

OPINION

OTHER VIEWS

Reviewing two years of COVID-19

On Saturday, the indoor mask mandates imposed by the governors of Oregon, Washington and California will be lifted.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown has also announced that the state of emergency that was put in place on March 8, 2020, will expire April 1.

Huzzah! Officially, the lifting of the mask requirement reflects declining COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in the West Coast states. Others suggest the announcements were coordinated with other Blue state governments to suggest a return to “normalcy” before President Biden’s State of the Union address and in advance of the midterm election campaign.

Whatever the reason, we are nonetheless thankful for the reprieve — even if it later proves temporary.

Two years and change into the pandemic, it behooves us to take stock of where we have been and offer some observations.

- COVID-19 qualified as a clear and present danger as it unfolded in the early spring of 2020. Little was known about the disease when it arrived in the United States.

In that context, the “two-weeks-to-flatten-the-curve” shutdown made some sense. But as those “two weeks” dragged into more than three months, this seemed less like a thoughtful strategy and more like a desperate effort to outlast the virus.

- While government can quickly shut the economy down, starting it back up again isn’t that easy.

- State government was unprepared to deal with the impacts its measures inflicted on working people and their employers. Shuttering the economy left more than half a million people on the West Coast scrambling for a paycheck.

- We have been told to “follow the science.” Being strong believers of facts, we put a lot of stock in science.

But, the exhortation to “follow the science” has too often been used as a cudgel with which to beat critics.

Science is not religious dogma. It is an open question, not a declarative statement. We don’t say this to benefit crackpots and conspiracy theorists, but to encourage reasoned debate.

Officials conveying science have too often failed to concede that the body of knowledge is ever changing.

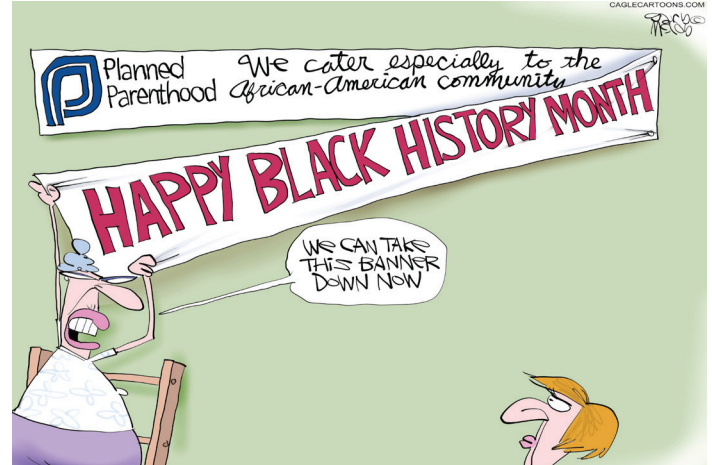
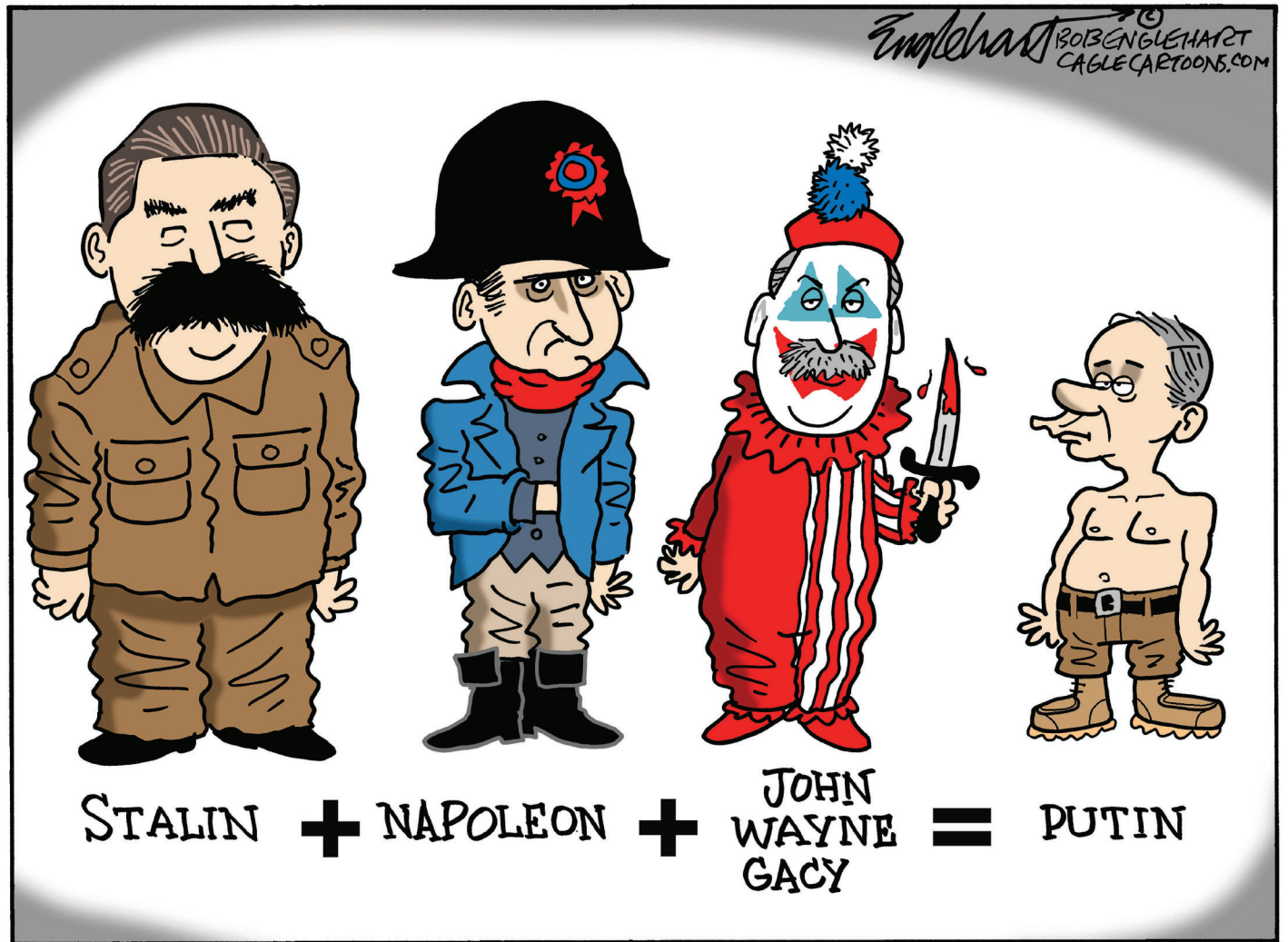
We have always been strong advocates for vaccinations, and still are. Initially, we were told the vaccines would prevent infections and transmission in most cases. Then we were told that in most cases it would only keep people from getting really sick. That’s still a worthy outcome, but not what conveyors of science promised in the beginning.

Policy makers have been the strongest proponents of “the science,” but have been willing to forego the science for political expediency.

- No elected official should be allowed to rule indefinitely by decree. Emergency powers should be limited in duration and subject to mandatory legislative oversight. A benevolent dictatorship in all but name is nonetheless tyranny.

Most people learned to live with the virus months ago. We are happy that the governors are learning it, too. We hope in future emergencies that they put more trust in the instincts of their constituents.

— Capital Press



LETTERS to the EDITOR

House Bill 4002 is why Eastern Oregon should join Idaho

Do you really wonder why Eastern Oregon wants to join with Idaho?

Here’s a big hint. House Bill 4002 has to be one of the most “irresponsible” regulations passed. Why not just pass a law that all farmers should sign their property over to the liberal West side? I have farmed in Washington and then starting in 1991 for several years in Oregon. Under this foolish law, how could I possibly stay in business?

If I have 600 or 6,000 acres of wheat to be harvested, my crew and I would work 12 hours a day until the crop was safely in storage. I personally always paid over minimum wage and gave a bonus for finishing the harvest. Let’s stop and look at an example: Seven days at 12 hour days comes to 84 hours. The first 40 hours would come to \$600. The next 44 hours at \$22.50 (time and half) would add \$990

for a total \$1,590 a week. The reality of weather fluctuations required me to get the harvest completed in a timely way. Farmers don’t set the selling price of their wheat. The going rate is set by world demand.

Just stop and think of me going to a grain dealer and saying I need an additional \$5 a bushel just to make ends meet. The reason is my wonderful state of Oregon has more than doubled my expenses by micro-managing how I personally operate my farm. I would receive nothing but laughter.

**Kenneth Parsons
La Grande**

Oveson deserves coach of the year honor

Greg Oveson’s selection as girls basketball coach of the year in the Old Oregon League was richly deserved. After a pandemic-impaired 2020-21 season, he

guided Wallowa High School’s 11-player team to a 16-9 season and third place in the league, guaranteeing a spot in the state tournament.

This was the Cougars’ best showing in a decade. Greg was appointed last season after Coach David Howe felt he had to resign over a controversy about his scheduling of games in Idaho so the girls could play at all. David likewise had improved the team’s performance.

Greg has a long history with Wallowa athletics beginning with his performance as a guard on the school’s state championship team in 1970 and continuing as coach of the boys 1995 state championship squad. He has coached girls basketball on and off for many years.

I, for one, salute Greg for his commitment to our female student-athletes and the Wallowa athletic program. He has earned our respect and acclamation. Next season ought to be spectacular.

**Chuck Anderson
Enterprise**

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