

OUR VIEW

Losing money?
New tax still applies

The Oregon Department of Revenue will see its first income from the state’s new corporate activity tax in less than two months. Unfortunately some of the businesses that pay the tax will be losing money at the same time.

That’s a big problem with the tax, which the Oregon Legislature approved in 2019 in order to raise some \$1 billion a year for the state’s new Student Success Fund. It is calculated on commercial activity, not profit.

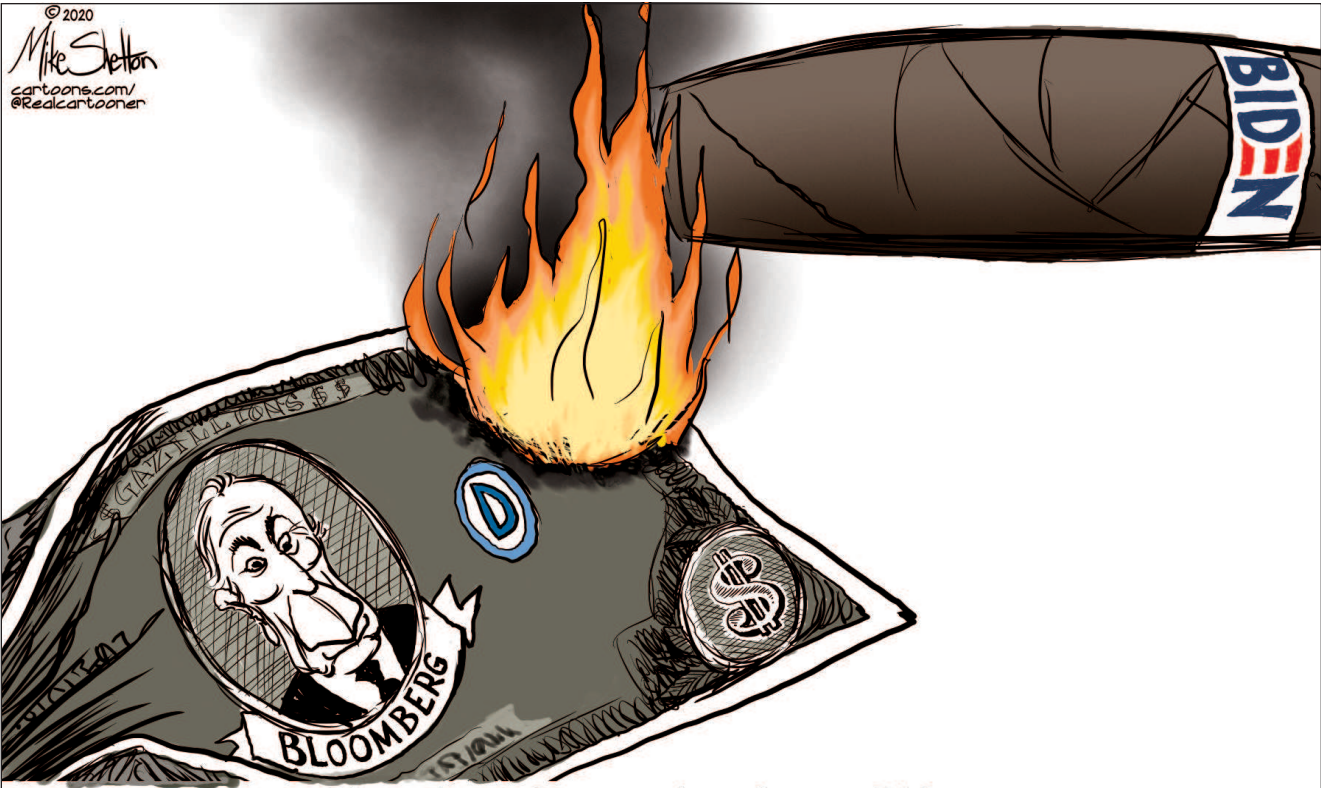
Groceries are excluded, to be sure, so long as they’re the foods that can be purchased with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits — no prepared foods, beer, vitamins or pizza by the slice. Medical care is excluded, too, but prescription drugs are not. And, if you’re a homebuilder, you’ll pay the so-called CAT on goods that have been taxed before as they move up the supply chain. In a state with already expensive housing, that makes little sense.

Worst, though, is the notion that a business that’s already hanging on by a thread should be subject to the CAT at all. True, businesses can deduct 35% of either their cost inputs (cost of direct materials, factory overhead and the like) or labor, but not both.

Unfortunately, that could mean that at least some businesses already on shaky ground could be tipped into insolvency and, ultimately, closure. And that, in turn, means people lose jobs and the businesses themselves, which were already paying some taxes in Oregon, pay no taxes at all.

A fix to some of the CAT’s problems were included in House Bill 4009, now before the current Legislature. The measure got through the House Revenue Committee, but on Thursday the Democratic leadership ended the session. That’s unfortunate. The CAT needs work, and this year, at least, it’s not likely to get it.

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Bloomberg drops out, endorses Biden

Your views

State Sen. Lynn Findley should return to the Capitol

Senator Lynn Findley, I live in Baker City and am your constituent. I write this letter as a concerned parent. I fear we are not doing enough as a state to counter the effects of climate change. I worry about the future of my daughter and have a message for you.

Please go back to work in Salem. I am tired of you and your colleagues’ temper tantrum over House Bill 1530. You disappeared from work two Mondays ago on Feb. 24. The last day to vote is Sunday, March 8. Please end this radical charade and do your job.

Go and vote. America and Oregon are democracies. Democracy means rule by the citizens. What you are doing is not democracy. You are denying the voices of a majority of Oregonians, including your own constituents in deciding their own fate. According to OregonLive, you and your 10 Republican Senate colleagues represent only 36% of our state. Please stop holding the State of Oregon hostage.

I emailed your office on Monday, Feb. 24, to express my disappointment in your actions. Your Chief of Staff responded, “Thank you for your kind words of support for Senator Findley.”

Let me be clear: I do not support your actions. The response from your office was unprofessional and careless. Are you listening to your constituents? Climate change is happening. We need to do something. Please, Senator, do your job and go back to work. What are you going to tell your grandkids you did to protect them from climate change?

Ethan Wolston
Baker City

Editor’s Note: The author submitted the letter before the Legislature adjourned Thursday.

OTHER VIEWS

New phase in coronavirus fight

Editorial from The Seattle Times:

As Washington’s COVID-19 outbreak entered a new phase this week, state and local officials are quickly mustering resources to ensure systems, institutions and individuals are braced for a potential surge in diagnoses.

While the first priority remains to slow the spread of the virus, officials must continue to be as transparent as possible to assuage public concerns about this unsettling development.

Gov. Jay Inslee declared a state of emergency on Saturday. King County Executive Dow Constantine followed suit on Sunday, ordering the purchase of a motel for patient isolation, which officials expect to be open by weeks’ end. This is a wise use of resources for the county, which

has been the scene of most of the state’s diagnoses, including five of the state’s six COVID-19-related deaths as of Monday afternoon.

The state Public Health Lab in Shoreline started testing for the virus last week, enabling same-day results, Washington State Secretary of Health John Wiesman told Senate Ways and Means committee members at a Monday morning briefing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says it has largely addressed earlier problems with testing availability and reliability.

Health care providers will receive resources from the strategic national stockpile of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies, Wiesman said. State and local health officials are working with health

systems, school leaders and private businesses to ensure preparedness and discuss potential closures.

Sen. Steve O’Ban, R-Pierce County, introduced a bill that would authorize a \$100 million transfer from the state rainy day fund to the disaster response account for response and recovery efforts. His bill would require the Office of Financial Management to provide monthly updates on how the money is being spent.

Much is still unknown about how this novel form of coronavirus will affect the region. As testing becomes more widely available, it is likely the numbers will surge.

In the meantime, it remains important as ever for individuals to do their part to slow the virus’ spread.

Varicella: The virus that just won’t go away

I’ve been hauling around the virus particles for better than 40 years, taking them to mountain-tops and to some of Germany’s finest cathedrals, among other scenic sites, and not once have the little ingrates so much as offered to chip in for gas money or beer.

But these microscopic hitchhikers have much more to answer for than simply being boorish guests. They have in fact betrayed me.

Rather than express the slightest appreciation for all I’ve done for them, the varicella particles, lying dormant since they infected me with chickenpox 43 years ago, have attacked me once again.

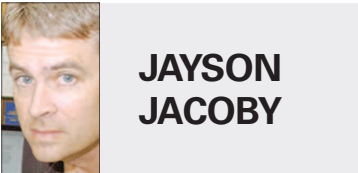
The lousy traitors.

I am of course referring to the shingles.

This is a common affliction for people like me who had the misfortune of being born too early to get the varicella vaccine.

The Mayo Clinic informs me that shingles is most common among people older than 50, an age I will not reach until September. Clearly my virus particles — and I feel a certain ownership, frankly, if not kinship — have no more respect for the Mayo Clinic’s experts than they have for me.

It happens that I know, with considerable precision, how long I have been providing a safe haven



JAYSON JACOBY

for these unpleasant little boarders.

From the baby book in which my doting mother faithfully recorded all manner of milestones — I was, and presumably still am, allergic to the foaming bath product known as Mr. Bubble — I learn that on March 10, 1977, my parents noticed the telltale red blotches of chicken pox.

She described my case as “very mild,” which I suppose it must have been as I have only indistinct memories of the episode. Perhaps I was in a fevered state and suffering from hallucinations. Although probably not.

But my mom jotted down a more important detail on the same baby book page that covers both chicken pox and my first day of first grade, which happened about six months earlier.

(Also inserted into that particular page are some stapled sheets of brown construction paper from that first school day, during which I produced drawings so inscrutable that it pains me even now to look at them. One image seems to depict

a hanging being performed on a jungle gym, although I don’t believe that actually happened.)

Mom wrote that she and my dad saw the red marks on the Friday before spring vacation.

Which is to say that the virus, even before latching on for its 43-year run, was already trying to foul up my vacations.

Given its tendency for such treachery I ought to have expected it would rouse itself before I reached the age when I might have considered getting inoculated against shingles.

Viruses are crafty organisms by any measure, of course.

They’re not alive, in the traditional sense, but once situated in a nurturing host — me, for instance, unwitting though my hospitality was — they demonstrate a frenzied capacity for reproduction to match any organism on the planet.

My recent bout with shingles, which left my face looking as though I had gone a few seconds with a professional boxer, renewed my already considerable respect for the science of vaccines.

(I realize the typical comparison is to having gone “a few rounds” with a boxer, not a “few seconds.” But I’m realistic enough to realize that if I was stuck inside the ring with a boxer for a few rounds — a

round lasts 3 minutes — I would suffer far more than the swollen eye and scattered lesions that the virus inflicted on me. Also, the shingles effects are confined to one side of the face, a distinction I doubt a pugilist would bother to make.)

Among the once-ubiquitous childhood diseases that have become exceedingly rare due to vaccines, chicken pox is relatively benign.

The infection was less likely to kill a child than, say, measles, and rarely caused permanent effects as was distressingly common with polio.

But unlike other diseases that most children used to contract in the pre-vaccine era, including measles and mumps, chicken pox often is not a singular event.

With measles, kids would get sick, recover and then almost certainly be immune to the rubeola virus for the rest of their lives.

(It mystifies me as to why some people insist it is better to be infected “naturally” with a disease and so develop immunity. Personally I much prefer getting a shot that gives me the same protection but doesn’t require that I first spend several days feeling awful — and with a chance of coming down with encephalitis or some other life-threatening complication. I’m all for the notion that enduring

tribulations help forge our character, but that doesn’t mean I eschew technological marvels. I don’t, for instance, want to crash into a bridge abutment and be flung through the windshield so I can better appreciate air bags.)

But varicella refuses to be permanently banished from its host.

I struggle to imagine anything more insidious than the reality that since 1977, the year of “Saturday Night Fever” and Blazermania, among other things, bits of that virus remained lodged inside me, as persistent as bone marrow, then launched their second assault on a body that had aged in ways its owner could scarcely account for.

Yet the virus, or so it seems to me, suffered none of the inevitable decay that the accumulation of years metes out.

Indeed, the particles this time around inflicted rather more damage than they did on my 6-year-old self. I don’t believe my mother, were she still keeping up my baby book, would, on seeing my face, describe the episode as “very mild.”

Also it would be embarrassing to read that I was, at the age of 594 months, still finicky about vegetables.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.