

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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OUR VIEW

Will there be enough vaccinated first responders?

It was just 14 months that Oregonians were singing the praises of firefighters and emergency medical services personnel who raced up Santiam Canyon to rescue those in the path of a wildfire racing down.

Those brave men and women, and their colleagues across the state who stand up in the face of the worst natural and man-made disasters, rightly were hailed as heroes.

What a difference a year can make.

Today, they are being singled out as possible vectors for the COVID-19 virus and made to stand down if they decline to be vaccinated.

We have said at the outset that people who are able should get vaccinated for the COVID-19 virus. 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.

At the same time, we think government diktats mandating vaccinations are wrong-headed and counterproductive. Within a few days we will see the consequences of Gov. Kate Brown's mandate that first responders be vaccinated by Oct. 18 or lose their jobs.

In the wake of Brown's mandate, fire and rescue departments across Oregon expect to lose many paid staff and volunteers who choose not to get vaccinated by Oct. 18, the vaccination deadline.

No one knows for sure how many first responders the state will lose. Each emergency department EO Media Group talked to offered a different prediction: 10%, 25%, 50%.

Genoa Ingram, executive director of the Oregon Volunteer Firefighters Association, said that while no one knows final numbers yet, impacts will likely be far-reaching.

"Nearly every district or department I've talked to has indicated there will be some shortage because not everyone is willing or can be vaccinated," Ingram said.

The vast majority of Oregon's firefighters, EMTs and paramedics — some experts estimate 90% — are volunteers, many of whom plan to leave if the mandate is enforced. While the mandate only covers licensed medical responders, at most departments fire and medical calls are handled by the same people.

We understand Brown's goal is twofold: protect patients and responders while increasing the number of vaccinated Oregonians. That's noble. But, we have to wonder if it's worse to risk catching COVID-19 or to die by the side of the road because there aren't any vaccinated volunteer responders to come to your aid.

On this point, Brown's office is mute. Her spokesperson declined to comment on the potential consequences of the mandate or measures that could be taken to mitigate and shortages in emergency responders.

In a few days, the latter becomes more of a possibility.

Many volunteer departments are chronically short-handed in the best of times. These are hardly the best of times, and there is no crush of the vaccinated suddenly willing to take up a post.

What are the departments to do?

It's never so bad that politicians and bureaucrats can't make it worse.



Pendleton's effort in space race



BRIGIT FARLEY
OPINION

At first glance, October is a month dedicated to pumpkin spice lattes, football and preparations for Halloween — a fall festival of frivolity before the dark and cold descend.

Surprisingly, though, October on the historical calendar reveals some serious inflection points in history: the Russian Revolution, which birthed the worldwide Communist movement, the Cuban Missile Crisis, in which President Kennedy and Soviet Premier Khrushchev approached, then backed away from, the abyss of nuclear war and the assassination of Anwar Sadat in Egypt, some of the first shots in the war against modernity by forerunners of Al-Qaeda.

For me and other Pendleton teachers and students, the launch on Oct. 4, 1957, of a smallish satellite the Russians termed "Sputnik" became one of these game-changing events.

The story of Sputnik begins in 1945. At that time, America bestrode the world like a colossus. Much of Europe and Asia were suffering from the ravages of World War II. Its mainland untouched in the conflict, the U.S. had emerged robust and strong and was making its influence felt in the occupation of Japan and plans for the reconstruction of Europe.

It had pulled off the technological feat of the century in the construction of the atom bomb. By contrast, our chief ideological competitor, the Soviet Union, had been victorious with the Allies in the war, but the cost was high: blasted infrastructure, shattered cities, burned out villages and towns, the legacy of the Nazi war of annihilation there. Many Soviet citizens

were living in husks of houses or holes in the ground and there was widespread famine in rural areas.

Nonetheless, the Soviet leadership, as always unfettered by public opinion, focused its resources exclusively on the production of new and improved weaponry. With the help of several hundred former Nazi scientists forcibly expatriated from Soviet-occupied Germany, the USSR exploded a nuclear device in August of 1949. Space science and rocketry also became a top priority. Although the United States had announced plans in 1955 to orbit a satellite, Soviet scientists beat them to it with the launch of Sputnik in October of 1957.

To put it mildly, Sputnik shocked Americans, as much for its display of superior technical skill as its implied ability to carry a nuclear warhead. While many science enthusiasts were intrigued, accusations and recriminations from wounded pride flew in officialdom. These fortunately translated into the foundation of NASA, dramatizing American commitment to space exploration, and a new initiative designed to improve our country's ability to understand and compete with the Soviet Union and the rest of the world.

Congress passed the National Defense Education Act less than a year after Sputnik, on Sept. 2, 1958. The act infused millions of dollars into higher education, to benefit students of math, science and foreign languages.

Sputnik and the NDEA soon made their mark on Pendleton. At Pendleton High School, Principal Don Fossatti and history and English instructors Phil Farley and Cal Plants caught the competitive spirit of Sputnik.

They had learned of a new project from the College Board, author of the SAT tests, that prepared high school teachers to offer first-year college classes. Fossatti, Farley

and Plants promptly worked up syllabi and launched Advanced Placement courses in U.S. History and English. They wanted capable Pendleton students to enter college with college credits, so that they could accelerate their coursework and contribute to the country sooner. Today, PHS offers AP in a number of subjects.

A few years later, in 1965, Joyce Brockway (now Hoffman) took a job teaching foreign languages at PHS. The NDEA had financed her education at the University of Utah, where she studied French and Russian. In 1967, Hoffman received NDEA support for advanced French language training in France. She went on to teach French and Russian to hundreds of Pendleton students, many of whom used their language proficiency in the pursuit of degrees in science, foreign languages, government, area studies and law.

Hoffman's superb instruction helped me to win grants and fellowships in successor programs to the NDEA for graduate work in Russian history and language. I have in turn taught these subjects at Baylor and Washington State University for 30 years. It is hard to imagine a more far-reaching investment in the future than the NDEA.

The Soviet Union would go on to score more wins in segments of the space race — first dog, then first man, then first female in space. But thanks largely to the United States' constructive response to Sputnik, the country won the ultimate prize — landing a man on the moon in 1969 — and strengthened itself immeasurably in other ways. Whenever I contemplate the October sky, in which Sputnik made its fateful journey, I am always proud that Pendleton became a part of that effort.

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

YOUR VIEWS

Unvaccinated should have compassion, social decency

In a recent East Oregonian, Rebecca Patton of Enterprise claims that drunk driving is not the same as being unvaccinated because "the law" prevents one from doing the former but not so the latter. She bases her position on how the law school at Harvard defines what is "lawful."

This argument is specious and cruel. What makes your position so inaccurate and harmful is the asymptomatic nature of the virus. If killing someone while driving in a drunken state — because drunk driving is against Harvard law — is not the same as willingly, but unconsciously killing someone else by flagrantly ignoring the deadly effect of my unknown transmission is both cruel and moronic.

To state that it is a (proven) supposition "that an unmasked/unvaccinated person poses a real (as opposed to theoretical) risk to others," can only be determined with frequent testing from being an unconscious and unwitting asymptomatic carrier of the virus. Have you been tested Ms. Patton? The thrust of your white hyper-individualist argument

would obviate against that conclusion.

There is no state or federal law that mandates telling someone you may carry a venereal disease either, but does passing it on to them, with or without your knowledge, make that right? As to your banal claim that "three quarters of new COVID cases arising from large gatherings in a Massachusetts town occurred in vaccinated people," I am one of several in town who have been fully vaccinated and yet were victims of a "breakthrough" infection. At my age, it is only the vaccination that has saved me from your "right to infect others" as determined by "Harvard Law."

To further state "that unvaccinated people are selfishly (and criminally) putting others at risk makes an appeal to emotion, but it lacks legal and evidential support" absolutely stuns me against the "evidential, untheoretical" deaths of millions around the globe. What more evidence do you need, Ms. Patton?

What you will never get is that being a willing asymptomatic carrier of this known killer is not and can never be a "legal issue" or one based on "personal freedom." It is strictly and solely a moral issue. It is not one of "personal rights" but entirely of ethical compas-

sion for everyone else with whom you come in contact. I beg of you and the rest of the unvaccinated possible killers, please have just a smidgeon of compassion and mature social decency.

**The Rev. Matt Henry
Pendleton**

Get vaccinated for you and your community

Pendleton is in my blood. I lived in Pendleton for 25 years, raised my kids, went to every Round-Up (best rodeo in the world), rode my horse in multiple parades, practiced OB/Gyn and delivered many of your babies, served on city council. I know you, I follow your news, and now I am alarmed because I see many of the valued community members sick and dying of COVID-19.

Why? Mistrust of medicine/facts/government? Is it worth it? Look around you and count the cost. Man enough to wear pink? Then maybe man enough to get vaccinated. If you don't do it for yourself, do it for your family, your neighbors and for your Round-Up community. We're counting on you.

**Dr. Cheryl Marier
Bellingham, Washington**

EDITORIALS

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