

Opinion

BAKER CITY
Herald
Serving Baker County since 1870

Write a letter
news@bakercityherald.com

GUEST EDITORIAL

Pass the vaccine bill

Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

Members of the Oregon Legislature’s Joint Ways and Means Committee voted, largely along party lines, April 25 to send House Bill 3063 to the full House. The measure would tighten the rules that allow parents to decide for almost any reason to leave their children unvaccinated.

The House should approve the measure and send it on to the Senate.

To say that the bill has stirred controversy is putting it mildly. Hearings on the bill have drawn record crowds.

The bill removes the ability of parents to decline vaccinations for their children for certain diseases, except because of a child’s medical diagnosis. Recent events have demonstrated how loose vaccination rules cause public health problems. Just 19 years after the United States was declared measles-free, the country has seen more cases of the disease than it has in years. More than 700 Americans, almost all of them unvaccinated children and including more than 70 in the Pacific Northwest, have been infected this year. The disease is horribly contagious, and nearly 10% of those who’ve gotten sick have had to be hospitalized, at least three with pneumonia.

Measles is dangerous business. Yet many of the parents of today’s children are themselves largely unaware of the damage the measles did before vaccination was commonplace. In the bad old days before the first vaccine became available in 1963, 450 to 500 cases ended in death each year and another 1,000 led to encephalitis.

Members of the Oregon House and Senate should stand up in the face of vociferous opposition and vote to tighten the state’s vaccination rules. It’s the right thing to do.

Letters to the editor

- We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.
- The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading claims. However, we cannot verify the accuracy of all statements in letters to the editor.
- Letters are limited to 350 words; longer letters will be edited for length. Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.
- The writer must sign the letter and include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do not include this information cannot be published.

Mail: To the Editor, Baker City Herald, P.O. Box 807, Baker City, OR 97814

Email: news@bakercityherald.com



Biden’s ad might help Trump

Joe Biden did Donald Trump a huge favor when he announced his presidential run with a campaign ad that featured the tragedy of Charlottesville as a central theme. I don’t think he meant to, because the obvious intention was to paint the current occupant of the White House as a racist who thinks some neo Nazis are good people.

While stirring music plays in the background, the former vice president looks somberly into the camera and says:

“It was there in August of 2017 that you saw Klansman and white supremacists and neo Nazis come out in the open....And they were met by a courageous group of Americans, and a violent clash ensued. And a brave young woman lost her life. And that’s when we heard the words of the president of the United States that stunned the world and shocked the conscience of this nation. He said there were, quote, some very fine people on both sides..With those words, the president of the United States assigned a moral equivalence between those spreading hate, and those with the courage to stand against it.”

It’s a powerful message. What a shame that it’s based on a lie. That’s why Joe did Donald a real solid in focusing our attention on the notorious quote “fine people on both sides,” because we can finally shatter a toxic political myth.

As I’ve noted in the past, language matters. So does context. When Ilhan Omar said that “some people did something,” some of her allies were quick to point out that the words were taken out of context. They said we needed

CHRISTINE M. FLOWERS

to listen to the entire speech she gave to the Council on American Islamic Relations to understand that she was talking about “bad things” being done to Muslims in the wake of 9/11, not the “bad things” the jihadists did to 3,000 innocent Americans. Of course, it is still legitimate to believe, as some people (including this writer) do, that her language could still be interpreted as referring to the “bad things” some terrorists did. That’s why precision in language is so very important.

Still, I’m willing to give her the benefit of the doubt on this one since, unlike her “it’s all about the Benjamins, baby” comment, there is a not-bigoted explanation for her words.

But unlike Ilhan Omar, who has a fierce group of supporters who seem to think she’s always misunderstood, there are few people in the media willing to push back against the conventional “wisdom” that Donald Trump is a racist. When Charlottesville happened, the media ran with the story that Trump had created a moral equivalence between the KKK and skinheads on one side, and liberals who opposed them on the other. Aside from the fact that members of both sides (so including those people Joe Biden called “a courageous group of Americans”) were throwing canisters of tear gas, no one mentions the fact that President Trump had specifically condemned the racists by name.

Motivated by Biden’s campaign ad, Politifact took a close look at exactly what the president said about Charlottesville, and reproduced the transcript of the press conference where the infamous “fine people on both sides” phrase was first uttered. At one point a reporter says: “The neo Nazis started this. They showed up in Charlottesville to protest — “Trump interrupts with: “Excuse me, excuse me...you had some very bad people in that group, but you also had people that were very fine people, on both sides..You had people in that group that were there to protest the taking down of, to them, a very, very important statue and the renaming of a park from Robert E. Lee to another name.”

Later in the transcript Trump says: “I’m not talking about the neo-Nazis and the white nationalists — because they should be condemned totally.” He says it more than once. But somehow, this was barely reported at the time.

I have to admit that for the longest time, I bought the story that Trump had made excuses for racists in Charlottesville. I never bothered to read the transcript, and believed the media reports that he’d made excuses for white supremacy. I was lazy.

Good thing for me and the president that Joe Biden was there to remind us that words matter and that, sometimes, words taken out of context are nothing more than lies.

Christine M. Flowers is a lawyer and columnist for the Philadelphia Daily News. Readers may send her email at cflowers1961@gmail.com.

GUEST EDITORIAL

Editorial from Newsday:

After more than four hours of opaque testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Attorney General William Barr made one thing quite clear.

Only special counsel Robert Mueller can give the nation the honest answers it needs to determine whether President Donald Trump’s actions during the Russia investigation were consistent with his constitutional oath to uphold the law. Barr will not.

Mueller, the former head of the FBI, is the only one who could provide a straightforward assessment of his investigation, its conclusions and its aftermath that would have a chance of convincing the American people that the truth is being told. Mueller needs to detail why there was no finding of a conspiracy between the Trump campaign

and Russia. And he is the only one who can explain why he did not make a recommendation to prosecute Trump after citing multiple instances of conduct that would support an obstruction charge. Was it because of a Department of Justice policy not to indict a sitting president or because of a lack of evidence?

Wednesday’s hearing provided more facade than facts, more charade than candor. Instead of true oversight, ugly partisan routines got ginned up again. Democrats pressed Barr hamfistedly on his interpretation of the 448-page Mueller report, while Republicans went back to their song-and-dance routine over Hillary Clinton’s emails.

But Barr’s performance was even more problematic than the Senate’s. After misleading the public with his initial four-page

summary of the Mueller report, and then misleading the public again with his remarks before the report’s release, Barr went three-for-three Wednesday as he attempted to explain his infamous letter, his remarks since, and his decisions. But with each vague, evasive response, Barr showed just how little we should rely on, believe, or have confidence in the nation’s top law enforcement officer.

Sen. Kamala Harris asked him, “Has the president or anyone at the White House ever asked or suggested that you open an investigation of anyone?”

Barr responded, “Could you repeat the question?” Then he fumbled to an answer: “I’m trying to grapple with the word ‘suggest.’” He finally allowed that he had no direct requests from a president who in

public has often called for investigations of his political enemies.

So to Barr, his four-page summary wasn’t a summary. In his eyes, Trump wanting to get rid of Mueller wasn’t illegal. But then why did those around Trump, like former White House counsel Don McGahn, refuse to act on Trump’s requests?

After Barr’s dishonest presentation Wednesday, it’s not surprising that he is refusing to testify Thursday before the House Judiciary Committee. And honestly, there is nothing more he can tell us about Mueller.

Not only do we need the special counsel to provide forthright, complex answers, in proper context, about his investigation of Trump. We also need to know whether, in Mueller’s view, Barr violated his oath as attorney general in service of Trump.

CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

President Donald Trump: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500; 202-456-1414; fax 202-456-2461; to send comments, go to www.whitehouse.gov/contact

U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley: D.C. office: 313 Hart Senate Office Building, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-3753; fax 202-228-3997. Portland office: One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; 503-326-3386; fax 503-326-2900. Pendleton office: 310 S.E. Second St. Suite 105, Pendleton 97801; 541-278-1129; merkley.senate.gov

U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden: D.C. office: 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; wyden.senate.gov

U.S. Rep. Greg Walden (2nd District): D.C. office: 2182 Rayburn

Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515, 202-225-6730; fax 202-225-5774. La Grande office: 1211 Washington Ave., La Grande, OR 97850; 541-624-2400, fax, 541-624-2402; walden.house.gov

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown: 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR 97310; 503-378-3111; www.governor.oregon.gov

Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us

State Sen. Cliff Bentz (R-Ontario): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., S-301, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1730. District office: P.O. Box 1027, Ontario, OR 97914; 541-889-8866.

State Rep. Lynn Findley (R-Vale): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., H-475, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1460. Email: Rep.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov

Baker City Hall: 1655 First Street, P.O. Box 650, Baker City,

OR 97814; 541-523-6541; fax 541-524-2049. City Council meets the second and fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers. Mike Downing, Loran Joseph, Randy Schiewe, Lynette Perry, Arvid Andersen, Ken Gross and Doni Bruland.

Baker City administration: 541-523-6541. Fred Warner Jr., city manager; Dustin Newman, police chief; John Clark, fire chief; Michelle Owen, public works director.

Baker County Commission: Baker County Courthouse 1995 3rd St., Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-8200. Meets the first and third Wednesdays at 9 a.m.; Bill Harvey (chair), Mark Bennett, Bruce Nichols.

Baker County departments: 541-523-8200. Travis Ash, sheriff; Jeff Smith, roadmaster; Matt Shirtcliff, district attorney; Alice Durlinger, county treasurer; Stefanie Kirby, county clerk