

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

Meeting with the doctor is wise

The news last week definitely was shocking — a health care worker in Wallowa County was hospitalized for several days after a severe allergic reaction to the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine. The individual, who Wallowa Memorial Hospital has not identified, did recover from the case of anaphylaxis caused by the vaccine and was released from the hospital — where, coincidentally, they work, according to the Oregon Health Authority — as was reported in this publication last week. We are thankful that this reaction was not more severe.

It was inevitable that, somewhere, at some point, there would be an adverse reaction to the vaccine. There have been several reported throughout the nation. It is a bit more jarring, though, when it hits at home, as this one did, and when it is the first in the state of Oregon, as this one appears to have been by all initial reports.

What is the proper response, though? As more and more of the vaccine is produced, and others are developed, it will, at some point soon, be made available to the rest of the general public. Individuals are going to have to decide whether the vaccine is the correct move for them, given it is not currently required, even in the fields where it is being administered.

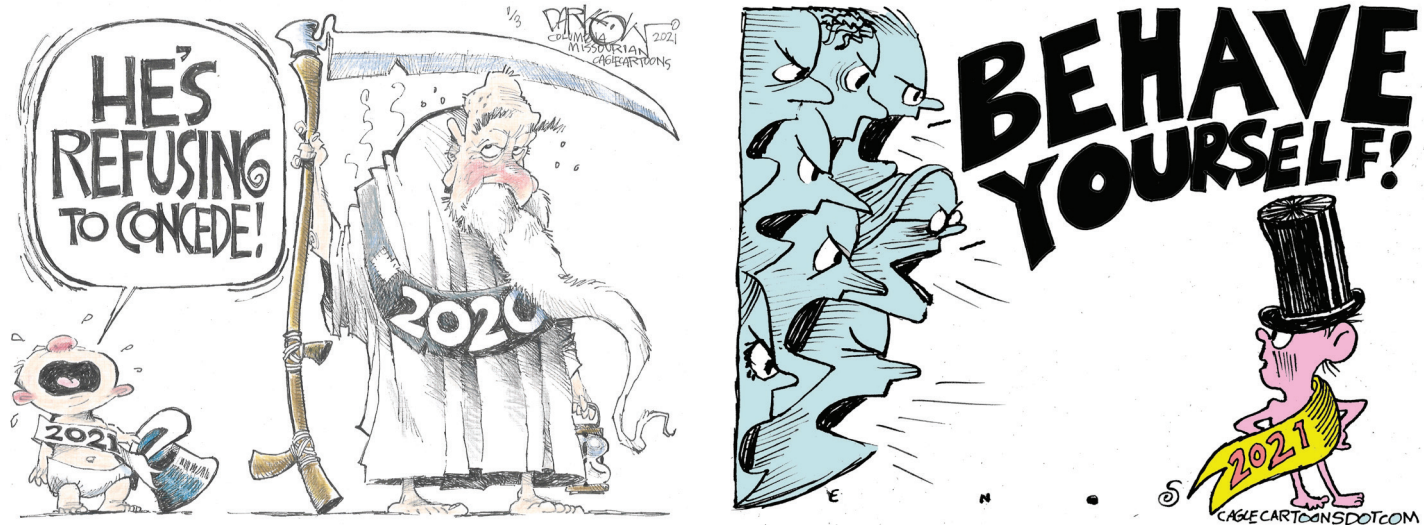
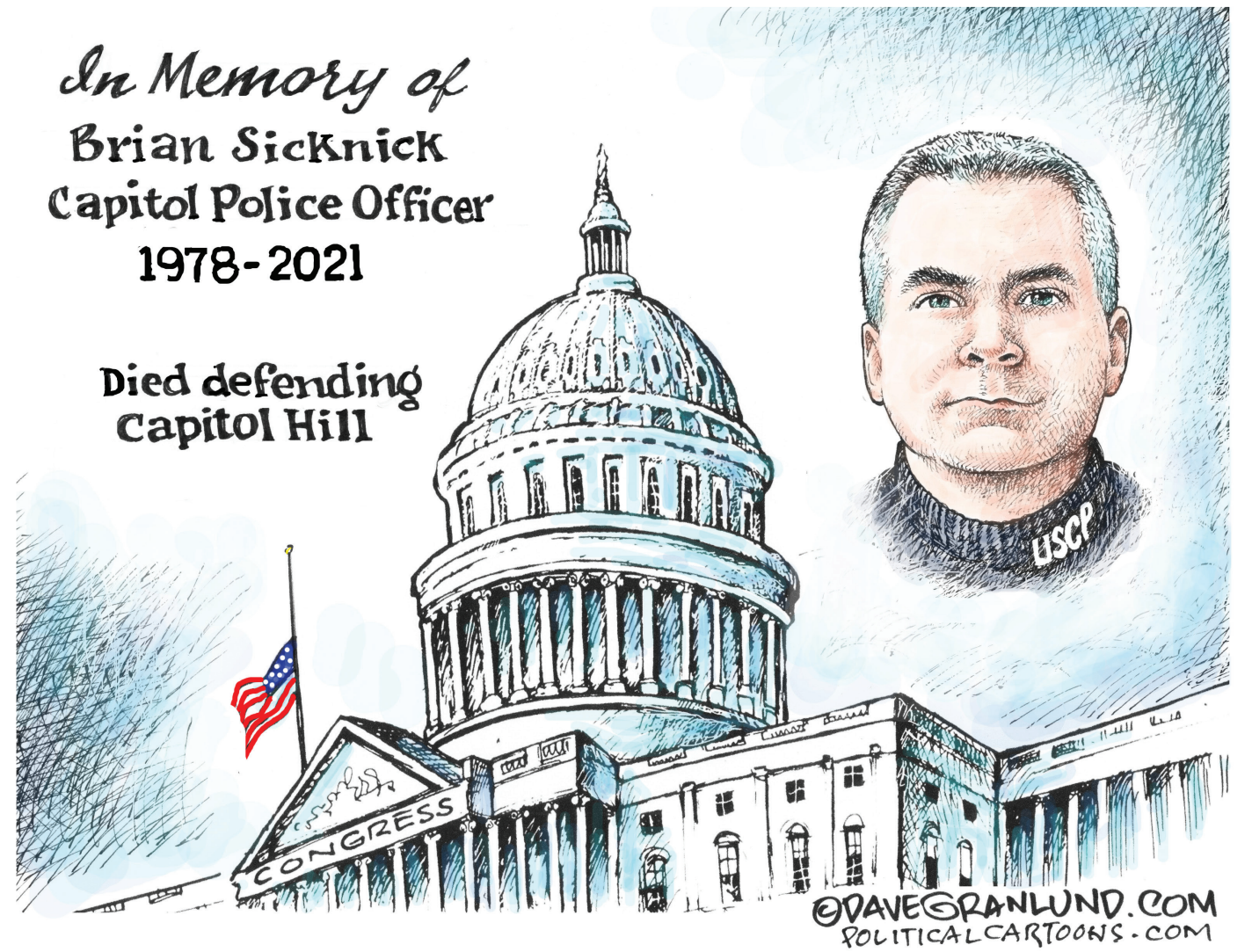
Many say it’s a no-brainer given the severity of COVID-19 — especially for those most susceptible, who will be higher up on the list to get inoculated.

An instance like this does give pause, however, and can cause a person to wonder if they should, given the possibility of an adverse reaction.

It doesn’t appear, though, that this is changing a ton of minds on the vaccine. Brooke Pace, the communications director for WMH, said in an interview with the Chieftain last week that most people had already made up their mind regarding the vaccine before this case, and doesn’t anticipate an adverse reaction — even locally — making a major shift in that.

For those still on the fence, or who have an allergy history and are concerned, both the OHA and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention websites have guidance on what the public should do, including meeting with their doctor to discuss the best step for them. One of the best documents to review, Pace recommended, is the official emergency use authorization from the CDC on its website. There, individuals have access to ample information — including the ingredients list — to help them make an informed decision when it comes to their allergy risk and the vaccine. Discussing the ingredients with a doctor would be a wise decision, as well.

The odds are very much against an individual having a reaction. But the prudent step still would be to meet with a doctor if you have concern. Don’t take a chance.



LETTERS to the EDITOR

No longer feels welcome

I consider myself incredibly lucky to have grown up in Wallowa County. I’ve always been different from many of the people I grew up around — I’m mixed-race with “liberal” political views and my mom raised me to be a vocal feminist. Despite this, I felt surrounded by people who wanted me to succeed in life. I felt I belonged here.

This past year (and really these past four years) has changed that. I don’t feel welcome in Wallowa County anymore.

The insurrection by Trump extremists at the Capitol yesterday provided an explanation — those who stormed the halls of Congress carried the same signs and flags that I’ve seen back home for four years. The message I have received is this: “If you do not look like us or think like us, you are not welcome here.” I see it on social media from folks back home, in the yards of houses I used to play in as a kid, and on the news channels my family watches.

I care deeply about Wallowa County, and I want it to be a place for everyone to feel like they belong — no matter their differences. Isn’t that the hope of this whole republic?

I’m afraid this story we’re living right now won’t change until we reckon with our history and the damage we are doing to each other.

“We can disagree and still love each other, unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist.” — James Baldwin

**Anna Bird
Portland**

Bentz makes wrong choice

The man we elected to the U.S. House of Representatives had an important choice to make in his first week in office. The choice was to support democracy and freedom or to support fascism and anarchy.

Unfortunately, Cliff Bentz made the wrong choice. Along with 138 other Republicans, Mr. Bentz voted to overturn the presidential election that Joe Biden won by eight million votes. No doubt he was pressured into doing this by more-senior members in the House. And that is what is wrong with our elected officials today. They cannot think for themselves but feel they have to follow the party line. The Republican party line these days seems to be to attempt to win every election no matter what the cost.

Over 80 million voters cast their ballot for Joe Biden, despite the misinformation spewed out on social media. In addition, the Republicans lost control of the Senate, largely due to the incompetency and lack of moral values of the president. Rep. Bentz took an oath to defend the Constitution. So far he has failed to do that. My hope is that in the future he will abide by that oath.

**Ken Hohmann
Wallowa**

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U.S. PRESIDENT		U.S. SENATORS		U.S. REPRESENTATIVE	
Donald Trump The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20500 Comments: 202-456-1111		Ron Wyden 221 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20510 202-224-5244 La Grande office: 541-962-7691	Jeff Merkley 313 Hart Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 202-224-3753 Pendleton office: 541-278-1129	Cliff Bentz 1239 Longworth House Office Building Washington, DC 20515 202-225-6730 Medford office: 541-776-4646	
GOVERNOR		REPRESENTATIVES		SENATOR	
Kate Brown 160 State Capitol 900 Court Street Salem, OR 97301-4047 503-378-4582		Bobby Levy, District 58 900 Court St. NE, H-376 Salem, OR 97301 503-986-1458 Rep.BobbyLevy@state.or.us	Greg Smith, District 57 900 Court St. NE, H-482 Salem, OR 97301 503-986-1457 Rep.GregSmith@state.or.us	Bill Hansell, District 29 900 Court St. NE, S-423 Salem, OR 97301 503-986-1729 Sen.BillHansell@state.or.us	

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SEND LETTERS TO: editor@wallowa.com, or via mail to Wallowa County Chieftain, 209 NW 1st St. Enterprise, OR 97828