

EDITORIAL

Fairness
with the
mandate

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown is giving more than 20,000 state employees, many of whose only contact with the public might involve processing paperwork, an extra six weeks to comply with the COVID-19 vaccination mandate.

People who might save your life?

They're getting no such concession.

This is untenable, and must change.

State officials announced last week that 24,000 state employees represented by the Service Employees International Union will have until Nov. 30 to comply with the mandate, instead of the original deadline of Oct. 18 to either be fully vaccinated or receive a medical or religious exception. That's more than half of the 42,000 state executive branch workers affected by the mandate.

Yet the deadline remains Oct. 18 for health care workers and for school employees. The former group, which includes hospital staff and emergency responders, including firefighters, most of whom also operate ambulances, is the most important in this situation.

Baker County Commissioners on Wednesday, Sept. 22 declared a local emergency related to the Oct. 18 mandate. Commissioners fear the mandate could prompt enough emergency responders to quit that the county's agencies will no longer have enough workers to respond to traffic crashes and other emergencies.

This is unacceptable.

The simplest solution, of course, is for health care workers to be vaccinated. It's perplexing that this should even be an issue. Dr. Dave Richards, medical director in the emergency department at Saint Alphonsus in Baker City, told the Herald earlier this month, while the hospital was busy treating COVID-19 patients, almost all of whom were unvaccinated: "This is simple — get vaccinated. It's a slam dunk."

Richards is absolutely right.

According to the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), as of Sept. 5, 68% of licensed health care workers in Baker County were vaccinated. That list includes some workers who aren't part of the emergency response system, such as dentists and chiropractors, and doesn't include all emergency responders.

The value of vaccination is indisputable, the evidence overwhelming. Since Aug. 1, when the surge in cases driven by the delta variant was in its early stages, about nine of every 10 cases in Baker County have been in unvaccinated residents. The vaccines are even more effective at preventing people from becoming seriously ill.

That the county faces even the potential of a crisis in responding to emergencies is unfortunate, and unnecessary. It's reasonable to expect that health care workers, who presumably have seen the terrible effects of the virus more directly than most people, would understand how vital vaccination is in combating the pandemic.

But we must deal with the situation as it is, not as we wish it to be. And if 24,000 state employees, whose tasks don't involve saving lives, are given more time to comply with the mandate, then the same concession should be afforded to those we depend on to protect us in the most perilous situations.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor

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.

Mail: To the Editor, Baker City Herald,
P.O. Box 807, Baker City, OR 97814
Email: news@bakercityherald.com



Your views

Forest health problems result
from mismanagement

The Sept. 25, 2021, issue of the Baker City Herald, from "Just get the shot" to the public forests in Oregon and much of the West are sick, and often on fire, is hardly a revelation.

Stating that the loggers and environmentalists concur is wrong. The loggers and ranchers are the real environmentalists, it was and is their livelihood. When a fire occurred on public land the logger was handed a paper sleeping bag and a sack lunch and put the fire out. They did not "contain and monitor."

The 1990 Wallowa-Whitman forest plan was a reasonable plan until the so-called environmentalists, along with judges, started amending the plan (spotted owl and eastside screens, 21-inch rule). Next came the big business of fighting wildfires. The industry was destroyed and we lost 15 mills in less than 10 years, including our own private mill.

Our company had 23 large companies work out of our shop, both private and government. There wasn't enough hours in the day to keep the hard-working, independent loggers in the woods. We now have many displaced log cutters working at Ash Grove, and several have retired from there. Many of the young people came by and shook our hand on their way to find work.

You can't blame this on climate change. Put the blame where it is due — on mismanagement. It took 17 years

for the feds and Western Oregon to recognize Eastern Oregon had a serious problem — tussock moths, pine borer beetle and spruce budworm, and tussock moth again.

"Senators demand climate action in federal budget plan." This picture was taken in 2007 at the Oregon Leadership Summit in Portland. "We are working as quickly as possible but want it done right." How is this working out?

By the way, in the letter to the editor. Separation of church and state is not in the Constitution. That was case law against the Department of Education.

Alice Knapp
Baker City

Those opposed to abortion
restrictions leave out details

There's a lot of talk by both sides and by some women also who don't know or believe the truth of God's word on this subject of abortion. Yes, she has the right over her own body, but the child she is carrying is, according to God's word, not her body. The child is a completely separate human from the mother, with a genetic code of its very own. Otherwise now we are dealing with two humans not just one.

Present day society condones sexual permissiveness, which leads to abortion, but God does not. God judges this permissiveness as sin and abortion as murder. Believers and unbelievers one day will give an account of their deeds

before Him. Think. What is the difference between a murderer destroying a body and the abortion clinic doing the same to a human baby? God calls both murders. He speaks of a special place in hell for those who do these things.

Exodus 20:13: "Thou shalt not kill."

Revelation, 21:8: "Murderers shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone."

We are not to have any part in putting an innocent human to death. In Exodus 23:7 God says "I will not justify anyone taking part in such wickedness."

This includes you, me, any politicians, presidents, anyone dealing in or condoning by knowing and not speaking the truth against such things. The truth is that the moment a male sperm cell fertilizes a female egg cell the command is given to begin the construction of a human life. This is not the preparing of a "tumor" or a "fetus" that will become a human, but is a designed individual that is different from anyone who has ever lived. Abortion clinics don't tell the prospect that a heartbeat is detectable at 18 days, brain waves measurable at 43 days, all systems are formed by eight weeks. All functioning at 11 weeks and except for size, by 20 weeks the child is virtually developed. In closing, it seems we have forgotten God's law and made it legal by man's law to murder and just call it inconvenience.

Richard Fox
Baker City

OTHER VIEWS

Congress shouldn't allow IRS to
spy on personal bank accounts

Editorial from The Detroit News:

The Biden administration is actively pushing Congress to require banks to report to the Internal Revenue Service on the account activity of a huge swath of Americans. This unwarranted snooping would be an invasion of privacy, and lawmakers should make sure it doesn't happen.

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen and the IRS have asked Congress to mandate banks send along annual inflows and outflows from accounts with at least \$600 or \$600 worth of transactions. That's a low bar that would expose the majority of bank accounts to additional scrutiny.

The administration claims this would allow the IRS to conduct audits more efficiently.

In reality, it's all about the federal government trying to squeeze Americans for additional tax dollars in an effort to fund Democrats' \$3.5 trillion budget wish list. Or as Yellen phrased it in a letter to Congress, the government has "a shortage of necessary funds for key national priorities." Biden officials estimate this could bring in

upward of \$400 billion over a decade.

This is a sleazy way to go about it, and it offends Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable search and seizure. Taking all these records and sifting through them for possible audits is an incredible overreach and an unprecedented invasion of the privacy of untold millions of Americans.

It's also none of the federal government's business.

Business and banking groups are pushing back hard, as are some state legislatures.

The Small Business Association of Michigan and the Michigan Bankers Association are among them. The proposal would be cumbersome for financial institutions to implement, and they have raised concerns about how this could put the financial information of consumers at risk.

Rann Paynter, president and CEO of the Michigan Bankers Association, says the plan would hamper both financial institutions and consumers.

"It's certainly a burden to the holders of those accounts, and an invasion of privacy to Americans for that type of

information to be shared with the IRS," he says. "It's a lot of information to provide to the government that is not necessary."

Paynter notes that if the IRS is concerned about some individuals or businesses avoiding their share of taxes, the agency already has the tools it needs to investigate.

The pushback has caused House Democrats to put aside the proposal for now — at least in its existing form. They are still considering a version that would impact fewer people.

U.S. Rep. Dan Kildee, D-Mich., has noted the concern over the negative impact this could have on low-income Americans, whom Democrats purport to want to help. Yet Kildee, who is on the Ways and Means Committee, also said the issue isn't "completely gone," according to The Wall Street Journal.

Given the invasiveness of the proposal, it needs to go away. Congress should ignore the demands of the Biden administration and make sure this extraordinary approach to tracking of the bank accounts of average Americans never happens.