

Opinion

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OUR VIEW

Leaders needed on vaccination

Oregon lawmakers have tried at least a couple of times to make it more difficult for parents to avoid vaccinating their children, unfortunately with little success.

And while those who support the idea may face an uphill battle this year when the Legislature meets, they must keep trying.

Gov. Kate Brown, along with state Sen. Herman Baertschiger, R-Grants Pass, killed the 2019 effort to save the massive new business tax bill Democrats wanted so badly.

At least 28 Oregonians came down with measles in 2019, in part because at least three travelers passed through the Portland airport when they were ill. The measles is particularly contagious. The virus can live in the air for two hours, infecting those who pass through or touch surfaces that have been contaminated, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

Worse, measles can be a killer. In Samoa in late 2019 an outbreak claimed nearly 80 lives in a country where only 31% of the population had been vaccinated. Herd immunity, which generally prevents measles from spreading much, kicks in only when 93% to 95% of a community is vaccinated. Oregon's kindergarten vaccination rate is 93%, right on the ragged edge of real problems should an infected child show up at school. The overall vaccination rate for adults and children is only 78 percent.

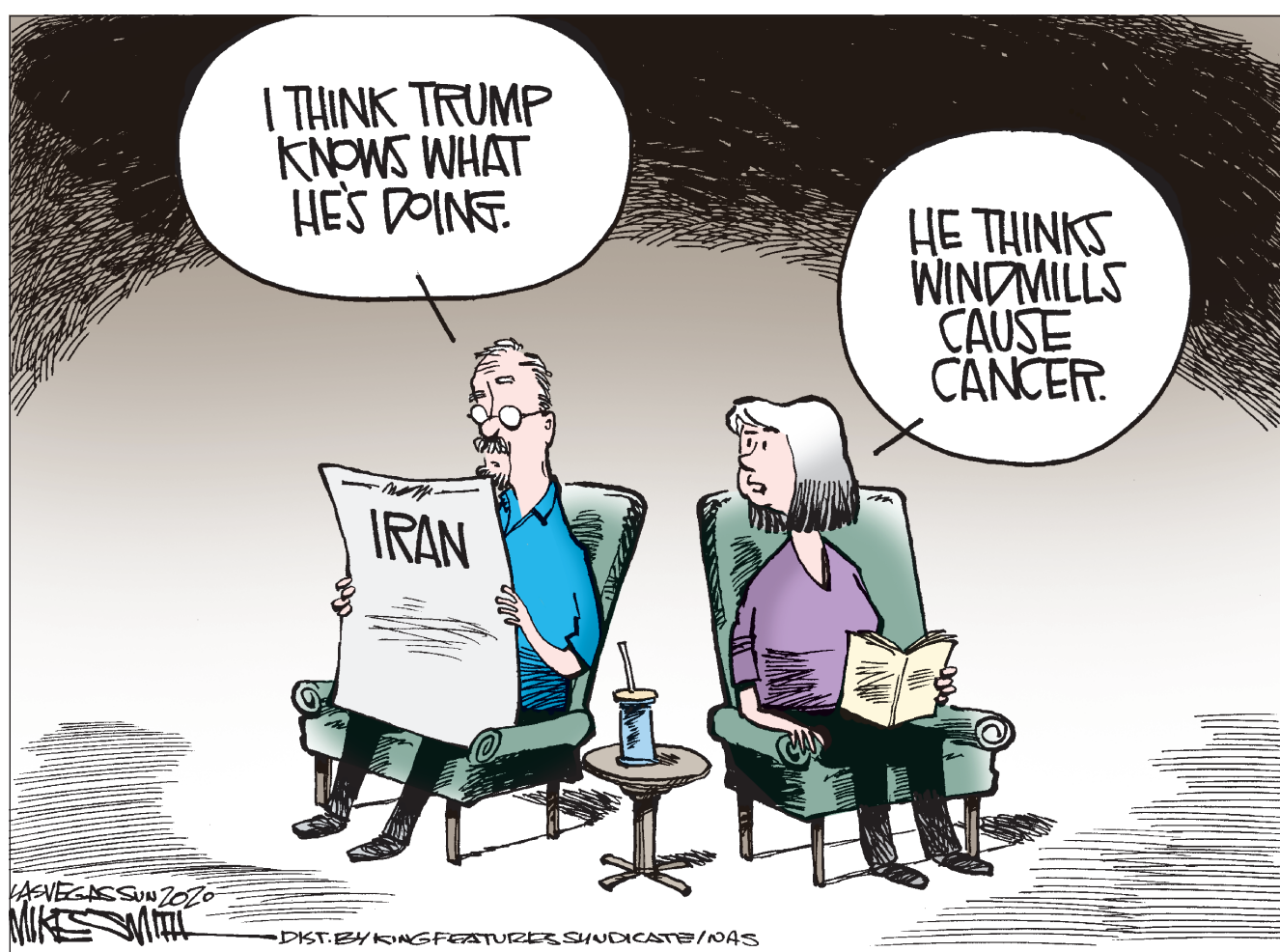
Meanwhile, Beth Crane, who chairs the Oregon Public Health Association's policy committee, noted recently in an article for *The Oregonian* that even without mass outbreaks measles cases cause problems.

A third of those who caught measles here in 2019 spent time in the hospital being treated for serious complications, for one thing. Here's another: Cancer patients, whose immune systems are often weakened by chemotherapy, are at extra risk for the disease, even if they'd been vaccinated earlier. Crane writes that some 20,000 Oregonians will be diagnosed with cancer this year.

Brown may well hold the key to vaccination legislation in her hand again this year, though she apparently plans to do nothing about the problem, if a statement released Thursday by her press secretary, Charles Boyd, is any indication. "Governor Brown will not be introducing a bill on vaccination during the short February session. However, especially in light of recent outbreaks of measles and other diseases for which effective vaccines exist, she continues to believe vaccination is critically important to the health of all Oregonians, and that parents should make sure their children receive all the vaccinations they need to live healthy lives."

It's a disappointing, but probably not unsurprising, stand from the woman elected to lead Oregonians to better things.

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Iran's supreme leader misjudged Trump's capacity to take action

Qassem Soleimani was never going to die peacefully in his bed.

As leader of the Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, and puppet-master of militias and terrorist groups across the Middle East, he had the blood of hundreds of thousands on his hands: Syrians, Iraqis, Yemenis, Lebanese, Palestinians, Israelis, Americans and fellow-Iranians, among others. His death was hoped for and prayed for by the families of his victims, and plotted by their governments.

It is a measure of Soleimani's brashness that he nonetheless strutted around Baghdad in the company of other wanted mass killers, whose faces, in another age, would be on "Wanted" posters on the walls of local post offices. It was incautious to the point of suicidal that he should have been doing so in the days after his most brazen stunt: the New Year's Eve assault by his Iraqi proxies on the U.S. embassy in Baghdad.

Soleimani's death-by-drone was the predictable denouement of his escalating recklessness over the years. That his top local lackey, Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, should have perished with him is appropriate.

The Iraqi had been the instrument of Soleimani's decision to step up rocket attacks on U.S. bases, leading to the trigger event of this week's turmoil: the

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killing of an American contractor at a base near the northern city of Kirkuk.

This escalation in deed matched a similar intensification in word by Soleimani's boss, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, who goaded President Donald Trump in the manner guaranteed to get his goat: by taunting him on Twitter.

"You can't do anything," Khamenei tweeted, after Trump blamed Iran for the embassy attack.

Khamenei and Soleimani seem to have calculated that Trump would respond to their provocations just as the leaders of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have to progressively brazen attacks on their shipping and oil installations.

Perhaps they thought he couldn't risk a war, or a crisis that would send oil prices spiking, in an election year. Or perhaps they thought he simply didn't have the stomach for a confrontation.

Whatever their reasoning, playing chicken with the American president was a hideous mistake. Contrary to Khamenei's taunt, Trump could do many things, ranging from tightening the economic sanctions that have

already cost Iran dearly, to striking Iran's proxies, as with last Sunday's bombing of Muhandis's Kataieb Hezbollah. These may have been acceptable outcomes for Khamenei: After all, a man who only weeks ago ordered the slaughter of hundreds of Iranians is unlikely to balk at causing more pain to his own people or proxies.

But Khamenei failed to reckon with Trump's own capacity for recklessness. Rather than merely ratchet up sanctions, the president chose to order a drone attack that brought a fiery end to the life and career of one of Iran's most fearsome and important military commanders.

What now? The cycle of recklessness that the supreme leader began leaves him little option except to keep raising the stakes. But he must now do so without his most effective instrument of terror, a commander distinguished for his unquestioned obedience and apparently inexhaustible appetite for violence. Those are qualities Khamenei will surely miss amid the mayhem he has unleashed.

Bobby Ghosh is a columnist and member of the Bloomberg Opinion editorial board. He writes on foreign affairs, with a special focus on the Middle East and the wider Islamic world.

Change will help Herald deliver fresher news

The word "news" is, you've no doubt noticed, pretty much the same as "new."

This is no coincidence.

The Baker City Herald's goal as a newspaper, as it has been for the past 150 years, is to bring to you, our readers, information that is new to you.

In many cases this information is about an event that happened very recently, that is itself "new" — a public meeting or a sporting event or a wildfire that took place only hours before the paper reaches you, for instance.

But we also publish stories about things that didn't happen quite so recently, but that you haven't read about before.

That's news, too.

Since June 2009 the Herald has published three issues per week, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Starting the week of Feb. 4 we're shifting our schedule to publish on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

This will affect the freshness, as this, of the news we bring to you.

And on balance I believe that that news will be, well, newer. That's because we're going to take advantage of the revised schedule, not simply deliver each issue a day later.



JAYSON JACOBY

There are a few exceptions to the newfound freshness to our news, due mainly to the Baker City Council typically meeting on Tuesday nights.

We cover those meetings, and publish stories about the Council's actions, because councilors are our elected representatives, and their decisions directly affect how our property tax dollars are spent.

We usually publish stories about Tuesday night Council meetings in the Wednesday issue. Most of you get that issue in late afternoon or early evening.

With the new publication schedule, stories about the City Council's Tuesday meetings will be included in the Thursday issue. That issue will arrive earlier in the day than you're used to, however, due to the other change that starts Feb. 4. That's when we start delivering the Herald through U.S. Postal Service. And depending on where you live in town, your mail is delivered as many as several hours earlier than the paper is distributed now.

The situation is opposite when it comes to another public entity we cover diligently — the Baker County Board of Commissioners. They meet on Wednesday mornings, so the meeting stories aren't in the paper until Friday. Starting in February we'll be able to get those stories to you a day earlier.

Moreover, technology allows us to deliver news all but instantaneously, and we'll be continue to take advantage of that utility to keep the Herald's news from becoming stale.

As a subscriber you have unlimited access to our website — www.bakercityherald.com. As we have for almost two decades, we'll use the immediacy of the website to let you know what's happening in our community. That includes posting stories about City Council meetings before the paper copy lands in your box.

We'll also continue to use both our website and our social media sites — Facebook being the most popular among our readers — to bring you the latest local high school sports results, regardless of what day they take place.

In many other respects, and particularly events that unlike meetings don't heed any schedule, the impending change to Tuesday,

Thursday and Saturday issues will allow us to pack fresher news into those papers than we can do now.

Here's why: The Herald, which is printed at the EO Media Group's plant in Pendleton, will come off the presses at night rather than in the morning, as is the case now.

Under the current schedule, we have to finish the paper by 9:30 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

That morning deadline frequently makes it difficult, and sometimes impossible, for us to gather information from law enforcement and other sources about events that happened the previous day or overnight in time to publish a thorough story — or even any story at all.

But our new evening deadline will largely do away with that dilemma.

Let's say, for instance, that a snowstorm slickens the freeway and causes a rash of accidents on a Monday, Wednesday or Friday morning.

With our current morning deadline we would struggle to put together a story and photo package for that day's issue.

But after we switch to the evening deadline the first week of February, we would have time to

assemble a comprehensive report about that storm and get it into an issue that you will be reading before the ice has turned to slush.

Storms also happen on Tuesdays and Thursdays, of course.

But for events that happen on days when we don't publish, we'll do just as we do now, and use our digital sites to deliver fresh news.

I'm sure some of you are so accustomed to reading the Herald on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays that it's become part of your routine, as ingrained as your favorite time and place to sip a mug of coffee.

Indeed, I hope most of you belong to that group. I hope so because it means you value the Herald — we don't, after all, willingly make unpleasant things part of our routines.

And although I understand that even minor shifts in routine can be unsettling, I think the advantages of the coming changes — bringing you mostly fresher news and getting it into your hands before darkness falls regardless of the season — will enrich that part of your day when you settle down with the Herald.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.