

OPINION

VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

Getting the vaccine is worth a look in light of spike

Here we go again. Events are starting to fall by the wayside for the second year in a row in the wake of coronavirus. In just the past two weeks, Juniper Jam, Oregon's Alpenfest and Hells Canyon Mule Days are among the cancellations. Events at the Josephy Center have been altered, too, as have sporting events. It's likely more may be on the way.

The cases, as we have written in this publication, are coming at a rate not yet seen in Wallowa County during the pandemic. The month of August alone has been the worst of the pandemic. The Oregon Health Authority's Aug. 2 report (which would have included any reported cases in the final two days of July and the first of August) had one case, which put the county at 239.

Since then, there have been 166 cases, with single days seeing the count as high as 16.

By comparison's sake, there were more cases during the month of August 2021 than there were from the time the first case was reported in April 2020 through late-April 2021.

There have also been more since July 19, when the county reported its 200th case, as there had been prior to that day.

Worse is hospitals statewide are being filled to the brim, and COVID-19 is the major reason. Hospitals statewide are more than 90% full, and 1,120 of those patients have COVID-19.

There's no disputing the numbers.

What has been in dispute since it came out in December has been the COVID-19 vaccine and what people are to do.

This publication has been consistent in its stance that it ultimately is the right of each individual to make that decision — to jab or not jab — and to be well-informed when doing so.

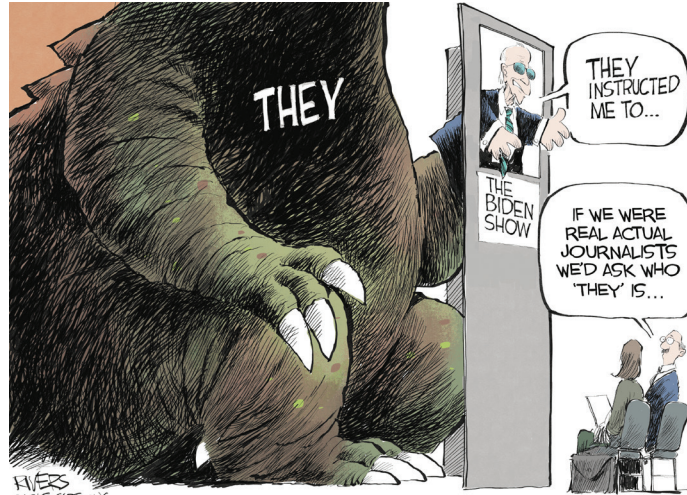
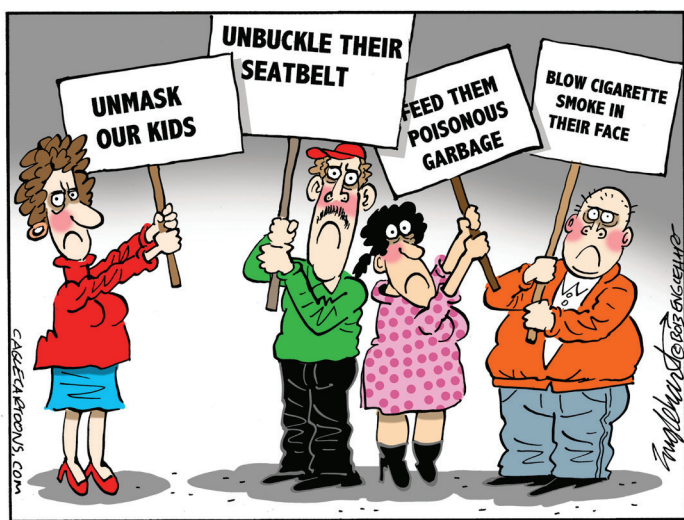
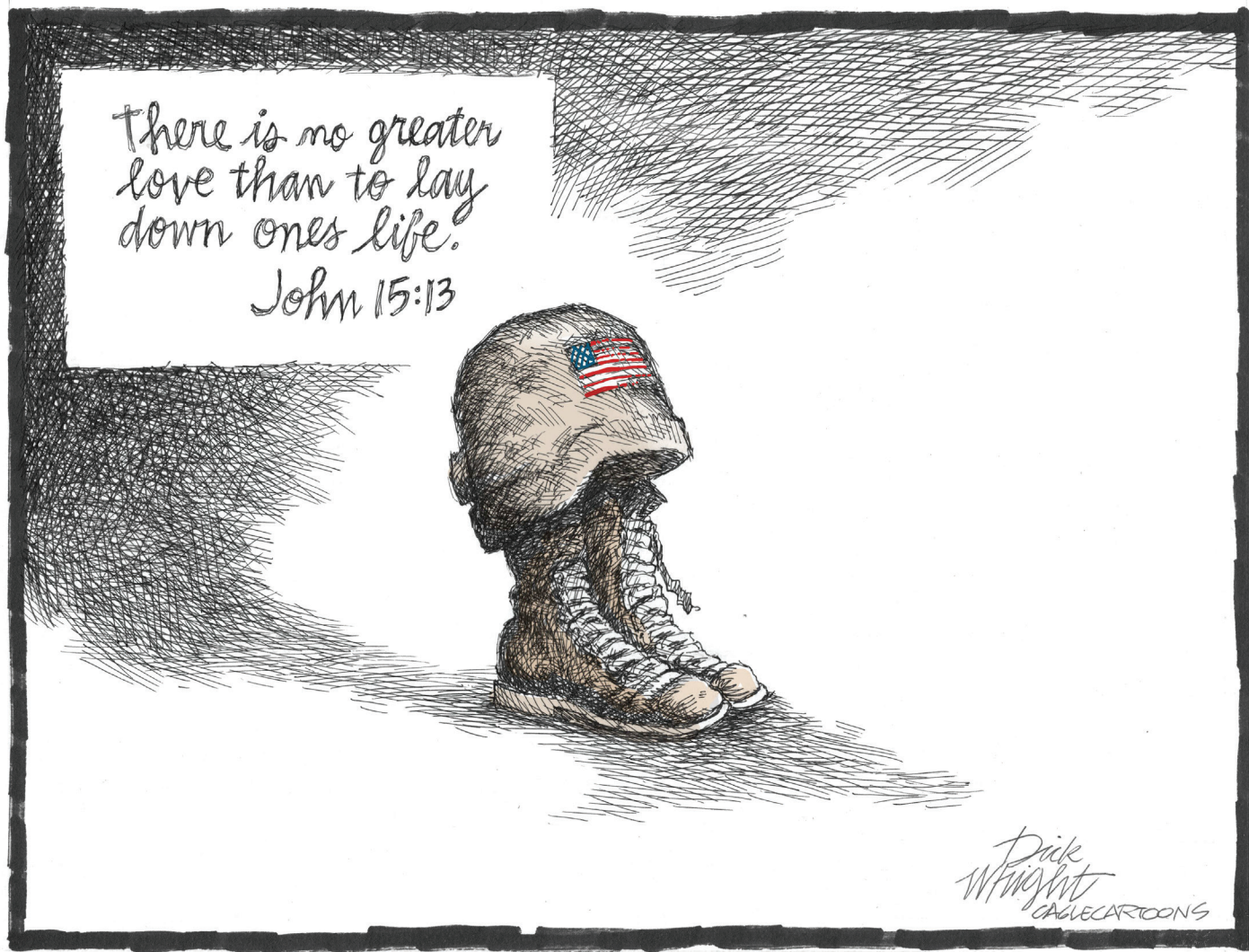
We still stand by those points, and as such, are not fans of mandates that force people with concerns to either get the shot or lose their job. We are glad there are exemptions for those with medical concerns or religious convictions.

But, we would also encourage those who have not yet received a shot to, at the very least, look into it. Even those who, to this point, have been staunchly against it.

When researching, though, don't just listen blindly to talking heads in the media. Look at the data. Talk to a doctor or nurse. Review what is on the CDC website. Read a medical publication such as the New England Journal of Medicine. Weigh the risks.

Then decide.

This is not a push to say "do it." We are not here to tell you what to do or to be the mouthpiece of the OHA, beating their drum and pushing everyone to get vaccinated. We are simply saying, given the unprecedented spike and the hospital resources being tapped, it's worth considering.



LETTERS to the EDITOR

Early warning system a better solution

In response to a thoughtful letter by Evan Bryan concerning south-end evacuation plans of the lake, I want to argue that to funnel traffic involving large RVs, camping trailers and rigs pulling boats over Lake Shore Road (a road already busy in summer with local and short-term rental traffic, a roadside there used for parking docks, trailers and numerous cars) is a lack of local awareness and reasonable planning.

Lake Shore Road has narrow passages, drops steeply at its northern end and then joins Old Ski Run Road with more traffic. The road then proceeds toward town through a series of 15 mph, 90-degree turns, another bottleneck. How would any emergency vehicle called to Lake Shore Road to fight fire, etc. possibly have access?

It seems absurd to insist that a multi-million dollar road rebuild is more logical than implementing a modern early-warning system and an evacuation plan over two lanes of good road to the east.

The main benefactors of road rebuilding will be contractors and an asphalt batch plant!

Boyd McAvoy
Joseph

Mandates are nonsensical, require scrutiny

The recent mask and vaccine mandates issued by the state of Oregon are nonsensical and require intense scrutiny by the public. It is at this time that

many of us are questioning our ability to stand firm in the face of social castigation and, potentially, legal repercussions for refusing to kowtow to the authoritarian regime.

This is no longer a discussion about public health. If masks work, we can mask. If vaccines work, those who want to protect themselves have that option. The personal choice to vaccinate based on preference and risk tolerance has been taken from us and is being wielded as a political tool to demand conformity, and I for one will have none of it.

If we are unable, or unwilling, to come together as a community in defense of the liberties of our fellow community members and countrymen, we will see this overreach of power extend much further than it has already.

"First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out — because I was not a communist; Then they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out — because I was not a socialist; Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out — because I was not a trade unionist; Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out — because I was not a Jew; Then they came for me — and there was no one left to speak out for me." — Martin Niemöller, 1946

Rebecca Patton
Enterprise

Mandates are more than a 'local issue'

In reference to the opinion page "Voice of the Chieftain" on Aug. 18, I

would like to offer an alternate opinion (everyone is entitled to an opinion). Mask mandate is more than just a "local issue" — it is a national health issue impacting almost everyone. Nor is it a partisan issue. There are examples of mandates addressing the health and safety of the nation such as seat belts, no smoking in public places, prescriptions required for drugs, etc.

The Journal of the American Medical Association reviewed data from 10 previous studies conclude mask wearing substantially reduces spread of coronavirus. Overall, the authors found mask wearing's main benefit is source control, which protects others by reducing the number of respiratory droplets released, rather than respiratory protection, which protects the wearer. In a publication of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the U.S., researchers poured over at least 150 other studies, models and findings to draw their conclusion: "The available evidence suggests that near-universal adoption of nonmedical masks when out in public, in combination with complementary public health measures, could successfully reduce virus reproduction."

Wallowa County is not immune from the pandemic. When facts and science are ignored in favor of misinformation from unqualified sources, are local officials acting irresponsibly? Masks are proven to protect the public. And yes, it is unfair to place students and school officials in a conflicting situation when local officials assume a personal agenda.

David Ebbert
Enterprise

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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.

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