

# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

# Vaccine can boost business

Baker County residents missed a chance on Saturday, April 24 to help protect themselves against COVID-19, and potentially to help some local businesses that have suffered significantly during the pandemic.

Fortunately it wasn't a one-time opportunity.

Still and all, the pitiful turnout for Saturday's free drive-thru COVID-19 vaccination clinic at the Fairgrounds in Baker City was both surprising and disappointing.

Surprising because Baker County residents thus far have not exactly shunned the vaccine. Although the county ranks 20th among Oregon's 36 counties in its vaccination rate per 10,000 residents, Baker does have a higher rate than other counties in our region except Wallowa.

Yet on Saturday, just 62 people — three of whom don't even live in Oregon — showed up to get their first dose of the Moderna vaccine without even having to leave their car.

The Baker County Health Department was prepared to inoculate more than 1,160 people if necessary.

That didn't seem like a farfetched goal considering that the health department has administered more than 600 doses on four separate days — Feb. 26, March 12, March 26 and April 9.

Unlike Saturday's drive-thru clinic, those four events, which took place at Baker High School, were for people who had appointments to receive either their first or second doses. Yet it was hardly unreasonable to expect that Saturday's clinic would attract a steady flow of cars. The event could hardly have been more convenient — people didn't have to make an appointment or pre-register, and, as mentioned, they didn't even have to get out of their car. Moreover, the clinic, unlike previous vaccination events, was open to anyone 18 or older.

The clinic was an ideal opportunity for county residents to take action to reverse the surge in COVID-19 cases over the past month, a trend that moved the county to high risk on April 23 and, starting this Friday, April 30, to extreme risk for at least one week.

The correlation is obvious — almost half of the county's new cases over the past month are people younger than 50, the age range with the lowest vaccination rate, largely because many people in that category haven't been eligible until recently.

There were no impediments to those people getting vaccinated Saturday. They just didn't show up.

Meanwhile the rate of infection among people 70 and older has dropped substantially over the past month. Again, this is not a coincidence — that age range has a much higher vaccination rate. For the approximately 1,000 county residents who are 80 or older, the vaccination rate is 70%. For the 2,100 or so residents ages 70 to 79, the rate is 62%. During April, slightly less than 10% of the county's COVID-19 cases have been in people 70 or older.

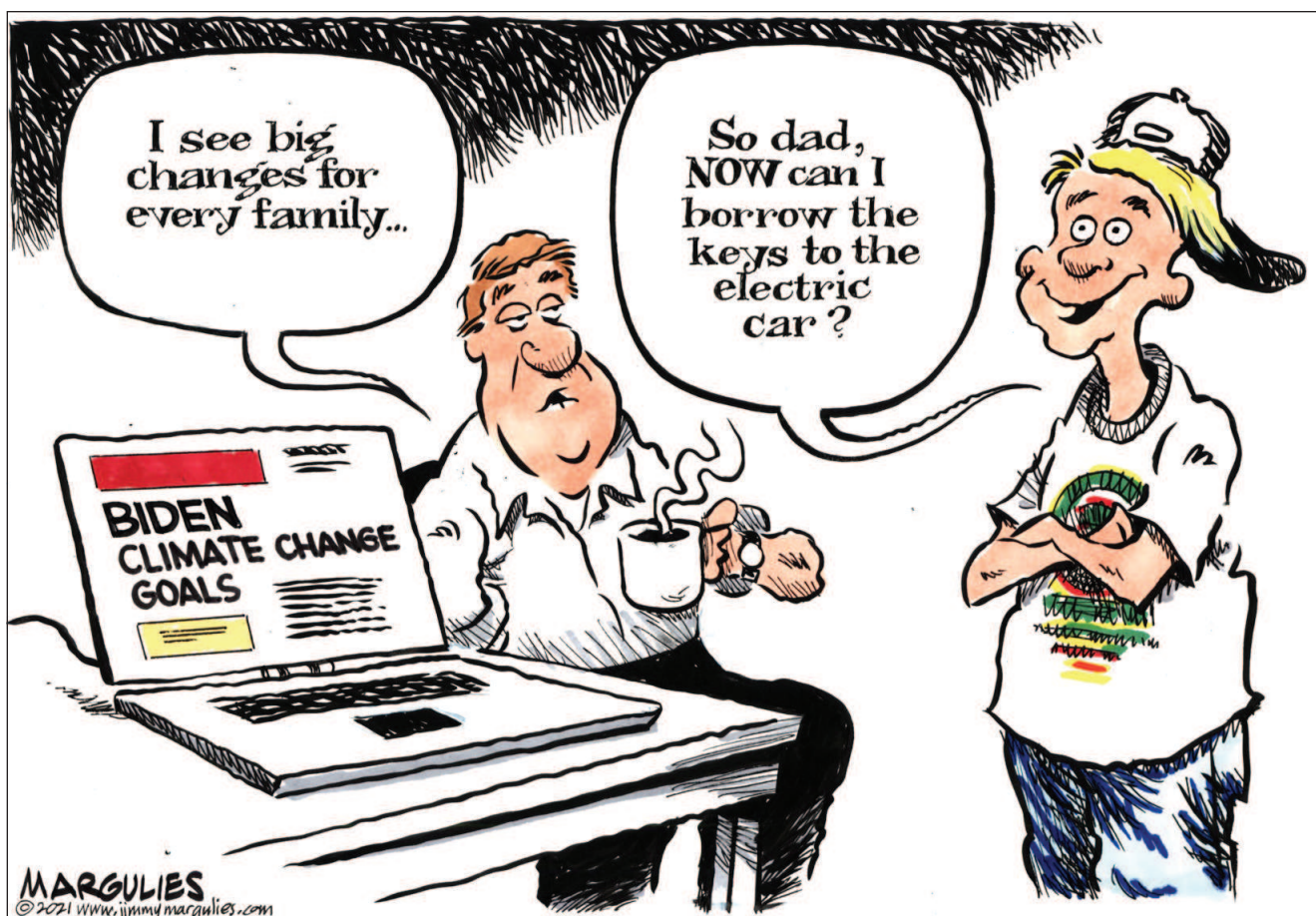
That COVID-19 vaccines are effective is hardly a revelation, of course.

But if county residents fail to take advantage of a free, easily available vaccine, and they also continue to eschew simple precautions when attending the social gatherings that health department officials say are the main source of the recent rash of cases, then local businesses will continue to suffer under state restrictions.

Some of those restrictions are unfair, to be sure — most notably the ban on indoor dining and strict limits on gyms, theaters and some other businesses while the county is at extreme risk. But complaining about draconian state rules won't help ailing businesses. Reversing the trend of COVID-19 cases, by contrast, likely will help to accomplish that task.

The county has plenty of vaccine doses. To get one, call 541-523-0015 or go to [www.bakercountycovid19.com](http://www.bakercountycovid19.com). Pharmacies at Safeway, Albertsons, Bi-Mart and Rite Aid also have vaccines.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



## Your views

### Drivers: please secure trash before heading for the dump

I'm writing a very important reminder to anyone that hauls their trash to the dump. Please put a cover over your pickup or trailer to keep the trash from flying out and on the roads. I do know it's our responsibility to keep your trash in your vehicle. It is also against the law to let your trash fly out. We do have a great city, so let's keep it clean.

Sharon Maloy-Styer  
Baker City

### Uncomfortable with seating at county health department

As anyone who reads the local news is well aware, Baker County could soon be raised to an "extreme" level of coronavirus danger. With that in mind I found it to be particularly shocking to see that the Baker County Health Department chose not to adhere to "Social Distancing" while vaccinating a large number of residents on 04/23/21. I am one of the many residents vaccinated on that day. I continue to be amazed at the fact that in a small waiting area the seats were positioned close together and the number of people allowed in the waiting area (significantly more than the number of seats available) made "Social Distancing" impossible.

Although the staff were friendly and professional; the person or people who organized this activity should be prevented from being involved in any similar activity in the future. I have mixed feelings about this experience. I feel fortunate to have been able to receive my second shot ... yet hope I didn't catch the virus while doing so.

Les Dickey  
Baker City

### If you like Idaho, you're welcome to move there

I am trying to determine the money behind the Move Oregon's Border. They have sent mailers all over eastern Oregon and are advertising on YouTube. Could it be business owners, who would rather the federal minimum wage be \$7.25 instead of the \$12.25 in Oregon? Could it be those who like a 6% sales tax, something Oregon has turned down nine times since the 1930s? Could it be that Oregon spends \$11,000 per student while Idaho spends \$7,200, the lowest in the country? Could it be miners, who wish no environmental controls? Could it be those who think Boise will replace the Oregon general fund, which funnels money from the Valley to our schools to cover the shortfalls, so our property taxes can remain

low? Could it be those who think Boise will cover the maintenance of our roads, which are now covered by road mile taxes, generally flowing east from the Valley? Does it think Boise will pay Oregon back for all the Oregon State property, including state highways that are not owned by those in the east, but by the state?

My family came to this state in 1904. In the interim we have had all kinds of government control. The Republican party was once dominant, but it changed in about 1982, which caused me to leave. It has gone more doctrinaire, more adept at litmus tests and has thus lost the respect of most in the state. The supporters of this measure, instead of determining how to appeal to all voters, are taking the chicken way out and attempting to do what will assuredly fail, but that will make the conflict between the east and west even more onerous.

I for one do not like Idaho and do not wish to be a part of the state. Thus, I hope there is enough money in the till for them to buy my ranch. I am asking for \$1 million.

Or those who like Idaho so much could just move there. So much simpler.

Tom Nash  
Halfway

# Disney's painful political shift

By Jonathan VanBoskerck

My family and I have been loyal Disney customers for decades. We vacation at Disney World every year. We take a Disney cruise every year or two. Consequently, we spend way too much money in Orlando.

Unfortunately, I am strongly rethinking our commitment to Disney and, thus, Orlando. The more Disney moves away from the values and vision of Walt Disney, the less Disney World means to me. Disney is forgetting that guest immersion is at the core of its business model. When I stand in Galaxy's Edge or Fantasyland, I know I am in a theme park but through immersion and my willingness to set the real world aside, something magical happens.

That spell is broken when the immersive experience is shattered by the real world. And boy, has Disney been breaking the immersion.

Recently, Disney announced that cast members are now permitted to display tattoos, wear inclusive uniforms and display inclusive haircuts. Disney did all of this in the name of allowing cast members to express themselves.

The problem is, I'm not traveling across the country and paying thousands of dollars to watch someone I do not know express themselves. I am there for the immersion and the fantasy, not the reality of a stranger's self-expression. I do not begrudge these people their individuality and I wish them well in their personal lives, but I do not get to express my individuality at my place of business.

What's next, is Disney going to end the rule barring on stage cellphone use by cast members as an infringement on self-expression?

More broadly, like many corporations, Disney has been politicizing its business. Full disclosure: I am a Christian and a conservative Republican, so the people who run Disney and I do not see eye to eye.

Regardless, corporations have always made politically motivated decisions. Usually, it is due to the desire to make a profit, but sometimes it is due to the values of the people in the corporation. Walt Disney used his corporation to express his patriotism during World War II and his pro-capitalism beliefs afterward. The difference today is that the people who run Disney use social media to scream to the whole world that a decision has been made for political reasons.

Disney is in the process of taking the woke scalpel to the Jungle Cruise. Trader Sam is out because he might offend certain people. Every grown-up in the room realizes that Trader Sam is not a representation of reality and is meant as a funny and silly caricature. It is no more based in racism than every Disney caricature of an out-of-touch white American dad.

The next time I ride Jungle Cruise I will not be thinking about the gloriously entertaining puns of the skippers, I will be thinking about Disney's political agenda. That's a mood killer.

Disney proclaims that Splash Mountain must change because of its association with "Song of the South." Disney owns Splash Mountain so it can do what it wants. But if Disney screams at the top of its corporate voice, which is pretty loud, that it is changing it to appease a certain political point of view, now every time I look at the ride I am thinking about politics.

The same with Pirates of the Caribbean. Disney has made significant changes to Pirates of the Caribbean over the years. Whether Disney caved to political pressure or really thought the alterations were necessary is irrelevant.

Pirates used to be one of my favorite attractions. My family would always ride it first on our first day at the Magic Kingdom. Now, we do not even ride it every trip. When my family rides Pirates now, each of the changed scenes takes us out of the illusion because they remind us of reality and the politics that forced the changes.

Disney World is going to lose us as customers if it continues down this path. I do not want to have Disney World taken away from us because Disney cares more about politics than happy guests.

This should matter to the people of Orlando because, if Disney drives away customers like me, Orlando loses money. I can take my tourist dollars elsewhere. I would rather keep spending them in Orlando but people like me feel more and more excluded by Disney's decisions.

The parks are less fun because immersion and thus the joy is taking a back seat to politics.

Disney, please return to the values and vision of Walt. The customer experience should be the core of your business model. Immersion should not be sacrificed on the altar of political correctness and appeasing the Twitter mob.

Jonathan VanBoskerck lives in North Las Vegas, Nevada. He wrote this for the Orlando Sentinel.