

# O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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## OUR VIEW

# Goal should always be to safeguard democracy

There was not much fanfare, but the official reopening of the Oregon's Capitol last week should be good news for all voters.

Readers may remember the Capitol was shut down because of the COVID-19 pandemic and, as usual, the closure kicked off plenty of political angst between Democrats and Republicans. In the Senate, GOP lawmakers voted no on many issues not related to COVID-19 in protest. In the House, Republicans declined to suspend rules that require bills to be read completely, which slowed down the legislative session.

The stance of the Republicans was, at least in theory, a good one. Their views were the Capitol is the people's building and should not be closed off to the public under any circumstances.

But Democratic lawmakers, such as House Speaker Tina Kotek and Senate President Peter Courtney, said in a joint statement the closure was necessary to safeguard people from COVID-19.

They termed the decisions to be "difficult" but they "consulted with infectious disease doctors and public health officials about what changes were needed to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the capitol."

Access to public buildings where lawmakers do the people's business is hardwired into the American psyche, as it should be. We live in a democracy and that means lawmakers must be accessible to voters.

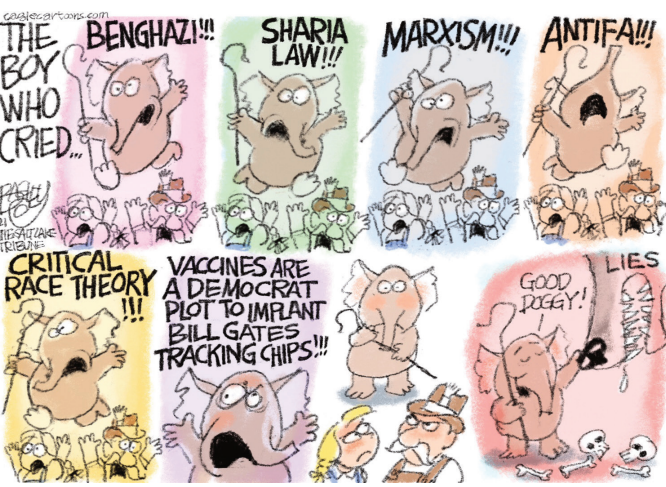
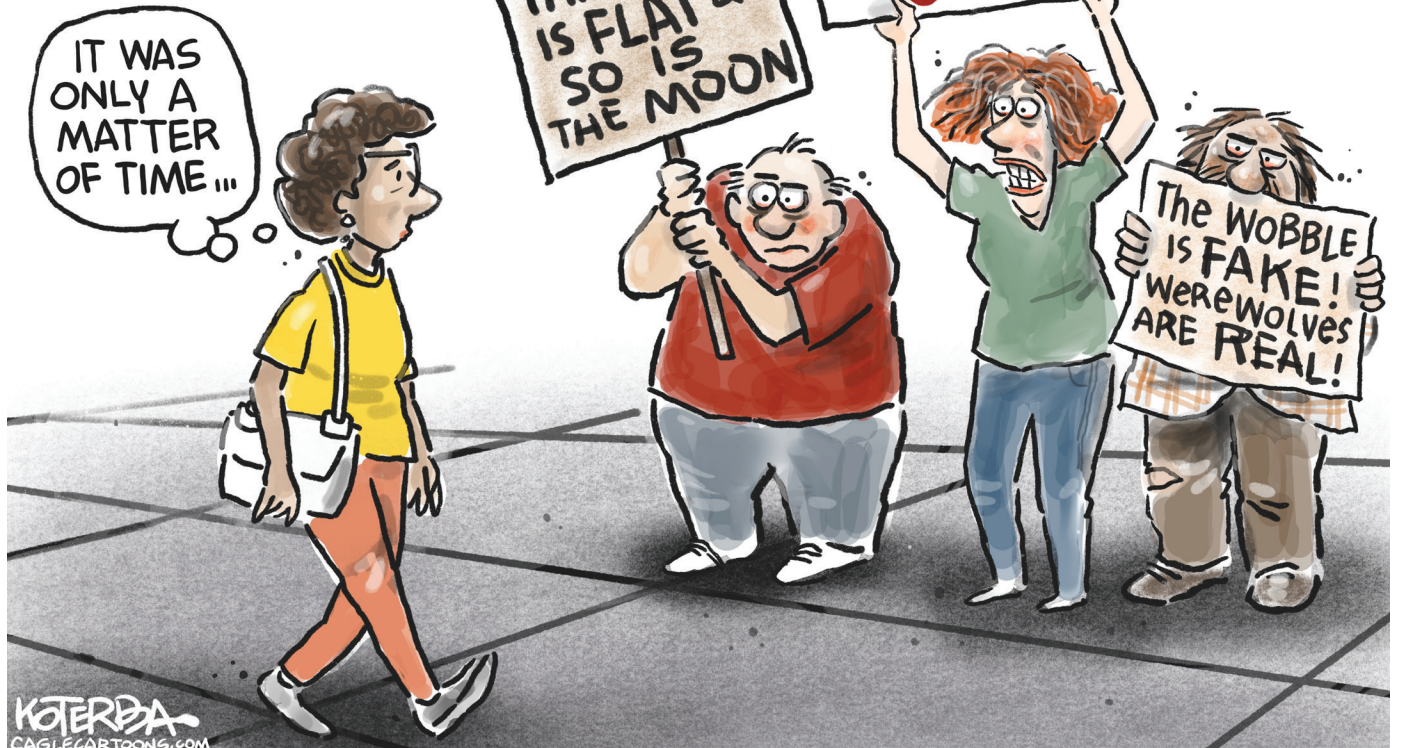
However, on this specific issue, closing the capitol building was the right move. Whether it should have been closed as long as it seems to be open for debate. Lawmakers such as Kotek and Courtney did the right thing during a time when the COVID-19 virus crisis still was very real and a threat to all.

Yet there is no denying that cutting off access to the activities of lawmakers hurt democracy. Anytime the halls where lawmakers roam or committee meetings where legislators gather information to make decisions are blockaded, the people lose.

The founders created our system as one that relies on the interplay between voters and lawmakers. Without it, our system does not operate as efficiently as it should.

Lawmakers did not have much choice regarding the closure of the capitol building and, as a one-time measure to avert a crisis, it was the right decision. Such decisions, though, always should be made with careful thought and with the knowledge that the overall goal is to safeguard democracy.

NASA: MOON 'WOBBLE' TO INCREASE FLOODING...



## YOUR VIEWS

### EOU should reevaluate requiring vaccination

A recent story ("EOU to continue with mask mandate," July 8) reports that Eastern Oregon University is not changing its guidelines for COVID-19 risk reduction after Gov. Kate Brown recently lifted mask restrictions. EOU is still requiring vaccination for all students, although the EOU website contains the vague statement that "accommodations will be available for medical and non-medical exemptions."

I believe that EOU should reexamine its policies in light of current knowledge.

We know much more about COVID-19 and its treatment than we did a year ago, and no longer have to make decisions from sparse data. It is clear that there is no significant threat of death from COVID-19 for healthy young people. Moreover, protocols for treatment have been developed that greatly reduce symptom severity and risk of death.

The safety of the mRNA vaccines is widely touted by the media and government, but a look at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System shows that these statements are too sanguine. The Food and Drug Administration has recently issued a warning concerning possible myocarditis (heart inflammation) after vaccination, unexpectedly high in young people. The CDC has similarly recognized a correlation between the vaccine and myocarditis, albeit with low numbers.

I have reviewed several studies showing the vaccine has no added benefit for those who have already had the disease, and there is some evidence of adverse immune responses among some who take the shot after having had COVID-19. One should, then, make exceptions for students who have already recovered from COVID-19. Moreover, there have been no true studies of the effect of these vaccines on fetal development, and VAERS reports hundreds of miscarriages after vaccination. At the very least, EOU should discourage pregnant students from taking the jab.

The Observer reports that 65% of EOU students polled were against mandatory vaccinations for COVID-19. I am puzzled that the administration would ignore this and seriously compromise the principle of informed consent. Requirements for well-studied vaccines (such as for measles) are reasonable, but mRNA-based treatments given under an emergency use authorization are another matter.

As a retired faculty member, I urge EOU to reevaluate these policies.

**Tom Herrmann  
La Grande**

### Using 747 Supertankers to fight fire could prevent disaster

Here we are, at the beginning of what could prove to be worst wildfire season ever, and the world's best firefighting tool sits unused and not ready to go because of decisions made by the U.S. Forest Service and states not to use it.

Unfortunately, in 2002 two Lockheed C-130 Hercules airplanes crashed while fighting fires, one in California and one in Colorado. In 2004, the U.S. Forest Service made the decision not to use the large tanker firefighting airplanes, instead relying on helicopters and smaller planes.

The 747 Supertanker would have really helped on these fires: The 2020 Oregon fires burned 1,221,324 acres, killed 11 people and burned 3,000 buildings. At Canby, in the middle of the day the streetlights and outside lights of businesses were on because of the darkness from the smoke. On July 12, 2017, lightning started the Chetco Bar Fire, near Brookings, and it burned 191,125 acres. In 2017 the Eagle Creek Fire, near Cascade Locks, burned 50,000 acres and most likely could have been put out quickly by the Supertanker if it would have been used.

Are we going to have to experience a disaster, like the building collapse at Surfside, Florida, before we realize that we need to prepare for these things ahead of time? When the fire is burning, it is too late to start preparing for it.

**Bob Mattila  
Brush Prairie, Washington**

### Labor shortage more than just laziness

Good job East Oregonian for the excellent story by Alex Wittwer ("Help Wanted: Eastern Oregon feels pinch of labor shortage," Tuesday, July 20).

I hear from many people here in Eastern Oregon that the reason we have a labor shortage is simply because people don't want to come back to work. Period. That they are just sitting around enjoying free money. It is easy to point to that as the main problem.

I, too, could easily say that, but I have zero evidence of it. Alex, on the other hand, did a great job explaining other factors involved, interviewing

key people and citing relevant data. My favorite quote in his story is this one from Chris Rich, the state's regional economist for Eastern Oregon: "There's a bunch of different pieces that contribute to what we would really term more of a tight labor market than a labor shortage."

That seems to sum it up well. If the article hasn't been read yet, I strongly encourage all to do so. It brings out so many other considerations. Kudos to Alex Wittwer and the East Oregonian.

**Connie Macomber  
Pendleton**

### Vaccinations not a political football

We must find common ground and set aside partisanship if we are going to beat COVID-19.

Science is knowledge with testable explanations, political tribalism is not. Political tribalism is eclipsing trust in science and extending the pandemic.

COVID-19 infections are rising in 46 states, the crossover between the vaccination rate map and electoral college map is stark.

As a Republican, I understand many of the arguments and concerns being voiced by the vaccine hesitant. I, too, often find myself at odds with Gov. Kate Brown, and many Democrat policies. However, public health is an issue that goes beyond politics. This virus does not discriminate between political parties.

Hospitals around the country are almost exclusively seeing patients that have not been fully vaccinated. Vaccines are proven and extremely effective at protecting us from the COVID-19 virus.

Receiving a vaccine to stop the spread of disease and supporting public health is not a new ask. Many generations before us have done their part to eliminate diseases from our communities, businesses and schools; smallpox, polio, rubella, diphtheria, mumps.

It's now our turn, to do our part, as past generations have done, and get vaccinated to eliminate COVID-19 to keep our children in school, our businesses open and our communities healthy.

I would encourage Republicans to trust science over self-interested politicians, Democrats to shelve policies that could threaten medical innovation by companies that are helping us out of this pandemic, and all Americans, to put our country first by getting vaccinated.

**Cheri Helt  
Bend**

## 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:

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