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## OUR VIEW

# Vaccine skepticism isn't a rural/urban issue

Last week, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown reinstated the mandate that Oregonians must wear masks in public spaces to halt the spread of the COVID-19 delta variant that threatens to overwhelm hospitals in some areas.

In announcing the mandate, Brown singled out rural elected officials for not taking steps to curb the spread of the virus.

"I expected local elected officials to step up and do the right thing," Brown said. "What is clear is they are not taking action. That is why we are moving forward."

Brown has misjudged many local officials who have refused to institute their own mask mandates. They did take action in the interest of their constituents — just not in the way preferred by the governor. Whether they made the right choice will never be known because Brown has made the opposite decision for them.

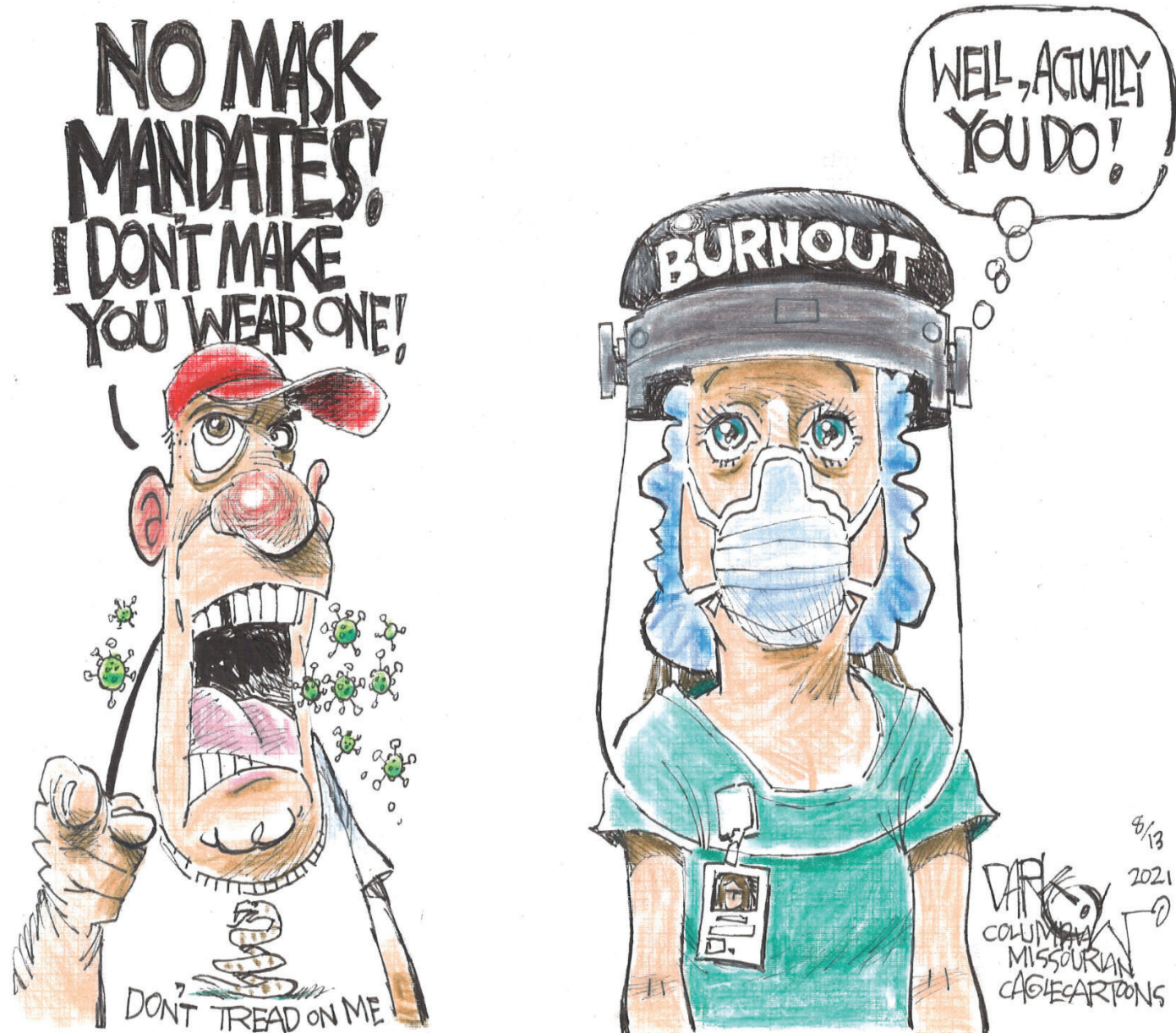
It is also wrong to suggest that vaccination resistance is found mostly in rural areas, or that it is the result of misinformation or misguided ideology.

It is true when measured as a percentage, the rates of COVID-19 vaccination are lower in Oregon's rural counties than the urban counties. It is also true that many rural communities, particularly in the east, are more openly resistant to Salem's mandates. But, by sheer numbers, the bulk of the state's unvaccinated adults live in more urban areas.

Our combing of state data shows more than half of unvaccinated adults — 56% — live in the state's five most populous, and most liberal, counties. That suggests to us that deciding not to get a COVID-19 shot is more of a matter of personal choice than an ideological statement.

We have said at the outset that people who are able should get vaccinated. While we respect the right of informed adults to weigh their own options and decide what is right for themselves, we think the vaccine is the best option.

Turning COVID-19 vaccinations into a right/left, rural/urban battle is a mistake — one that will only harden the resolve of many who are yet to be vaccinated.



# Heat the No. 1 weather-related killer



LARRY  
NIERENBERG  
EYE TO THE SKY

If someone were to take a poll and ask "what type of weather causes the most fatalities," many people would likely answer tornadoes or hurricanes. It is certainly true that the effects of these two types of weather can be quite dramatic with all the damage that they can cause.

Additionally, if the tornado or hurricane impacts a large area, it will often garner media attention, and any number of injuries or fatalities that the tornado or hurricane may cause is, of course, tragic.

However, the No. 1 weather-related killer, by far, is in fact heat.

The Pacific Northwest experienced a record-breaking heatwave at the end of June and more heat at the end of July and early August. The June heat wave was responsible for more than 200 deaths in Oregon and Washington, and more than 800 fatalities in British Columbia, Canada. This far exceeds the number in a typical tornado or hurricane and this is one event, though an exceptional one.

Now that it is mid-August and we are approaching the cooler fall months, we should be done with excessive heat

for the year, especially as the days grow increasingly shorter.

One of the reasons heat ranks so high on the list of weather that causes so many fatalities is that excessive heat can occur almost anywhere. Hurricanes are generally a coastal weather threat, and certain conditions have to be met for a tornado to form that are not common in many locations.

As we all learned this summer, heat waves can occur in places where they are not common, such as Portland, Seattle and many other areas. Due to the rarity of extreme heat, many homes in these locations do not have air conditioning. It is for these reasons that the potential impacts from heat are much more widespread when they do occur.

Even in areas where hot weather is more common, it is often the number of days and the actual temperature values (or temperature combined with humidity in certain parts of the country) that have the most impact.

While many areas of the world get hot during their summer and some locations stay hot all year round, there is a difference between a normal summer day in an area and excessive heat. Additionally, how frequently heat events occur can also help the body adapt.

Heat tends to affect older people, young children and those with certain medical conditions before it affects the broader population, and one day of heat can usually be handled with few issues.

However, it is the combined effects of multiple days of heat, coupled with warm nights that do not allow the body to cool, that can cause heat stress to start to occur. Excessive heat also can impact infrastructure, including the electrical grid, which would make it difficult to use fans or air conditioning to cool off.

So, what should you do in a heat wave?

First, and most importantly, stay hydrated. Drink plenty of water or other nonalcoholic, decaffeinated fluids.

Use air conditioners or fans or, if this is not possible, spend as much time as you can in air-conditioned facilities.

Stay inside, if possible, and out of direct sunlight, especially during the hottest part of the day. If you must be outside for work or other reasons, take frequent breaks out of the sun.

The record-breaking heat wave the Pacific Northwest experienced at the end of June was exceptional in many ways. There will be other heat waves in the future and, because heat is the No. 1 weather related killer, being prepared for the next one is always a prudent course of action.

Larry Nierenberg is a senior forecaster for the National Weather Service in Pendleton. Nierenberg leads National Weather Service community outreach and hazardous weather preparedness and resiliency programs.

## YOUR VIEWS

### Compassion is more useful than charity

I recently was given an analogy in defense of Critical Race Theory. "Critical Height Theory — tall people have more privilege than shorties." My reply:

And Critical Weight Theory — Skinny People Privilege. It's "You have something I don't, and the world owes it to me." Not equality. Not systemic bias. It's self-pity despite insufficient effort. It's focusing on what "they" have instead of my own life. Anything is possible with enough effort. Equal opportunity is not equal quality of life. Short people aren't "denied" food too high on a shelf, they simply have an obstacle to overcome. I can toss items at what I want, use a long object to prod, etc., until it comes to me. Even the tall have to, sometimes. Odds are someone will come to assist anyway. Nobody has a right to shorter shelves, just a right to buy the food that is there. Difficulty is just a handicap to work through.

Back to CRT, society has already bent over backward too far. Laws require businesses meet racist skin color quotas, regardless of skill or experience. It's problematic in many ways and has

created this situation. Doing for others leaves them with their handicap.

You have to combine compassion with tough love and mentorship. Doing for people is rarely compassion (far less is joining in complaining). Compassion grants others the ability. Com- (together/with) passion (effort, difficulty) ... literally, working together. When nobody does the work, there's no compassion. I hope this is getting through.

Mark Elfering  
Hermiston

### How quickly we forget

While the right is piling on President Joe Biden for the fiasco in Afghanistan, how quickly they forget former President Donald Trump wanted to get out of that country.

Does anybody really believe the outcome would have been any different if Trump was in charge? Even the president of Afghanistan has now fled the country. Perhaps the Afghans have become too dependent on somebody else fighting for them.

We've done everything we could to train an army. It's time to leave. It's cost

us over \$2 trillion of borrowed money. I can fully understand soldiers who fought there feeling betrayed, just as in Vietnam. I just believe as the Soviets found out, it's a no-win situation in that country. It's a tribal culture, always has been. We would be there forever, spending trillions more trying to make it in our image.

Many men in the country actually agree with the Taliban's fundamental Muslim beliefs in the first place and do not care for western invaders imposing their lifestyle on them. It's time to go. We need to pay more attention to the myriad of problems in our own country. This 20-year war reminds me of an old quote from Jonathan Schell's "The Real War":

"It has been said that the United States was deceived into entering and expanding the Vietnam War by its own overoptimistic propaganda. The policy makers stayed in Vietnam not so much because of overly optimistic hopes of winning ... as because of overly pessimistic assessments of losing."

Rob Smith  
La Pine

### EDITORIALS

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