

# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

# Pitch a tent, park a trailer

The gradual reopening of Oregon's economy has also included, to a limited extent, outdoor recreation, as both state and federal agencies have opened some parks, boat launches, trailheads, day-use areas and other sites over the past few weeks.

But a notable exception is campgrounds.

This should change — and it can change, in a way that preserves the precautions that medical experts say have helped stem the spread of the coronavirus.

Campgrounds at local state parks, including Farewell Bend and Unity Lake, are closed, although day-use areas in those parks are open.

Forest Service campgrounds, including Union Creek and other sites at Phillips Lake and in the Sumpter area, are also closed.

But Baker County's Hewitt and Holcomb parks, on Brownlee Reservoir near Richland, opened last week, and on Wednesday the state opened the campground at the Elkhorn Wildlife Area west of North Powder. Both the county and the state request campers comply with social distancing.

And that's the key point.

It's easier to keep your distance at campgrounds than at many other places. Campgrounds are outdoors, most notably. And campsites are designed to separate each group of campers, since most campers prefer not to crawl out of their tent or step from their camper and step on somebody who's sleeping.

There are potential challenges, but they're hardly insurmountable ones.

Campgrounds have restrooms and in some cases other buildings where visitors can potentially get closer than 6 feet. But that's the case in plenty of other places, including businesses, that are open.

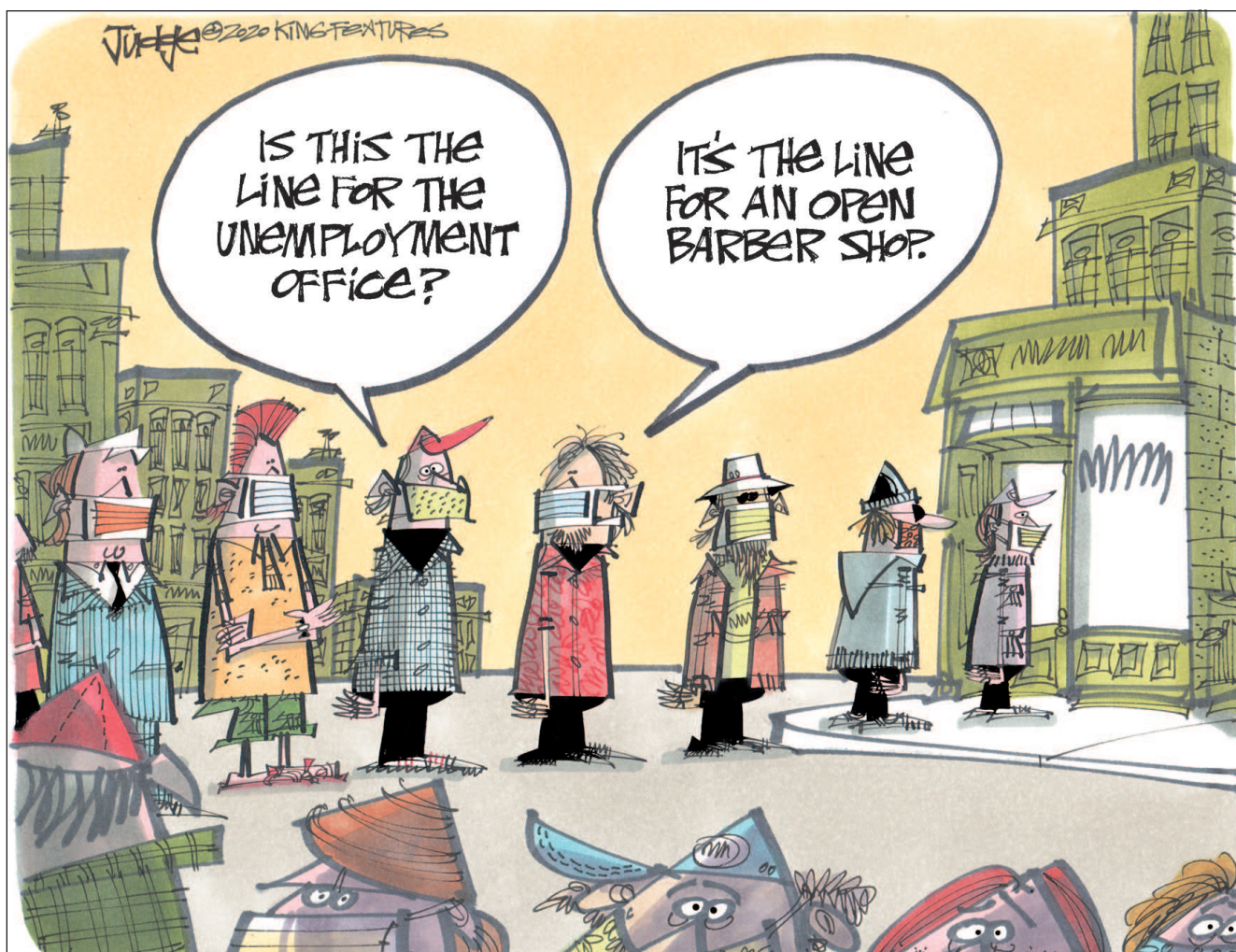
Some people might worry that opening campgrounds would entice people to travel from outside the area. That's true, to an extent. But it's not as if anything is preventing people from visiting now.

Moreover, even though official campgrounds have been closed for two months, both the Forest Service and the BLM have continued to allow "dispersed camping" — pitching a tent or parking a trailer wherever you can find a suitably flat spot.

The difference is that those dispersed campsites lack restrooms. And although many trailers have toilets, smaller ones don't. Neither do tents. Dispersed campsites also lack fire rings, so the danger of a fire escaping is higher.

The camping season is just getting started. As June arrives and temperatures warm, more people will want to get out town to enjoy their public — and uncrowded — lands. State and federal officials should start to open campgrounds, albeit with specific, and conspicuously signed, recommendations for social distancing, and with more robust restroom sanitizing protocols.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



## Your views

### Speculation about Trump's mental fitness not out of order

The Rienks and Carnahan letters to the editor (May 16) chastise Marshall McComb for his letter to the editor (May 7).

I'm well acquainted with Marshall McComb. He is one of the wisest and most compassionate persons I have ever had the pleasure of knowing.

In his letter McComb acknowledges that he is not a psychologist or a psychiatrist, but believes that the definition of a sociopath fits Trump.

McComb lists behaviors of a sociopath, which he believes President Trump exhibits: glibness and superficial charm; manipulative and conning, never recognizing the rights of others and seeing his self-serving behavior as permissible; grandiose sense of self; pathological lying; lack of remorse, shame, or guilt; shallow emotions; incapacity for love.

Many psychiatrists have expressed similar views about Trump's behavior. (If the reader Googles "Is Trump mentally ill?" he/she will find that many renowned psychiatrists say that Trump is so mentally unstable that he's unfit for office.)

In their letters Rienks and Carnahan address not one of the characteristics that define a sociopath. They express no opinion pro or con about whether Trump exhibits any of the characteristics McComb lists.

Instead, their letters contain benign platitudes about how we should "be more considerate" and engage in "mature dialog."

Rienks concludes his letter criticizing McComb this way: "We don't need to waste time and ink on those who bring nothing of substance to the discussion."

Exactly my opinion about the letters penned by Rick Rienks and Jim Carnahan.

Gary Dielman  
Baker City

### Waiting for a 'united we stand' pandemic moment

Thank you to the cashiers, the

healthcare workers, the truck drivers, the mail carriers, and all workers keeping our community functioning through this pandemic. I am grateful for your courage. Thank you to those who are practicing social distancing and have given me space on the street or in the aisle. Thank you for wearing a mask even though it may feel strange. Thanks for making sacrifices to your daily lives so we may protect the most vulnerable and honor the common good. United we stand.

I was a freshman in high school in 2001 when the Twin Towers fell. I grew up 3 hours from New York. I will never forget the national feeling of unity that followed the horrific event. Fire departments from across the U.S. drove to NYC to dig through the rubble. Americans of all types dawned NYPD and FDNY gear to show support. It was a "united we stand" moment. My twin brother lives in New York. As of May 15, the CDC reported over 87,000 American deaths from COVID-19. I want that feeling of unity to return to our community and country, but sadly I'm still waiting.

Recently our county commissioner, Bill Harvey, complained about the high school track being closed. This week he joined a lawsuit suing our Governor. Commissioner Harvey, united we stand and divided we fall. Your comments about the track were negligent and entitled. Your support of a lawsuit that views public health guidelines as "fearmongering" is dangerous. I'm sorry this virus has harmed your business. However, many have had to pay the ultimate price. A prosperous future lies in working together and supporting one another. In a time of national crisis and death, please stop picking petty fights. We need leadership that can bring people together.

Ethan Wolston  
Baker City

### Don't risk our health under guise of religious freedom

I was gonna just let it go. I would turn the other cheek. Daily it would

pop into my head. I would do my best to ignore it. Alas I couldn't take it. It was not going away and my only remedy was to respond. I am talking about the group of churches, pastors and congregants that filed a lawsuit against the Governor, citing unconstitutional restrictions due to the coronavirus. The first word that popped into my head was "selfish."

I have yet to hear of a church or pastor collapsing into bankruptcy. Meanwhile many of our small businesses will never recover from this horrendous virus. The effect on these churches' pocketbooks is not mentioned in the lawsuit but methinks it is a huge issue in pulling the old "religious freedom" lawsuit card. If you can't assemble you can't pass the basket, you can't have the fundraisers etc. yet I can't believe they would throw their fellow man under the bus because they "know" when it's safe to start gathering in crowds of 25 or more.

Just guessing but pretty sure our Governor didn't pull these rules and restrictions out of a hat. Just maybe they were put together by a team of top professionals and advisers to keep everyone as safe as possible, not specifically designed to inflict harm or damage on churches.

They say there is only one true God but it seems like money is continuously hanging around trying to sneak its way in, always a close second. When I read about churches suing our Governor over rules implemented to protect everyone I asked myself "What would Jesus do?"

This thing will be over soon and church services, fundraisers, social gatherings will again be in full swing. For the short term I'm confident we can all handle our own spiritual fulfillment. If a support group of like minded souls is a necessity in your life then by all means reach out via phone or computer. Please don't endanger my life under the guise of religious freedom. Peace to all.

Mike Meyer  
Baker City

# The challenge of overcoming vaccine skeptics

By Mariel Garza

Convincing vaccine skeptics to trust any future COVID-19 vaccine is going to be a tough job, even if there are mountains of data from clinical trials showing that it is safe and effective.

It's going to be harder still if there is any reason for them to doubt the motives or the method behind the vaccine.

With that in mind, I can see two potential trouble spots with Operation Warp Speed, President Donald Trump's effort to leverage the full force of military, pharmaceutical industry and government resources to develop a vaccine for COVID-19 by the end of the year.

According to news reports, Trump has tapped Moncef Slaoui, a former

executive with giant pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline, along with a top Army general, Gustave F. Perma, to lead the effort.

Slaoui clearly has the pedigree and connections for such a job. He has a doctorate in molecular biology and immunology and ran the vaccine development program for GlaxoSmithKline, where he worked for 30 years. But he's also a venture capitalist who sits on a number of pharmaceutical company boards, including those of two vaccine makers, SutroVax and Moderna.

Slaoui reportedly intends to step down from the boards to participate in Warp Speed, but that won't erase a career spent deeply embedded in, and enriched by, the pharmaceutical industry. Putting him in charge of this

effort gives ammunition to vaccine opponents to shoot holes in the public health campaign that will be needed to successfully immunize the public against the coronavirus.

One of the most durable myths trafficked by so-called anti-vaxxers is that vaccines are scams developed by greedy pharmaceutical companies, abetted by a corrupt government, to make money from substances that do more harm than good.

These claims have been repeatedly debunked, and studies show that vaccines are safe and effective. It's also well documented that vaccines have saved untold numbers of humans from suffering and death from disease. Nevertheless, the fiction spread by anti-vaxxers continues to circulate and take hold among well-meaning,

if gullible, people. The disinformation campaigns have done real harm, too, helping drive down rates of childhood immunizations and leading to the recent resurgence of measles in the U.S. and other countries.

And lord help us if anything goes wrong with the COVID-19 vaccine itself.

Although vaccines have been protecting people from deadly infectious diseases such as smallpox and influenza for centuries, they aren't always benign and sometimes harm people they are intended to protect. The rush to develop a vaccine against polio in the 1950s had disastrous consequences. Some batches of the vaccine were found to be defective, but only after they had been rolled out in a mass immunization campaign. The

bad batches caused 40,000 cases of polio, killing 10 children, leaving dozens more paralyzed and justifiably scaring the public about the safety of future vaccines.

That incident led to much tighter regulation for vaccines, but it should stand as a good reminder that expediting vaccine development comes with risks. And the facts that the White House is calling the effort Operation Warp Speed, not Operation Save Lives, and aiming to produce 100 million doses by November suggest that the motivation is meeting an artificial deadline rather than developing a safe way to protect the public against the coronavirus.

Mariel Garza is an editorial writer for the Los Angeles Times.