

# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

# Vaccine 'mandates'

Gov. Kate Brown has a laudable goal: To boost Oregon's COVID-19 vaccination rate among health care and school workers.

Everyone except the exceedingly small percentage of residents who have medical issues that make vaccinations potentially dangerous should be inoculated against this virus that continues to spread rapidly. The vaccines are safe. They are effective. Not as effective against the currently predominant delta variant, to be sure. But "breakthrough" infections in fully vaccinated people are still rare — about 8% of cases in Baker County during the first half of August — and vaccinated people, even if they contract COVID-19, are vastly less likely to become seriously ill.

But Brown's vaccination mandates won't have the desired result, at least not at a significant rate.

Critics say the requirement that health care and school workers be vaccinated by Oct. 18 will prompt many employees to resign, creating a staffing crisis in these crucial public services.

But it's at least as likely that many workers, rather than lose their jobs, will simply cite either the medical or religious exemption that make this rather less than a "mandate." Besides which, 65% of health care workers in Baker County are already vaccinated, according to the Oregon Health Authority.

Baker County's two state legislators, Sen. Lynn Findley, R-Vale, and Rep. Mark Owens, D-Crane, are urging Brown to cancel the vaccine requirement but also to "implement robust medical and religious exemptions immediately," according to a press release.

Neither outcome — vital workers quitting or being fired, or using an exemption — would result in more people being vaccinated.

What, then, can the governor, and other public officials, do to boost the vaccination rate?

Threats don't work. They only spawn anger and nourish stubbornness.

The Baker City Council on Tuesday, Aug. 24 directed City Manager Jon Cannon to find an attorney to represent the city in a potential lawsuit against Brown. The city shouldn't spend public money contesting a mandate that really isn't one and that does not absolutely force people to decide between keeping their jobs and being vaccinated. Also, the governor has the legal authority to issue such executive orders.

The City Council would better show its respect for health care, education and other workers, and the community as a whole, by encouraging them to be vaccinated. That would protect not only these workers, but also the rest of us who depend every day on their skills.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

## Your views

### Employees' choice not to be vaccinated can harm others

How disappointing that representatives of firefighter/paramedic unions and certain health care workers value their "political" rights over the health and safety of the patients they serve (Per the Aug. 24, 2021, Herald story). I hope these folks might find the love and grace to care more for the children and adults they originally trained and educated themselves to protect and serve.

Please reconsider supporting the emergency mandate for vaccinations to protect the public health.

People also want to drive drunk, blow through stop signs, or speed recklessly, which also puts others at risk. Their poor choices harm others and result in criminal penalties. While it may be their sincerely held belief that it's their right to do what they want, it still harms others.

It is concerning that folks resist the single most important health care measure to protect themselves and others — vaccinations. They resist, despite ample medical and scientific evidence of their safety and effectiveness and increasing numbers of COVID cases — largely of the unvaccinated. Their choices exhaust doctors and nurses and overcrowd hospitals that must turn away others who need care.

Those of us who choose to follow medical advice to get fully vaccinated and wear masks pay the price for those who do not. Because people have resisted vaccines and masking, highly contagious variants continue to evolve. Young children who can't yet be vaccinated, immunocompromised, people undergoing chemotherapy, or have a transplant are at even greater risk.

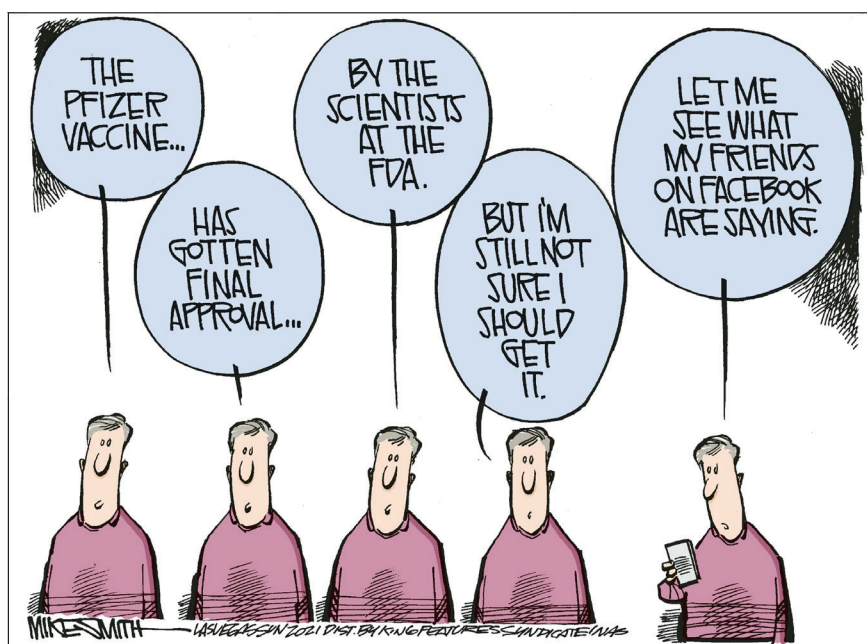
Thank you for the opportunity to provide a different perspective than that of a vocal minority of protesters.

Mary B. Tomlinson  
Baker City

### City refugees are threatening rural communities

Many of our neighbors are expressing growing concern and bafflement over the rapid changes in our country and culture. One thing it seems we all worry about is a sense that our town is being reshaped by "Nut Cases From Other Places." Refugees from the inhospitable concrete canyons.

Out here we know that rural folk, America's farmers and ranchers, are the foundation stones of this nation. These are the people that grew the crops and livestock that fed our developing country. Small towns formed, starting slowly as they grew to provide essential services and goods. Soon libraries and churches appeared. On market day families could walk the town, greeting one another with a smile and a handshake, as they caught up on the latest news.



America's rural families also know that bad things often happen in the middle of the night. As when you must leave a warm bed to face an early storm that puts the stock at risk. Or when a wildfire sweeps the prairie, taking out a crop and threatening homes of those who grew it. These people understand rallying together to save a neighbor or a community. They are tough enough to do whatever it takes. They are honest and forthright. Their promise given is a promise honored. They are tough — they don't start a fight but if one comes, they fight to win.

I grew up in the Rocky Mountain West, infused with the Code Of The West. At 17, I enlisted in the U.S. Navy. Years later, returning to my roots, I created a business that served our mountain towns. In my travels I watched the "Nut Cases From Other Places" as they began filling the front range towns. People from places like "New Joisey" or "New Yaak." They came to our state but cared nothing of its culture and values. They brought what they considered mountain music, Bluegrass! Nuts! Our mountain music was cowboy music. Sons of the Pioneers echoes in my ears to this day.

Now, we face a time where the essential elements of rural life are under a similar threat. People are coming here bringing ideas we can barely understand and will not accept. One current campaign is to spend our town's limited funds to create a "quiet zone" where the train cannot sound its horn. Can we agree, if you move into a place with active railroad tracks, you will hear trains? The same trains that brought prosperity to the nation as it connected our far reaches. Living here, we are delighted to hear the trains. They remind us of the enormity of success in our pioneer family's achievement. They opened this country and created a nation. Let's not lose another unique testament to who we are to the "Nut Cases From Other Places."

Rick Rienks  
Baker City

### We need to work together to end the pandemic

Baker City Council and Baker City Mayor. You may cause the very destruction you are complaining about. The protest you have initiated against the mandates of the governor and your plan to explore a lawsuit could be the final nail in the coffin of the many businesses you claim to be fighting for. Just the hint of such a rebellion could be the beginning of the downfall. How many will say, if City Council is fighting it, then I am too? How many will refuse? How many more will die?

Each and every citizen of this nation has been required at some point in time to comply with a regulation or law that they don't agree with. We are required by law to vaccinate our children before sending them to the education we are required to provide for them. We are required to pass a test in order to receive a license to drive a vehicle, which we are then required by law to insure. We pay taxes on the homes we own, the income we earn and products we purchase. These taxes go to pay the salaries you receive, in order to be able to sit in judgement of someone doing a very difficult job, during very difficult times.

As long as there is the potential to see some end to this virus and because of the sacrifices made to overcome it, we should be standing together, fighting against the virus, not against other people.

How can you endanger the lives of so many? You have given many uninformed or misinformed people the perfect reason for refusing to be vaccinated or wear a mask.

We are losing PEOPLE, real lives are at stake because of your political manipulations. Are you so busy trying to be right, that you can't see who is paying the price?

Look behind those masks, those are your neighbors, friends, family and yes your constituents. If you continue killing them off, you won't have a stake in the game, there won't be a game.

Ritha Wilcox  
Baker City

# The glorious shivering of a stroll on the beach

I zipped the fleece jacket snug to my chin and still I shivered.

It was glorious.

I couldn't recall, in that moment of joy, when I had last felt truly chilled.

The series of heat waves which had passed in the meantime had made the notion of donning a garment with long sleeves seem hazy, as ephemeral as a dream.

I had my blissful bout of goosebumps while standing on the beach near Bandon, buffeted by the breeze blowing off the Pacific.

Except breeze, though appropriately alliterative, is a poor choice in this context.

Breeze connotes a gentle zephyr that falls gently upon the face.

This wind careening off the foaming breakers slapped.

It stung.

It scoured.

The sand on this particular stretch of shoreline is more coarse than is typical in Oregon, and flung about by the gale it nipped my bare calves with a minor but constant pain, as though I were being stung simultaneously by a whole swarm of venomless wasps.



JAYSON JACOBY

I suppose I have some sense of what it would be like to get trapped in a sandblasting machine.

But the slight unpleasantness of the high velocity sand didn't dampen my joy at being outdoors without a sheen of sweat on my forehead.

The Pacific Ocean is the greatest natural air conditioner, more reliable even than the high mountains, which at times this summer have offered scant relief from the torrid doldrums of the valleys.

The Pacific, where it crashes ashore in Oregon, even in high summer rarely warms above 60 degrees; more typically the water measures in the low to mid 50s.

So long as the wind is blowing onshore — and so it does along the Oregon coast, with exceedingly rare exceptions — the air temperature along the beach, and usually for at least a few miles inland, almost certainly won't surpass 70 degrees.

And generally, as on the day of my walk at Bandon, it's comfortably below that.

Or uncomfortably, depending on how many layers you happen to bring and on the velocity of the wind.

Most summers — even ones less overbearing with their heat than the current version has been — I begin to daydream, as August begins, about strolling along the beach, the refreshing ocean wind feathering my hair.

This August, for the first time in two years, we managed to actually get some salty air into our lungs.

We spent more than half the week along the coast, covering almost the whole of Oregon's embarrassing wealth of seacoast.

(A wealth which is not, however, exclusive to the wealthy; I am eternally grateful to Gov. Oswald West for preserving our state's beaches as public, surely one of the greatest gifts any politician has ever bestowed on his constituents and on their offspring for generations to come.)

We ventured as far south as

Gold Beach, where the Rogue River empties into the sea, and left Oregon by way of the Astoria Megler Bridge, across the Columbia into Washington.

We got the sand of several beaches between our toes (and on the carpeted floor mats of our car, there to remain for eternity, beyond the power of any vacuum), and in every case the temperature was bracing.

Our kids, Olivia and Max, seemed immune. They generally shunned jackets as they splashed into the surf, Max, as is his wont, dousing himself up to the waist at a minimum. I waded into water a few inches deep occasionally and it had the same skin-contracting frigidity of an alpine brook, except more foamy.

And littered with the discarded shells of Dungeness crab, scraps of kelp and the transparent blobs of jellyfish remnants, all flotsam not usually found in mountain streams.

On our last day at the seaside (well, technically riverside, as the Astoria Megler Bridge, like Astoria itself, is a bit inland), I checked

the car thermometer as we began our inland journey. It showed 62 degrees.

We hadn't made it three miles before the temperature crept up to 70. And although it was already going on 7 o'clock in the evening, I knew the number would only continue to rise as we continued west, widening the distance from the Pacific's beneficent chill.

When we entered Longview it was up to 84. We stopped at a convenience store to use the restroom and when I opened the car door the air, heavy and sultry, slunk in.

I knew that for the rest of our journey the air conditioner would run almost constantly, its effects welcome, to be sure, but also an ersatz version of a stroll on a beach.

The artificially cooled air issuing from the dashboard vents is effective.

But it lacks the aroma of the shore, that rich and unique mixture — fishy, earthy, tangy, but always, owing to its utter absence of energy-sapping heat, refreshing to body and soul.

Jayson Jacoby is editor of the Baker City Herald.