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Opinion

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EDITORIAL

COVID-19 not the only vaccine that's vital

Children are much less likely than their grandparents to get sick if they're infected with COVID-19, but the virus has the potential to harm kids in a slightly less direct way.

Health officials in Oregon and nationwide blame the pandemic for a significant drop in the number of vaccines administered to children during the first half of 2020.

This is hardly surprising, of course.

Since early March we've been encouraged to stay home as much as possible. And many people no doubt are especially leery of visiting any medical facility, lest they bump into someone infected with the virus.

The Oregon Health Authority recently reported that for the first half of 2020, clinics gave 45% fewer doses of the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine to kids ages 2 to 9, compared with the same period in 2019. Inoculations for other vaccine-preventable diseases have also dropped, though not as much.

This trend is troubling on its face. But it's particularly unfortunate in Oregon, which already fares poorly in immunization rates, ranking 15th among 49 states in 2018-19 (Alaska didn't report results) for the rate of kindergartners who had received the recommended two doses of the MMR vaccine.

The potential effects of low immunization rates are serious. In 2019 Washington had its largest measles outbreak since 1990, with 86 people being infected, most of whom — 72 — were 18 or younger. Of the people infected, 77% had not had even one dose of the MMR vaccine. Just 4% had had the recommended two doses.

Dr. Rahul Gupta, senior vice president and chief medical and health officer for the March of Dimes, said during an Aug. 7 webinar that "we're playing with fire when we talk about not taking our kids to get the vaccines that are already recommended."

Stacy de Assis Matthews, school immunization coordinator for the Oregon Health Authority, told Willamette Week that the agency will be striving to remind parents of children who have missed vaccinations how important it is to be inoculated.

COVID-19 is the best-known virus of the day, to be sure.

But even as we try to get through this pandemic — and of course a vaccine is a crucial part of the campaign — we need to remember that many other diseases, both viral and bacterial, remain potential threats.

Many of these, though, are different from COVID-19, most notably because they pose a greater threat to children, and because we have a proven way to prevent these infections.

We need to continue keeping our distance, wearing our masks and washing our hands.

But we also must continue to get our shots.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

Letters to the editor

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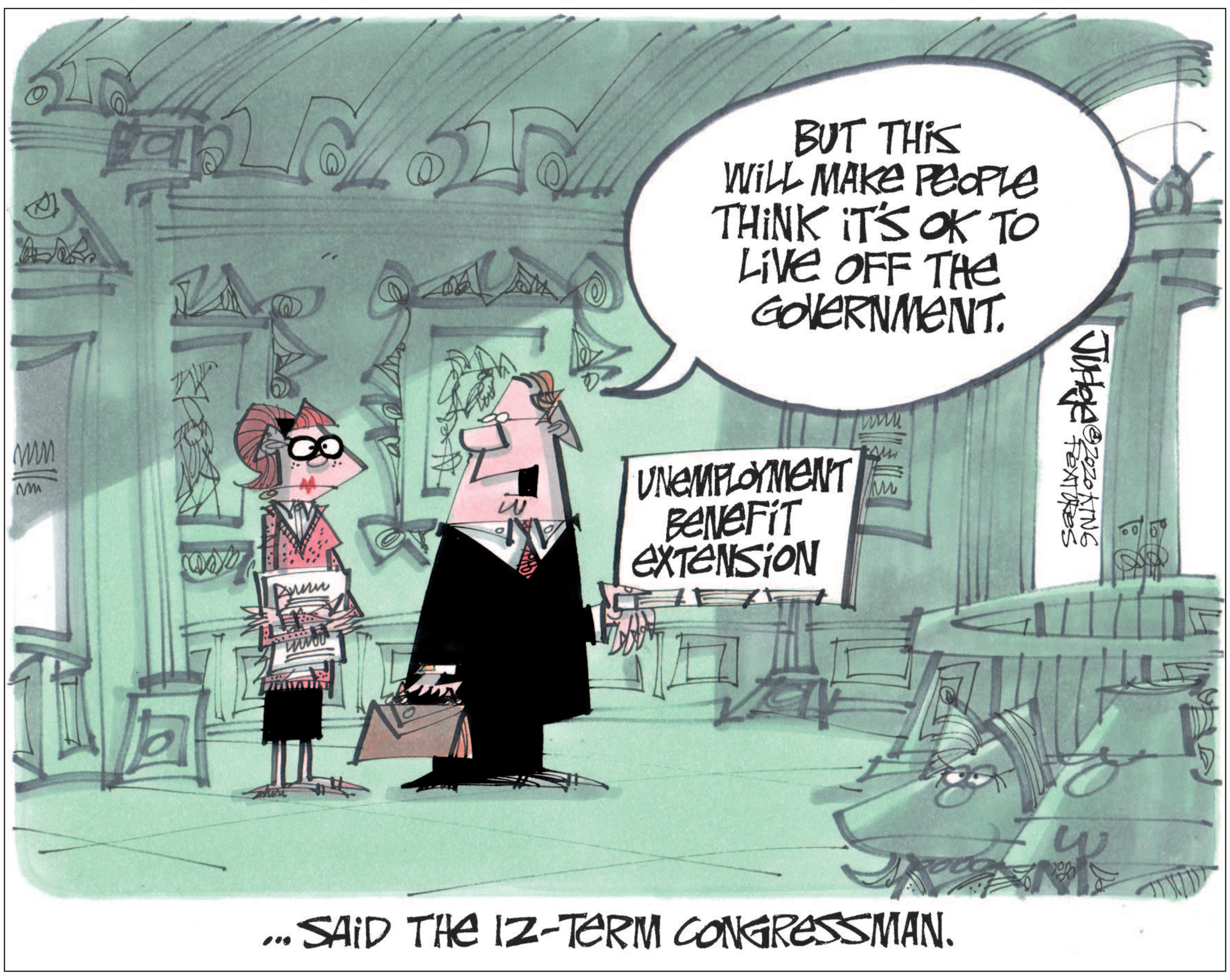

The advantages of capitalism

By Rick Rienks

A perspective on capitalism for those who work for their money.

We, the adults in society, should all know that the cries for socialism are a form of subversion promoted by a small group who do not have anyone's interests at heart but their own. Their path is subjugation for most. A free market means anyone can work to achieve a secure financial future. Even a modest income well managed can grow over time. Investing is but one component in a personal approach in building an estate.

Let us look at the idea expressed in the adage, "A penny saved is a penny earned." Even a small sum saved each month will grow over time. Many know that small amount may seem to be "accumulating" rather than growing as prices rise and bank savings pay next to nothing. However, an accumulated amount, at some point, becomes enough to begin putting your money to work. We are talking about taking the long view here. The practice of saving even a small amount over a period of time results in enough ready cash for opportunities such as this:

Aug. 31 will see a planned 4 for 1 split of Apple (AAPL) shares. Over the years we have seen several splits and subsequent appreciation of the value of AAPL. Were you to be interested I suppose the question would be, "Is this a split too far?" That is a question worth considering. In 1997 AAPL sold for $23 a share. Many splits over the intervening years increased the share count significantly. This holding and its growth may be seen as unusual but starting small, say one share, there were two 2 for 1 splits. That one share became two, then four. Another 2-for-1 turned that initial single share into eight. Later there was a 7-for-1, that yielded 56 where once there was one. Now they will split 4-for-1. That single share from 1997 now becomes 224.

As of this writing, trading around $425 per share, the after split price of a bit over $100 per new share makes a modest buy easier to approach, conceptually. Still, the $425 price will yield four shares. A total of $2,550 pre-split will buy six shares which will become 24 shares after the split. After the split you can buy 24 shares for, theoretically, the same price. Commissions are added.

Please note: If the share price sags a bit after the split the same $2,550 might buy more.

If there is a quick lift to the price there might not be time to grab shares at the near $100 price.

There is also the chance that the announced split may bump the current price of $425 before the split.

I would suggest you consider this stock carefully and if you do make a buy either before or after, once the transaction is done, do not worry about it if it does go through a downturn. Most investor losses seem to be caused by people selling on a price drop. A longer term "buy and hold" works well.

Don't put all your eggs in one basket. Allow the dividends to buy shares. The reinvested dividends grow the holding. At any time you can stop reinvesting and take the cash as income.

Cautionary note: If you start with a discount brokerage do not allow churning — the practice of some brokers to encourage a lot of activity. They get a commission on each buy and each sale. That is why they make so much personal income. Small investors take a loss with each transaction and a larger loss from bad advice. Never let a broker convince you that you should make a buy based solely on their suggestion. Often brokerages hold shares in a stock they believe will tank so the brokers push customers to buy them, thus relieving them of a dog.

There's a reason a broker's favorite bail-out is: "Past performance is no guarantee of future profits."

Make your decision, don't go in too deep until you understand the markets, don't sell at a loss. A poorly performing stock will either improve or go bust. Few ever go bust. Over time they show gains. Putting more money into a dog won't make it get better. Holding it may allow you to recoup your investment down the road.

So there you are. A little perspective on investing. Remember, sometimes cash is king. Have enough set aside and avoid transactions that involve you paying interest, when possible. This is the advantage of capitalism — you work for your money but can begin putting it to work for you a bit at a time.

Rick Rienks lives in Baker City.

OTHER VIEWS

Trump's cynical stance on housing

Editorial from The Los Angeles Times:

By now we should be used to getting whiplash from following the Trump administration's reversals. But the latest about-face on affordable housing in the suburbs from Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson is so dismally cynical and dishonest that it still manages to shock.

In an opinion piece published by the Wall Street Journal on Sunday, Carson and President Trump claim they'll save America's suburbs from presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden's "dystopian vision of building low-income housing units next to your suburban house."

So mixed-income neighborhoods are now dystopian? Just last year, Carson gave a very different opinion when he toured an affordable housing development in north Minneapolis.

"These units are very nice; I think anybody would want to live in (them)," Carson said on the tour, according to the Minneapolis Star-Tribune. "They look just like any apartment that you would find anywhere in the country, and that's what you want to see; you don't want to see a situation where, 'Oh, those are for low-income people' and 'These are for middle-income.' You want to have a mixed neighborhood."

While he was in Minneapolis, Carson praised the city's landmark decision to eliminate single-family zoning, thus opening more communities to higher-density housing that tends to be more affordable and racially diverse. Minneapolis leaders were clear about the goal of the policy: to reduce economic and racial segregation that is exacerbated when entire neighborhoods are closed to apartments, townhouses and other types of multifamily housing.

Now, apparently, Carson and Trump believe that policy is the centerpiece of liberals' evil plan to "take that American Dream away from you." Who, exactly, is the "you" in that sentence? Clearly it's not the many millions of hardworking people who can't afford to buy a home near jobs and good schools because the lack of housing supply has driven up prices. (Case in point: The median home price in California hit a record high of $660,000 in July.)

Carson and Trump also criticize a proposal by Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.) and Rep. James E. Clyburn (D-S.C.) to withhold federal grants from jurisdictions that don't agree to add more mixed-income housing. Again, Carson was rather keen on that idea in 2018. He told the Wall Street Journal that he was working on a rule to require communities to loosen zoning restrictions in order to qualify for construction grants for roads, sewers or other infrastructure projects.

"I would incentivize people who really would like to get a nice juicy government grant" to take a look at their zoning codes, Carson told the Journal.

We shouldn't be surprised by anything Trump and his appointees dish up these days. He is desperate to win reelection and willing to try anything, including lying about fair housing laws and employing fear-mongering and racist dog whistles about the threat that affordable housing dwellers pose to suburban homeowners. He's pandering to the most base instincts of NIMBYs who equate more housing with crime and declining property values.

Voters should recognize Carson's change of tune for what it is, and note whose interests he's really serving.