

EDITORIAL

Slowing
a vaccine?

Imagine you were deprived easy access to a COVID-19 vaccine simply because you lived on the west bank of the Snake River rather than the east, in Oregon rather than in Idaho.

This disturbing possibility is not farfetched.

Officials from Oregon, along with at least five other states and the District of Columbia, have said they will conduct separate reviews of any coronavirus vaccine the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authorizes.

This is not only unnecessary, but it could stymie the states' efforts to make significant progress in curbing the pandemic by distributing a vaccine.

Although the Oregon Health Authority didn't mention the Trump administration in a statement about its plan for a separate review, officials in other states have cited concerns about the president interfering in the vaccine approval process as justification.

But medical experts say this is misguided.

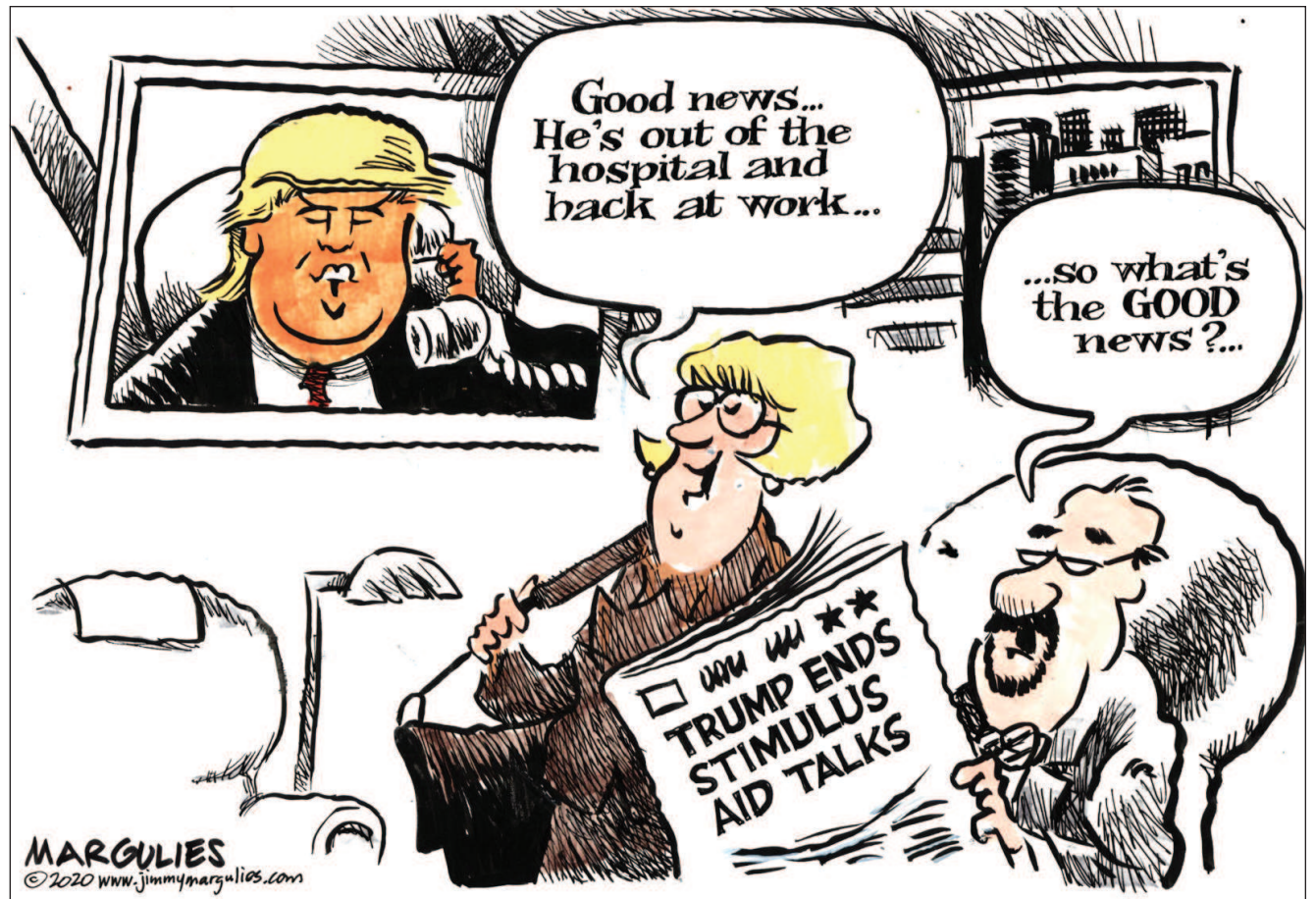
"States should stay out of the vaccine review business," said Michael Osterholm, an epidemiologist and director of the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota.

Trump has quarreled with federal medical officials, certainly. But his blustering about the imminent availability of a COVID-19 vaccine doesn't warrant states' overreactions. The state reviews not only could delay distribution of the vaccine, but they almost certainly would inflame skepticism — unfounded skepticism — about the vaccine's safety.

In reality, the FDA seems immune to the administration's pressure. Earlier this week the agency announced new safety standards for vaccine makers, in defiance of White House efforts. This likely will prevent any vaccine from being approved before the election on Nov. 3.

State officials accuse the president of politicizing a medical matter. But if they interfere with this most important inoculation campaign in decades, they, not the Trump administration, will be responsible for endangering people for no good reason.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



Your views

America is in the midst of a great spiritual battle

I am not going to write a long letter, just a few statements that in my opinion must be made at this time of trouble.

Two subjects. First, we have two parties that can't work together for the good of the country. There is a saying that a house divided against itself will fall. Next, if you are a truly born-again, spirit-filled believer and do not understand that we are in the most dangerous spiritual war in history, let me remind you of a few things. Sickness (virus) does not come from God! You should know where it came from. You should also know what defeats it. You should know this evil spirit also dwells in people. Can you come up with a better explanation? When people want to throw away their God-given freedoms there's something leading them, especially when they don't care if they

have to take yours to get what they want. Riots, not demonstrations. People in power lie to get more power.

Like I stated above, this country is in the most spiritual battle for its life and freedom. We cannot let it lose! Please do not give up the freedoms of this great country for a few poison handouts.

Richard Fox
Baker City

Beth Spell would look out for families in District 60

Beth E. Spell is the Democrat and Working Families Party candidate for Oregon State Representative, District 60. I have known her for more than 25 years. Beth is a retired teacher and was a working mom.

She personally understands the challenges that families and workers face, especially in rural Oregon, when it comes to accessing affordable child care, affordable health care and living wages.

She has been endorsed by organizations that interviewed her and came to the same conclusion as I have, she is the best candidate for families and working folks in this district. Those organizations are: OEA (Oregon Education Association), OSEA AFT Local 6732 (Oregon School Employees Association), The Mother PAC, (a group dedicated to building power for mamas and caregivers across Oregon), WINPAC (Women's Investment Network Political Action Committee) and UFCW Local 55 (United Food and Commercial Workers).

She has also been endorsed by Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden, and the Democratic Central Committees of Grant, Baker, Harney, Malheur and Lake counties.

You can endorse her too, by voting for Beth E. Spell and returning your ballot as early as you can.

Nancy Nickel
John Day

Letters to the editor

- We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.
- 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.

- Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

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Stuck with a faucet that's become a fountain

As the water gushed from the faucet near my front porch I had to pause for a moment, as sodden and helpless as a kitten stuck in a flooding stream, and simply admire what my pipes are capable of.

I mean the top people at the Belagio would have been envious had they been standing beside me — and also dripping beside me — on this particular evening.

I don't know whether real estate types consider strong water pressure a selling point.

But let's just say I'm ready to fight fires.

In skyscrapers.

Also, as any "Seinfeld" fan knows, low water pressure can leave you looking like you did in that third-grade class photo that epitomizes the dreaded hairstyle known as the bowl cut.

(Although you might well have had a more appealing coiffure than I had at that age.)

I have on occasion thought of adding to my property what those aforementioned Realtors call a "water feature." A pond perhaps, fed by a little waterfall powered by an electric pump.

Only I expected that I would be able to turn off this feature pretty much whenever I wanted to.

Nor do I believe this is an unreasonable expectation. We generally demand nothing less from all our spigots than the ability to summon water, and curb its flow, at a whim.

But my faucet, which suddenly and quite distressingly turned into a fountain, utterly defied my fumblyings with tools ranging from my index finger to a crescent wrench



JAYSON JACOBY

that's heavy enough to drive roof nails.

All I had set out to do was wash the car on a mild late summer evening. Like most other frequently stationary objects the car had, during the early days of September, acquired a patina of dust mixed with ash from distant wildfires.

(Unfortunately I don't own a garage. Or rent one.)

This particular faucet has a brass splitter connected to it, one outlet attached to a hose and the other to the clever irrigation system my wife, Lisa, installed a couple years ago.

Because the system is controlled by a timer, we generally leave the faucet on slightly. Very slightly, actually, given that prodigious water pressure.

I intended to turn the faucet off completely before switching the flow from the irrigation system to the hose. I had some vague idea that this would reduce the force of the water, perhaps preserving a valve or a gasket or something.

(My ideas about plumbing derive more from fantasy than from physics.)

But as I turned the handle clockwise, rather than stop, as it is supposed to, it merely slowed briefly. This interval was just long enough to convince me that everything was in order, and so I instinctively ap-

plied a tad more force, the way you do to firmly shut off a faucet.

Except then, instead of hitting the strong resistance I was expecting, the handle suddenly spun faster, as though someone had sprayed it with an exceedingly slippery lubricant.

The gurgle of water inside the faucet became louder.

That's when the plastic cap on top of the faucet blew off, rather like the cork in a champagne bottle which has been given a brisk preparatory shake.

I stayed pretty dry for a good 10 seconds.

But that's only because I was looking down at the faucet and my face took most of the chilly torrent. It was quite refreshing, in the way that jumping into an alpine lake is refreshing. Or at least the way I imagine it would be. I've never actually jumped into an alpine lake because I don't want my heart to stop beating.

I backed away from the faucet. Or, rather, I leaped back, as if a rattlesnake had sprung from the spigot instead of cold water from the Elkhorn Mountains.

I ran inside to get a screwdriver. I figured if I could pull off the faucet handle I could get at the valve stem itself and maybe stanch the flow.

I tried to come at the faucet from the side, to turn its flank, as it were, and avoid the liquid bombardment. But the water was spurting at a height of maybe 8 feet and spreading as it climbed, creating an artificial rainstorm that surrounded the faucet like a halo.

I managed to loosen the screw

holding down the handle, but it was obvious that the problem was with the faucet's innards, not the handle. I got hold of the valve with a crescent wrench but it acted as it had before — a tantalizing moment of friction and a noticeable drop in the water flow, making me think it would actually close, then, as I kept twisting, another sudden surge.

I looked around, by now soaked and on the verge of panicking, and saw the plastic cap that had been blown skyward (I later learned this is the vacuum cap, and that it has something, I'm still not quite sure what, to do with the frost-free nature of this faucet).

I clapped it back in place. Water continued to spew from the faucet, but at least it was no longer shooting straight up as well as out.

I also grabbed a 5-gallon plastic bucket and thrust it beneath the faucet, thinking this would buy me some time to ponder my next move.

It is truly dismaying how quickly a 5-gallon bucket can fill.

I began to feel like Lucy and Ethel in that famous episode when they're working the conveyor belt in a chocolate factory.

The bucket overflowed in maybe 10 seconds. I lugged it over to the yard and dumped it, mostly on my own feet.

Water is heavy.

I knew where our water meter is. But I don't have the tool to shut off the valve. And even if I had the tool I wouldn't know how to use it, and probably would end up shutting off water to the whole neighborhood or else flooding it.

Then I remembered that I might

have a way to get ahold of Dennis Bachman, who works for the city's public works department and probably could rebuild a water meter in the dark with a Swiss Army knife and a piece of duct tape.

I pulled out my cell phone — only slightly damp, fortunately — and dialed.

Little more than 5 minutes later Dennis, who undoubtedly had better things to do than splash around in my front yard, showed up. Less than a minute after that the water stopped flowing. The silence was blissful.

The next day I summoned a plumber. When he got there I felt that sense of relief unique to situations when an expert arrives to handle a problem beyond your ability (and comprehension, come to that). I'm fairly certain that, given the choice between having a doctor to deal with my broken arm and a plumber to fix a broken faucet, I would pick the plumber. The arm would be more painful, sure. But with the arm I could at least sit down and throb. When water is puddling up around your house's foundation the problem, although lacking in agony, seems more pressing just the same.

But my greater debt is to Dennis. Unlike the plumber, he didn't send me a bill.

But he might well have prevented my front yard from turning into a wetland.

And I think you're supposed to get a permit for that.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.