

OUR VIEW

Reversing
restaurant
free fall

During the past nine months, 110,000 of U.S. farmers’ best customers have been shut down as CO-VID-19 continues its march through the countryside. That number represents 17% of the nation’s res- taurants. While the restaurant business inherently has lots of risk, nothing like this has happened in re- cent memory. Of those restaurants that are still open, 37% won’t survive six months without economic aid, according to the National Restaurant Association. The association describes the plight of its 500,000 members as “free fall.” Most full-service restaurants — 87% of them — say their revenue is down 37%. And most operators expect the dire situation to get worse.

While governors try to use shutdowns as a tool to keep hospitals from being flooded with COVID-19 patients — which is laudable — they tend to pick on some businesses while others are allowed to stay open. For example, in Oregon, marijuana shops, tattoo parlors and liquor stores remain open while gyms, zoos, gardens and aquariums are closed. Go figure. And restaurants are limited to takeout or delivery only. Or customers can sit in a tent, as they do in places like Bend and Hermiston, eating their meals in 30-degree temperatures.

Earlier this month in California, Gov. Gavin New- som slammed the door shut on many of the state’s restaurants, limiting them to takeout. The shutdowns hurt more than restaurants, their employees and customers. They hurt farmers.

Many restaurants buy their food directly from farmers or from distributors that buy food from farm- ers. Without their business, the farmers and distribu- tors have had to go to Plan B, C and now, D. Stand by for Plans E, F and G.

Every shutdown means lost business. When — make that if — restaurants reopen, it’s unknown whether they will buy from the same farms or dis- tributors. In turn, farms and distributors might have been forced to pivot to other buyers, if they can find them.

In short, if a governor wanted to kill the restaurant industry, all he or she needs to do is keep randomly shutting them down on short notice.

Maybe that’s why there has been so much recall talk in California and Oregon. As an alternative to sweeping, one-size-fits-all orders, the governors and the public would be better served by using the data they have been collecting to identify COVID-19 hot spots.

For example, in Oregon, the data is broken down by ZIP codes, allowing the health authorities to zero in on problem areas.

Other areas where the problems are minor or non- existent could be left alone, if the governor allowed it. That would be both fair and effective. But there’s hope. Last week, at-risk populations in the U.S. be- gan receiving the COVID-19 vaccines.

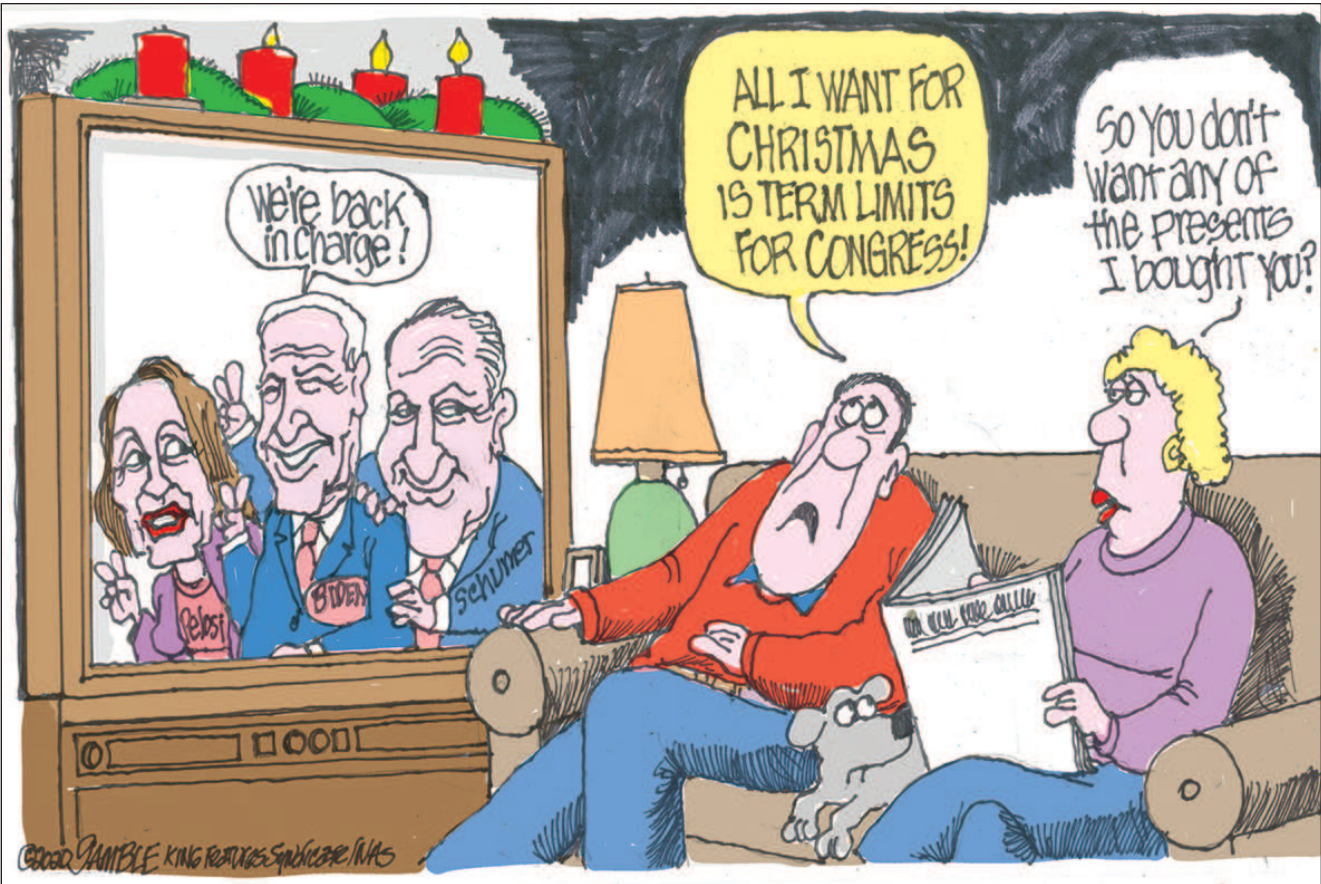
It can’t happen soon enough, not only for our health but the health of those segments of the economy such as restaurants that have been deci- mated not by the virus but by random, ill-considered shutdowns.

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- 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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Your views

Trump’s unconscionable use of federal death penalty

The Trump administration’s in- epititude in dealing with the COVID-19 virus has led to the avoidable deaths of over 300,000 U.S. citizens, soon to surpass 400,000. As if that’s not enough deaths, the Trump administration in the last half of 2020 has begun executing federal prisoners on death row, thereby ending a 17-year moratorium on executions. I don’t think I’m being cynical in pointing out that the executions are taking place right after the Republican Party’s re-nomination of President Trump last July as the party’s candi- date for president. How better to show you’re tough on crime than by killing prisoners on death row in the federal prison system. The other day I read the Death Pen- alty Information Center’s just-issued “The Death Penalty in 2020: Year End Report.” The Report covers thoroughly death penalty statistics in all 50 states,

plus military and federal system. One federal system statistic in the Report, besides ending of the 17-year moratorium on executions, is the fol- lowing: “The ten people executed under the federal death penalty in the second half of 2020 exceeded the number executed by all of the states combined, the first time in the history of the United States in which the federal government car- ried out more civilian executions than did the states.” The Report describes specific execu- tions, often accompanied by photos of the prisoners executed: “The rash of executions was also ab- errant in its selections of prisoners to be put to death. The condemned included the first Native American ever executed by the federal government for a murder of a member of his own tribe on tribal lands; the first federal executions of teenaged offenders in 68 years; the first federal execution in 57 years for a crime committed in a state that had abolished

the death penalty; the scheduled execu- tions of two prisoners who medical evidence indicated had intellectual disability; the scheduled executions of two prisoners with serious mental ill- ness, including one who may have been mentally incompetent at the time of his execution; the scheduled executions of two prisoners who did not kill anyone and three who were less culpable than co-defendants who received lesser sen- tences; the first lame-duck executions in more than a century; and executions carried out against the wishes of vic- tims’ family members, trial or appellate prosecutors in the cases, and at least one of the judges who presided at trial.” The report may be downloaded here: <https://deathpenaltyinfo.org/facts-and-research/dpic-reports/dpic-year-end-reports/the-death-penalty-in-2020-year-end-report> And I may be contacted at: tubingen@eoni.com

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Trump’s failed China policies

By Trudy Rubin

As President Donald Trump contin- ues to spew lies about “election fraud” and attack democratic institutions, he is handing China a huge Christmas gift. Trump touts his hard-line tack toward Beijing as a historic policy shift. He warned during the election cam- paign that if Joe Biden won, China “would own the United States.” On the contrary, President-elect Biden grasps something Trump never understood. The president’s chaotic China policy — and his failed trade deal — ignored the essential elements for success: Convincing Chinese lead- ers that America’s democratic system is not crumbling and uniting with other democracies to beat China at its own game. The bitter, Trump-driven effort to discredit the election has only strengthened Chinese leader Xi Jinping’s message to his people — that their authoritarian system and high-tech achievements are poised to overtake the United States.

Chinese state-controlled media are filled with disdainful commentary about the election — and over the still soaring U.S. deaths from COVID-19 after Beijing stamped out the pan- demic there. “Hopeless America,” proclaimed a columnist at the official Xinhua News Agency. “U.S. democracy now a joke,” wrote the Ta Kung Pao broadsheet. “Time to wake up from blind faith in the Western system,” said the state-run China Education News last week. “Vicious partisan fighting has worsened ... and a severe social crisis is brewing.” And on and on. On a visit to China a year ago, I heard a growing confidence from think tank experts about Chinese prospects of overtaking a politically paralyzed America. But America’s continued internal upheaval appears to have accelerated that confidence amongst the Chinese public and lead-

ers — to a degree that may inspire risky overconfidence. And Trump’s trade deal certainly didn’t dissuade Xi Jinping from an in- creasingly aggressive policy overseas. Trump’s instincts about unfair Chinese trade practices were correct. But as his former national security adviser John Bolton has written, the president’s trade policy was incoher- ent, driven not by strategy but by his own political needs. Rather than insist on structural changes that would force China to play fair in trade and technology, Trump focused on sweet-talking Xi Jinping to buy more soybeans in order to help the president win farm states in the election. Meantime, in October, America’s trade deficit with China was as large as last year’s. In the holiday season, imports from China are soaring. And the cost of Trump’s trade tariffs against China have been borne not by Beijing, as the president claims, but by U.S. consumers and taxpayers. So Xi Jinping had Trump’s number, as he continues to strengthen China’s military and make military gains in the region at America’s expense. Which brings us to President-elect Biden, for whom China policy will be the biggest foreign policy challenge. Here is what he has recognized, something that Trump never under- stood: First, an America First policy will never be enough to make China reconsider its mercantilist trade policies, such as stealing intellectual property, illegal subsidies and forced “technology transfers” from American companies. “The most effective way to meet that challenge is to build a united front of U.S. allies and partners to confront China’s abusive behaviors,” Biden wrote in the March issue of Foreign Affairs. Unlike Trump, Biden will work to renew alliances with America’s democratic partners in

Europe and Asia, from day one. Second, to compete effectively with China, America must have a function- ing political system, with bipartisan cooperation in Congress. Anyone who travels to China can see the country is pulling ahead of the United States in infrastructure and internet con- nectivity. It is prepared to overtake us in critical areas of technology that will determine who leads the world in the future. To attack our democratic institu- tions — as Trump is doing with his unending lies to his base about election fraud — is the equivalent of a military assault on our homeland. It plays to Chinese perceptions that our democracy is failing. Ditto for efforts to prevent biparti- san cooperation on addressing issues of inequality and race that divide us. Without bipartisanship, America cannot make the advances in infra- structure and key technologies to prevent China from overtaking us. It is time for a bipartisan accord on a U.S. industrial policy — call it a Sputnik moment. Biden gets this. “I will make invest- ment in research and development a cornerstone of my presidency, so that the United States is leading the charge in innovation,” he wrote in Foreign Affairs “There is no reason we should be falling behind China or anyone else when it comes to clean energy, quantum computing, artificial intelligence, 5G, high-speed rail, or the race to end cancer as we know it.” No reason at all, if patriotism final- ly displaces cowardice on Capitol Hill and proves that American democracy can renew itself. All it takes is a few upright GOP senators to lead the way.

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