

EDITORIAL

Vaccines and the chance for progress

Trees might be leafing out by the time most of us get to decide whether to roll up a sleeve and have a needle pierce our skin and deliver a dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

For some time the vaccines, the first batches of which arrived in Oregon this week, will be given, and for good reason, to health care workers, residents in long-term care facilities and others who are at higher risk for being infected with the virus.

Naturally we want to first protect those for whom COVID-19 poses by far the most significant health risk.

For those of us who are younger than 60, that risk is exceedingly low. According to the Oregon Health Authority, of the 1,161 people whose deaths are attributed to COVID-19, just 9.2% were younger than 60 (and 3% were younger than 50).

Nonetheless, it's still vital that younger people also are inoculated against the virus as soon as possible. Although members of that younger-than-60 group account for a small percentage of Oregon's COVID-19 deaths, they make up 84% of the state's approximately 96,000 cases. That's a lot of people who could potential infect those who are more vulnerable.

The more people who are immunized, the more effective the vaccines will be.

A recent survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation, asking Americans if they plan to "definitely or probably" take a COVID-19 vaccine, showed a promising trend. The survey results, released on Tuesday, Dec. 15, found that 71% of respondents will definitely or probably be inoculated. That's up from 63% in a September survey.

But it's still troubling that nearly one-third of respondents aren't eager, if not outright ecstatic, that they'll have a chance to protect themselves, and potentially their family, friends and neighbors, from this virus.

Troubling, and not a little vexing.

The record of vaccines is so voluminous, a history of saving millions of lives and sparing many millions of others from the debilitating effects of bacterial and viral diseases that we were for so long powerless against, that it's passing strange that skepticism persists to the extent it does.

COVID-19 vaccines stand out, of course, because they were made so quickly. But that's not because safety standards were relaxed or testing protocols slighted.

Rather, the rapidity of these achievements reflects the immense abilities of brilliant scientists when they devote themselves wholeheartedly to one task and have robust support from the Trump administration.

Considering that earlier generations of experts conquered polio and measles and smallpox and other microscopic scourges, we ought not be surprised that, roused into action by COVID-19, the scientific community has pulled off another monumental victory.

Skepticism, of course, is not limited to the vaccine. There is widespread disbelief about the virus itself, and in particular about how dangerous it is.

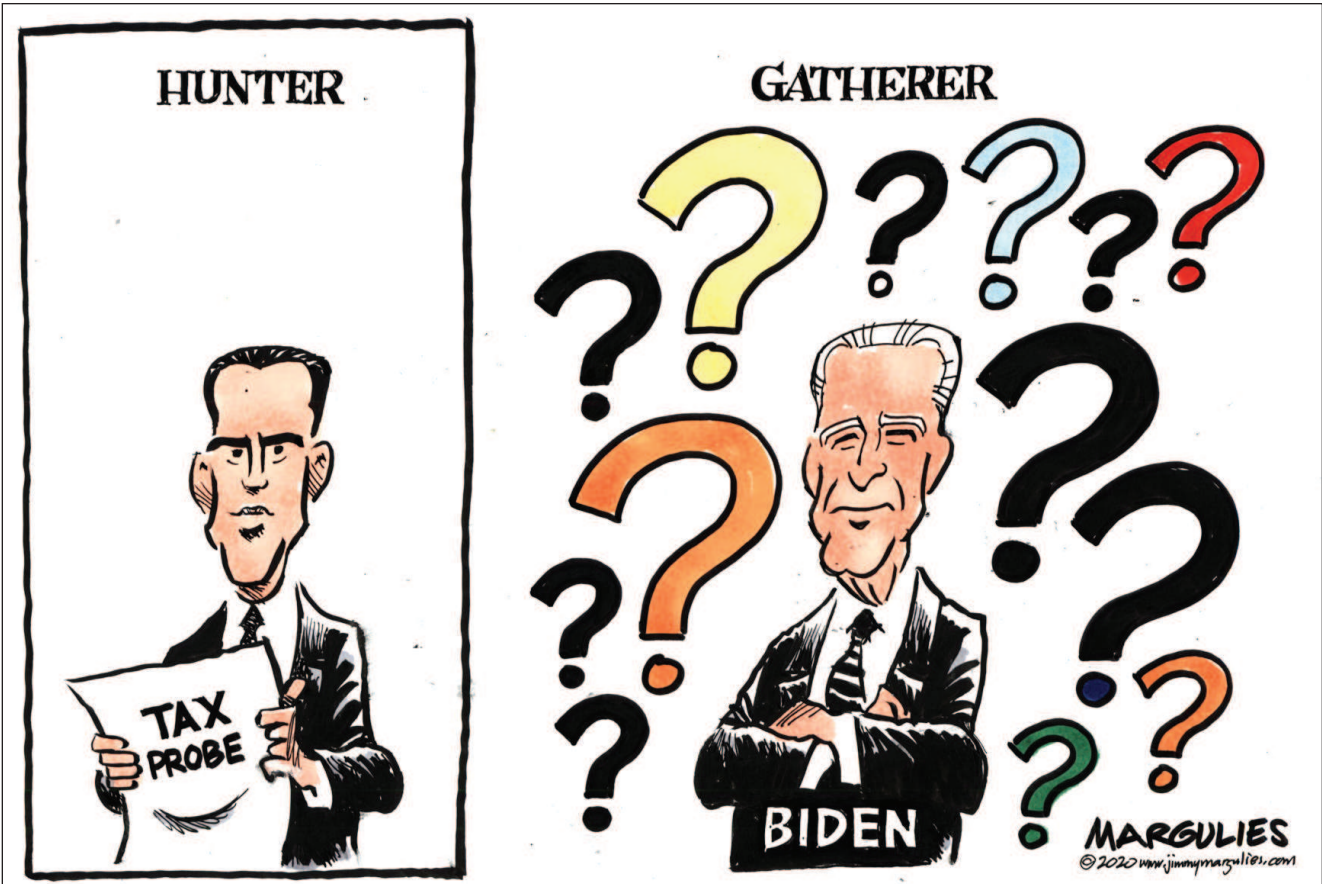
But even those who discount the death toll can't ignore that the virus has had terrible effects on our communities, socially and economically.

The fastest and most effective way to end the restrictions, to reach that light at the end of the tunnel, or get back to normal, to cite just two of the annoying and cloying clichés that have infested our national conversation, is to administer these wonderful vaccines as widely and rapidly as possible.

We have been given a collective gift.

We just have to unwrap it.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



Your views

Beyond the Trump era

As the American political landscape languishes in a state of turmoil, it is sadly evident we have failed to learn from our own history. Journalist Sydney J. Harris noted, "History repeats itself, but in such cunning disguise that we never detect the resemblance until the damage is done." McCarthyism, an extension of the 1920s Red Scare in our nation after the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, was an intense vocal campaign which relied on sensationalism and the use of deceitful, unproven accusations against alleged communists in the U.S. government and other institutions carried out by Sen. Joseph McCarthy in the early 1950s. By the end of 1954, the nation and McCarthy's colleagues had had enough, prompting Joseph Welch to discredit him ... "Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?"

McCarthy was censored afterward by the Senate and stripped of his chairmanship. Arguably, a similar parallel could easily be drawn today. President Trump's paranoia about the legality of state election voting practices, a 10th Amendment power granted to the states, and fraudulent post-election validity claims underscore this. In a statement made by the president recently at a Georgia Senate runoff rally he asserted that if Republican candidates were not reelected the, "socialists and communists will win." Similarly, others point alarmingly to the president's post-election political behavior. To illustrate their concern, an analysis by the Brookings Institute reported that besides changes in 15 executive cabinet positions, President Trump's "A Team" turnover by early November was 91% and 39% of those departures had undergone serial turnovers. Further, since the fall election, the purge of cabinet and government bureaucrats continues, especially for anyone who seemingly fails to pass

the political litmus test of filial piety.

Unquestionably, 2020 is one for the history and civics books with the economic, political and social challenges facing the next administration in the balance. My hopes for our nation in the coming days were echoed in Gerald Ford's remarks in his oath of office after the resignation of Richard Nixon. "My fellow Americans, our long national nightmare is over. Our Constitution works; our great Republic is a government of laws and not of men. Here the people rule ... let us restore the golden rule to our political process, and let brotherly love purge our hearts of suspicion and of hate."

Anthony Johnson
Baker City

Biden's deserves to be called the 'President-elect'

Mary Andersen wrote a letter to the editor a bit back shaming anyone choosing to believe that "President-elect" Joe Biden should be called, or was in actuality, our President-elect. I am guessing that she was buying into the fantasy world of our delusional President Donald Trump and his unfounded, unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud ... with not one shred of credible evidence! I hate to disappoint you, Mary, but the minute "all" the votes of your fellow Americans were tallied and President-elect Joe Biden received 81,139,495 "legal and unfraudulent" votes compared to Donald Trump's 74,223,755 "legal and unfraudulent" votes along with Joe Biden capturing 306 electoral votes to Trump's 232, Joe Biden indeed became your "President-elect."

Mike Meyer
Baker City

New city councilors need to act responsibly

I believe we can all agree that the most important traits for a leading body of representatives are honesty,

loyalty, and self-responsibility. We should be able to trust that our leaders are doing their best to protect our health and our daily lives. So, why does the incoming council refuse to abide by these characteristics?

We are in the middle of a worldwide pandemic, the likes of which haven't been seen in over 100 years. Regardless of your political beliefs, the facts are there. Over 1,000 people a day are dying from COVID-19. We are nearly at 300,000 deaths nationwide, and we have over 16 million cases. Even with a vaccine rolling out, we can expect this type of loss to continue well into the new year.

There are measures in place to stop the spread of COVID-19. The science backs the use of masks and social distancing. It is not a government conspiracy, it is not the plot of sheep. Yet, several of the councilors-elect who will join the city council in January outright refuse to believe this. They stalk online forums, throwing in misleading information or anti-mask comments, often becoming a storm of anger against anyone who dare believe the science behind preventative measures.

This type of behavior isn't just childish, it's downright dangerous and reckless. Our leaders should be competent enough to follow current public procedures, the very procedures founded on extreme vetting of research and data. We deserve a council that has our best interests at heart, and that includes supporting the widely-followed methods of masks and social distancing.

If the incoming city council cannot honestly make their decisions based on public facts and research, how can we trust them to make any decisions that impact our lives? How can we believe they are fit for the job? If they cannot show the correct decorum, then they must be replaced.

Boston Colton
Baker City

Letters to the editor

- We welcome letters on any issue of public interest. Customer complaints about specific businesses will not be printed.
- The Baker City Herald will not knowingly print false or misleading

claims. However, we cannot verify the accuracy of all statements in letters to the editor.

- 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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Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read: oregon.treasurer@ost.state.or.us; 350 Winter St. NE, Suite 100, Salem OR 97301-3896; 503-378-4000.

Oregon Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum: Justice Building, Salem, OR 97301-4096; 503-378-4400.

Oregon Legislature: Legislative documents and information are available online at www.leg.state.or.us.

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State Rep. Mark Owens (R-Crane): Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., H-475, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1460. Email: Rep. MarkOwens@oregonlegislature.gov

Baker City Hall: 1655 First Street, P.O. Box 650, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-6541; fax 541-524-2049. City Council meets the second and fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers. Loran Joseph, Randy Schiewe, Lynette Perry, Arvid Andersen, Larry Morrison, Jason Spriet and Doni Bruland.

Baker City administration: 541-523-6541. Fred Warner Jr., city manager; Ray Duman, police chief; Sean Lee, fire chief; Michelle Owen, public works director.

Baker County Commission: Baker County Courthouse 1995 3rd St., Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-8200. Meets the first and third Wednesdays at 9 a.m.; Bill Harvey (chair), Mark Bennett, Bruce Nichols.

Baker County departments: 541-523-8200. Travis Ash, sheriff; Noodle Perkins, roadmaster; Greg Baxter, district attorney; Alice Durlfinger, county treasurer; Stefanie Kirby, county clerk; Kerry Savage, county assessor.

Baker School District: 2090 4th Street, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-524-2260; fax 541-524-2564. Superintendent: Mark Witty. Board meets the third Thursday of the month at 6 p.m. Council Chambers, Baker City Hall, 1655 First St.; Andrew Bryan, Kevin Cassidy, Chris Hawkins, Katie Lamb and Julie Huntington.