOWELL
Hermiston Editor

TUESDAY, JUNE 29, 2021

Founded October 16, 1875

A4

OUR VIEW

Learning valuable lessons from COVID-19

On the COVID-19 front last week, it was more good news, bad news, but the glimmer of hope in terms of reopening the state is now a full-fledged spotlight and that should bring some relief to us all.

COVID-19 still is around in Umatilla County, and Baker County is seeing something of a minor surge, but Gov. Kate Brown said last week the state will either reopen totally by June 30 or by the time the state hits a 70% vaccination rate.

That means mandates on masks along with social distancing rules and limits on restaurants will be gone.

In another piece of good news, the Oregon Department of Education announced recently it planned to return to full-time, in-person instruction in the fall. COVID-19 safety protocols — such as masks and social distancing — will be advisory instead of requirements.

That is all good news. The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented damage to millions of lives and hit the already shaky economy of Eastern Oregon particularly hard. Since the virus hit our shores last year, it cut a wide destructive path across our nation.

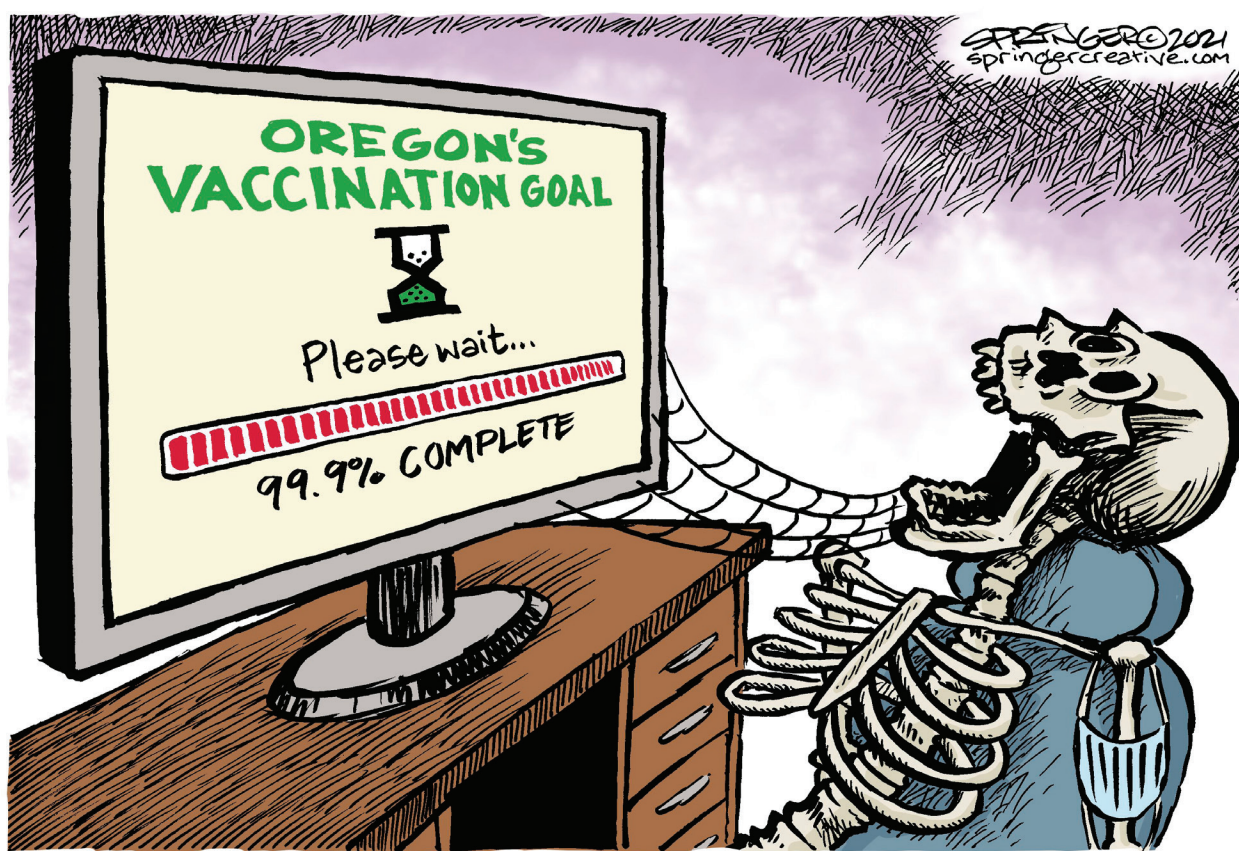
What was so discouraging about the impact of the virus was it never had to be that way. While Oregon's response to the pathogen was robust at times, the national reaction was lackluster at best. We were, in short, caught off guard and it showed. Yet, there were plenty of warnings signs and many books, medical papers and comments from health officials during the last 15 years that another global pandemic was coming, it was just a matter of when.

Those warnings still hold true. Another pandemic ignited by a respirator viral pathogen is not a possibility but a certainty. While that could seem to be cause for deep worry, it need not be. The nation and, hopefully, Oregon, have learned a lot from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Those lessons, though, cannot be forgotten. They must be codified in some manner and studied over the long term.

The Legislature also should decide in its next session to earmark dollars for a new state agency whose sole purpose is to monitor for pandemic risks and to develop a very specific, detailed plan that officials can roll out the next time a pandemic erupts.

We are a smart society and can learn from our mistakes. Against the constant threat of another pandemic, we must act decisively to ensure the errors that plagued the state, and the nation, are not repeated.



Oregon Legislature honored our Vietnam veterans



STEVE BATES

OTHER VIEWS

The 2021 legislative session started with the hope that the state Legislature would honor our Vietnam veterans by passing a bill to establish a Vietnam War Memorial on the Oregon State Capitol Grounds.

Senate Bill 319 was introduced by the Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness. The bill dedicates a portion of Capitol State Park to a Vietnam War Memorial to be funded and constructed by a qualified nonprofit corporation.

SB319 in its last paragraph declares an emergency. Its preamble states more than 180,000 Oregonians served during the Vietnam War, of which about 100,000 are alive today. The average age of these Oregon Veterans is 70+. Oregon is losing up to eight Vietnam veterans per day. This is based upon data from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs. SB319 states: "It is imperative to memorialize the service and sacrifice of all who served during the tumultuous decades of the Vietnam War." This should be done before our Vietnam veterans are gone.

The Senate passed SB319 with a 29-0 vote on March 18. The bill was moved to the House and assigned to the House

Committee on Veterans and Emergency Management with a subsequent referral to the House Committee on Rules. On May 18, the House Veterans Committee passed the bill unanimously with a "Do Pass" recommendation. On June 16, the House Rules Committee did the same. On Tuesday, June 22, the House of Representatives passed SB319 with a 58-0 vote.

It now awaits the Gov. Kate Brown's signature.

In 2017, the Vietnam War Memorial Fund was founded as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation with the sole mission of funding and constructing a Vietnam War Memorial on the Oregon State Capitol Grounds. For a year and a half, its steering committee met regularly and developed a design for the proposed memorial. The design was adopted July 31, 2019.

During 2020, the design was reviewed and approved by the Oregon Capitol Planning Commission and the city of Salem Historic Landmarks Commission. The design was also approved by the Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission on Feb. 25. Subsequently, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and the Vietnam War Memorial Fund have entered into a memorandum of understanding that outlines each entity's responsibilities going forward.

The approved design includes interpretive panels that will detail historic events and facts of the Vietnam War. This information will be developed later in the process by the steering commit-

tee, which is outlined in the memorandum of understanding. The steering committee will consist of veterans, local and national historians, interpreters, local and state public officials and people representing Oregon's Vietnamese and Southeast Asian communities.

This project has met all local and state requirements with more than a dozen public hearings or forums. As a result, the Oregon Legislature voted to honor our Vietnam veterans by passing SB319 and setting aside space for a Vietnam War Memorial on the Oregon State Capitol Grounds.

With the governor's signature on Senate Bill 319, the major permissions will be in place to construct a Vietnam War Memorial. While there are state and local requirements to be met, the greatest challenge remaining is raising the \$3 million needed to complete the project.

As we approach the Fourth of July holiday, remember to honor all of our veterans. Freedom is not free! In particular, you can honor our Vietnam veterans with a contribution to the Vietnam War Memorial on the Oregon State Capitol Grounds Project.

Steve Bates has resided in Boring for 44 years and is an honorary life member of the Vietnam Veterans of America and is a life member of the Associates of Vietnam Veterans of America. He serves as chair of the Committee on Memorials and Remembrance and president of the Vietnam War Memorial Fund.

YOUR VIEWS

Herd immunity protects everyone

Herd immunity, while scientifically appropriate, is an unfortunate term to throw at Americans. We think of a herd as something that is rounded up, put into pens and then slaughtered. We don't want to be treated like cattle.

So how are we supposed to react to a pandemic? We know that some diseases spread quickly and can be lethal. Think of typhoid fever, polio or the 1918 flu, which killed some of our ancestors. Vaccines have eliminated the risk of catching them today. Scientists studying such diseases in animals discovered some time ago that immunizing a substantial percentage of the herd soon stops the spread of the disease.

Immunizing a herd of cattle is relatively easy, but democracies don't round up their citizens and force 70% of them to get vaccinated. As citizens we are in charge of our own decisions, but perhaps we should consider how our decisions affect the people around us.

If your friends and neighbors start dropping like flies from COVID-19, you will likely take it seriously. But what if you don't know anyone who is really sick from the virus? You only hear about it on the news. Or you may know people who got sick but seemed to get over it. So you decide to skip the vaccination. If you don't get sick you feel justified in your decision. You may even decide not to wear a mask. You may feel proud that you made your decision independently, but you overlook the fact that you may be infecting others who will

get really sick.

Here is where herd immunity makes sense. Vaccinating around 70% of our population is sufficient to keep the virus from spreading. If most people in our community decide not to get vaccinated, the virus and its new variants will continue to spread, with dire consequences for some of the unvaccinated. To date in Umatilla County, nearly 3,000 people have been infected with it, and 87 of them have died. We don't know how many others who caught the disease have lingering health problems.

As a community we are not a herd of cattle, but we are in close contact with other people every day. No one is forcing us to be vaccinated, but by refusing to get vaccinated we are gambling not only with our own health but with the health of those around us.

Terry Templeman
Pendleton

Another date should join Juneteenth as national holiday

On June 19, 1865, federal troops landed at Galveston Bay, Texas, and ended 200 years of slavery. It is now and should be a national holiday. But there is an even more important date — April 19, 1775, when at a bridge over Lexington Green a shot heard around the world was fired. That shot was literally heard around the world. It challenged tyranny, which at that time was vested in royalty.

Royalty: the idea that you are born to rule and could pass that on to your heirs. The idea of republics, where the people

elect their leaders, caught on. Bolivar in South America challenged Spanish royalty, the French chopped their heads off. Later the Russians shot their royal family. The republic idea caught on, except in the so-called Great Britain, where they still kiss the royal arse.

I guess it is the failure of the American education system that subjects me to what Megan and Harry are doing.

They are everywhere, even Fox News. Tucker Carlson and Sean Hannity both have had Piers Morgan on, because he trashes Harry and Megan. Morgan is a staunch supporter of the royal family. He is, however, a vocal opponent of our Second Amendment. It shouldn't be hard to google Piers defending the British idea that only the elite should possess arms, the exact opposite of the American ideal.

Enough crap about whether Biden violated royal protocol and other such tripe. I don't care if there is another royal brat. I don't want to hear anymore about an American royal baby. Titles of royalty are specifically prohibited in our constitution. Coverage of Megan and Harry gives our poorly educated citizenry the idea that royalty is a legitimate form of government. That shot fired at Lexington Green challenged that.

It is time to teach history in our schools again, and it is time that April 19 becomes a national holiday. It set the idea that people of all colors all around the world are capable of controlling their own lives. People of all colors.

Steve Culley
Baker City

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.

SEND LETTERS TO:

editor@eastoregonian.com,
or via mail to Andrew Cutler,
211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801