

## OPINION

### VOICE of the CHIEFTAIN

# Courage in the face of COVID challenges

The COVID impact spotlight has rested — rightfully — on the thousands of dedicated men and women in the state’s medical system who have remained on the front lines of the pandemic for nearly two years.

Their commitment has been a mostly silent one. They’ve gone to work, completed their work and grappled with the impact of watching people become very sick or die from the COVID-19 virus.

Their courage in the face of unprecedented upheaval should not be forgotten, but there is another group — teachers and educators across the region — who have, in some ways, escaped notice of the challenges they’ve faced and overcome since the pandemic kicked off.

Our teachers, coaches and administrators have been in the spotlight as well, but usually for a very different reason. At specific times during the pandemic, the people we trust to educate our youths somehow ended up in the middle of a political debate regarding masks and the very severity of COVID-19 itself. For reasons that remain mysterious, teachers, coaches and administrators were tossed into the maelstrom of debate about COVID-19, often becoming the targets for decisions made at the state level they had no control over.

Our educators — through no fault of their own — also were forced to completely adjust the way they teach when schools were closed across the state because of COVID-19.

These men and women at local and regional schools faced an array of serious — and often disappointing — challenges with little room to maneuver.

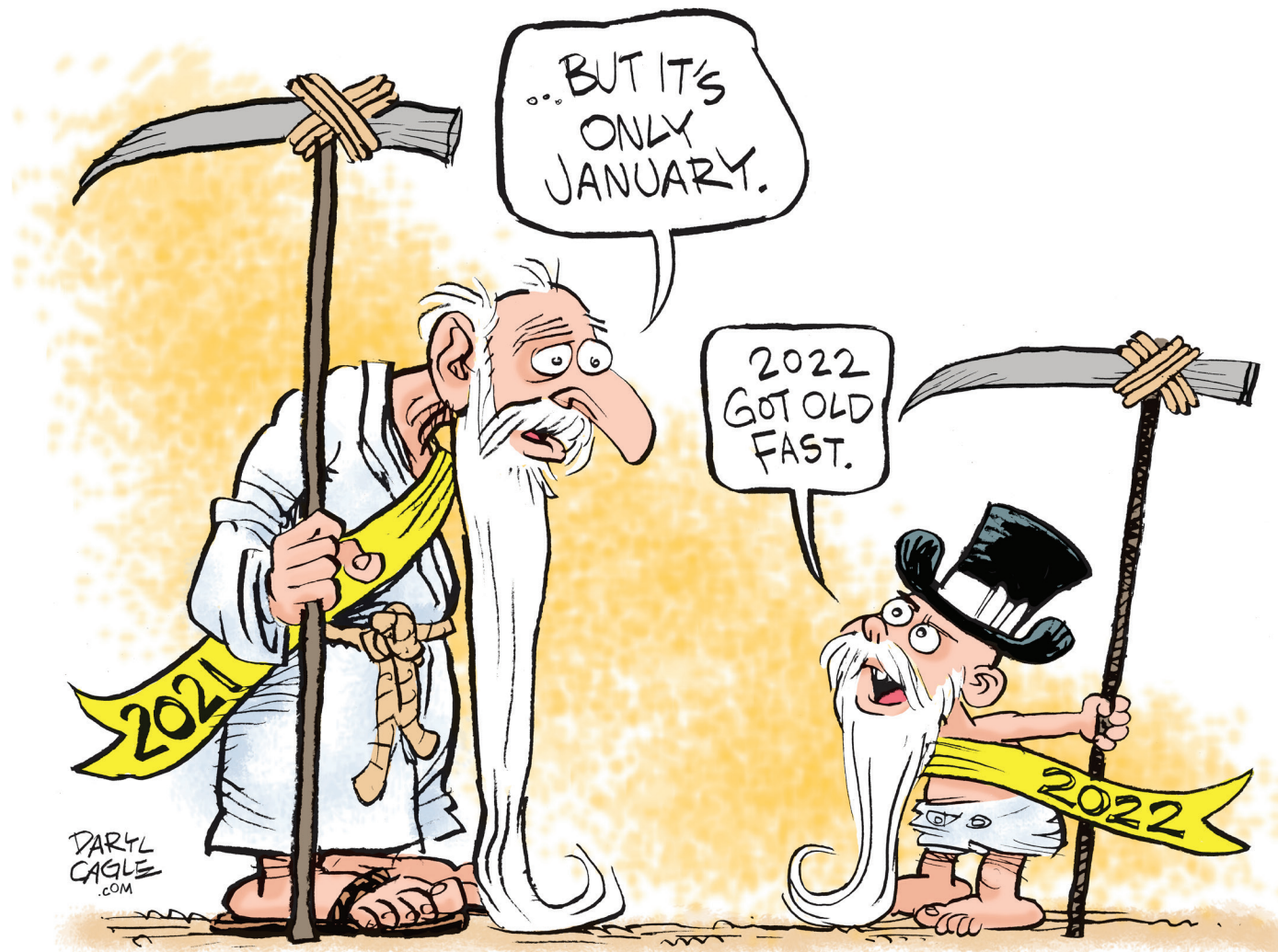
The truth is teachers and administrators should never have become focal points of local angst about vaccines or whether COVID-19 is serious or even real.

Their job was a straightforward one — teach our youths to the best of their ability.

When the COVID-19 mandates were handed down by Gov. Kate Brown, an entire way of teaching — etched into our collective consciousness for decades — evaporated overnight. That created huge challenges for teachers and administrators.

Our educators — just like our medical professionals — were not and are not searching for praise. They just want to do their jobs. Yet, it is fitting and right to point out their contributions and sacrifices during the past 18 or so months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We must not forget that our educators are part of our communities and deserve support during these challenging times.



## LETTERS to the EDITOR

### Checklist for Republican standards

The mid-term elections are only 11 months away. Many of us in Wallowa County might have some uncertainty about which of the upcoming 2022 GOP candidates are really worthy of the Republican brand. Given the high standards set by Donald Trump, Jim Jordan, Marjorie Taylor Greene and, to some extent, Cliff Bentz, not every would-be politician could measure up. To aid in that determination, I’ve put together this convenient checklist. Our aspiring representative should:

- Rail against Fox-fueled culture war phantoms like critical race theory but say nothing about the super rich paying their fair share of taxes.
- Believe the right to infect others with a lethal disease is a fundamental freedom.

- Argue against science-based public health guidelines.
  - Promote medical treatments that have no evidentiary support.
  - Fight for the interests of 0.1% but oppose “elites.”
  - Claim that the Jan. 6 MAGA coup plotters and cop killers were actually “freedom-fighting patriots.”
  - Assert that in spite of losing the Electoral College and popular votes, as well as numerous Republican-supervised recounts, Trump’s 2020 victory was stolen by a vast conspiracy of Democrats and RINOs.
  - Insist that suppressing the vote and nullifying elections are really what the Founding Fathers intended.
  - View foreign dictators, like Russia’s Vladimir Putin and Hungary’s Viktor Orbán, as role models for American leadership.
- Feel free to use this handy checklist

to see which local GOP candidates might deserve our vote.

**Stephen Ducat Joseph**

### Have a heart for our animals in the cold

Dear citizens of Wallowa County, Well, the weather has been the talk of the county this week. I hope we all can be aware that our important farm animals didn’t celebrate the holidays like we did; in fact, while we were stuffing ourselves and having good cheer, many of our beautiful horses and cows went to bed without a roof over their heads.

Wake up, Wallowa County. Build a barn or shelter, or sell off your herd earlier in the fall. Have a heart for our dependent, furry friends.

**Dick Rice Innaha**

## CONTACT your REPRESENTATIVES

### U.S. PRESIDENT

**Joe Biden**  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Washington, DC 20500  
Comments: 202-456-1111

### U.S. SENATORS

**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

### U.S. REPRESENTATIVE

**Cliff Bentz**  
1239 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
202-225-6730  
Medford office: 541-776-4646

### GOVERNOR

**Kate Brown**  
160 State Capitol  
900 Court St.  
Salem, OR 97301-4047  
503-378-4582

### REPRESENTATIVES

**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

### SENATOR

**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