

EDITORIAL

‘Permanent’ mask rule not necessary

Oregon health officials have a communication problem when it comes to the current mask “mandate” for indoor public spaces.

(Mandate in this case deserves to be enclosed in quotation marks given how many people, including in Baker County, are ignoring it despite the potential benefits of masks in slowing the spread of the highly infectious omicron variant.)

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) has proposed to replace the temporary mandate, which expires Feb. 8, with a “permanent” rule.

More quotation marks.

“Permanent” is a particularly poor adjective in this context. Permanent implies, well, permanence, which is to say, forever. Unfortunately, permanent is the word state law uses to distinguish the type of rule the OHA is proposing from the temporary rule that expires Feb. 8. It’s not reasonable to believe that OHA officials truly intend to require, at least on paper, that people are still wearing masks in indoor public spaces

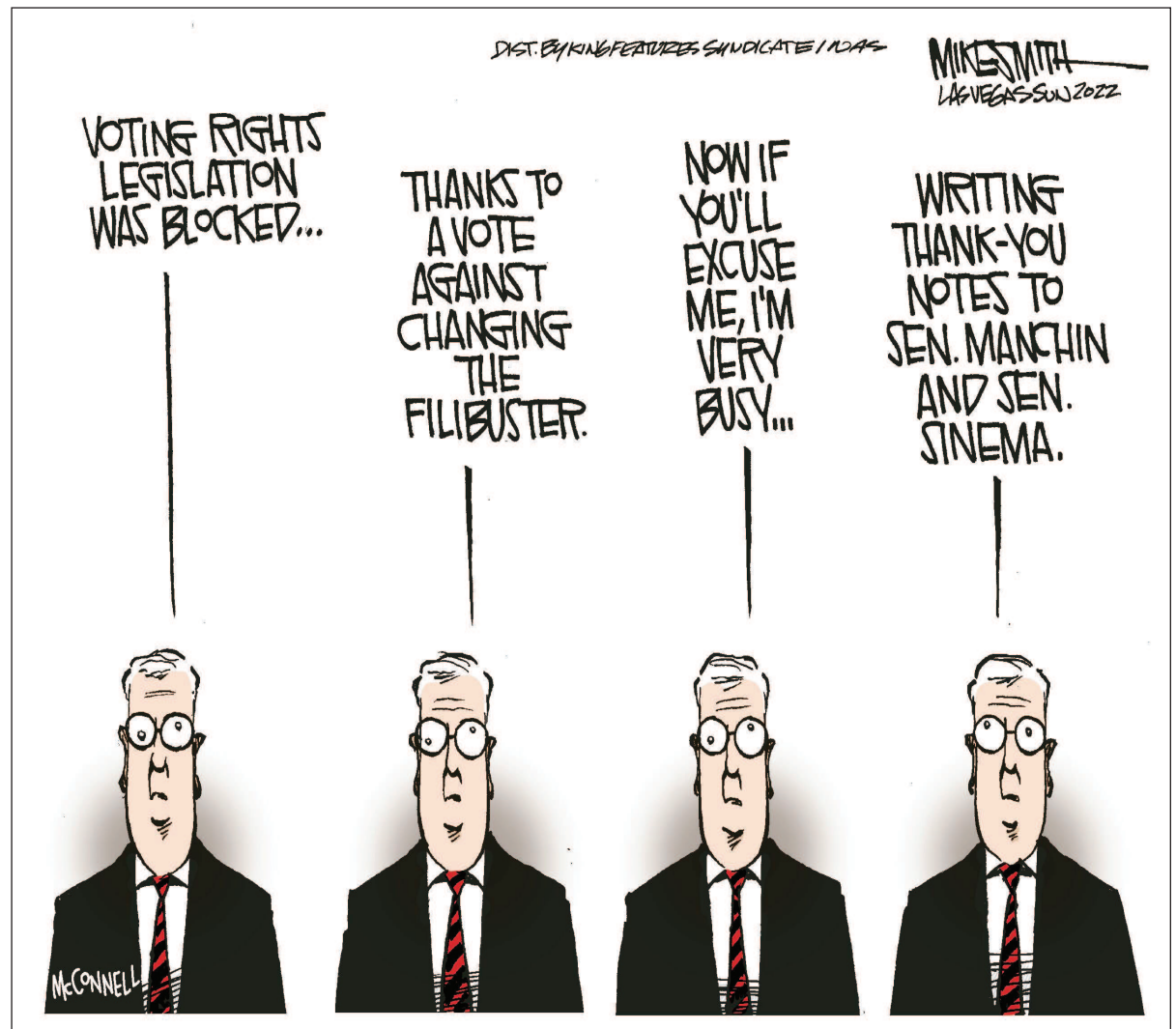
in this state in 2050, or 2070.

The reason for a “permanent” rule, officials say, is that such a rule doesn’t have a specified duration, unlike temporary rules such as the current mask mandate, which is limited to 180 days.

But here’s the thing: Although OHA can’t legally extend the current temporary rule beyond Feb. 8, the agency can replace it with a new, slightly different, rule that’s also limited to 180 days. This is not a choice between either a “permanent” mask rule or no rule at all after Feb. 8.

Although concerns about a decades-long mask mandate are not logical, OHA is fueling legitimate concern about the duration of the indoor mask rule by refusing to give Oregonians specific criteria, such as the rate of new COVID-19 infections, hospitalizations and deaths, that would trigger the cancellation of a “permanent” rule. State officials should be able to come up with thresholds that would render the mask mandate unnecessary.

The simplest solution,



though, is a new temporary rule. That would have the same effect as a permanent rule, but with the benefit that, because it has a finite duration, it ensures that OHA would at least have to review

the situation with the pandemic in a reasonable period.

The agency should be doing so regardless of whether the mask rule is permanent or temporary. Given projections that the omicron surge will

peak soon — if it hasn’t already — and then recede rapidly, the current indoor mask rule might be unnecessary relatively soon.

— Jayson Jacoby,
Baker City Herald editor

YOUR VIEWS

The US Constitution has served our nation well

I have read with interest the several recent letters to the editor in the Herald regarding “constitutional county” and “county supremacy” issues. They are interesting in their approaches and in their depth of analysis of the issue. Both sides cite the Constitution. When I was in school (admittedly a long time ago), we were taught to bolster our positions with factual information, speak with as much certainty as the facts allowed, and be passionate.

The folks advocating for Baker County United (BCU) speak with great passion. They are, however, either not aware of the facts of history, or choose to manipulate them for an ideological belief. The Articles of Confederation were discarded by the Founders for very good reasons ... namely that they did not work and the newly formed country was failing. Under the Articles each state made its own laws and rules regarding taxes, tariffs, slavery, etc., without the critical coordination of a federal government. The term Balkanization was not yet coined but they knew what they were talking about when the Articles were discarded for our current Constitution. By the 1860s, continuing “local supremacy” issues, including whether or not slavery should continue or be left for each state to decide, resulted in the most traumatic and deadly four years of strife in our history.

We know we have a Constitution and the commissioners have already taken an oath to support and defend it ... BCU’s efforts are at best redundant, and at worst play into the hands of a small extremist fringe.

I encourage the Baker County Commission to look at the lessons of history and reject this latest attempt to discard our Constitution. It has served us well for more than 200 years. Whenever it needed to be revised, a long and considered process was laid out and followed to change it. That process, including the part about the courts being the arbiters and interpreters of the Constitution’s intent, is what we should be committed to ... not an extremist and skewed view of our country.

Dave Hunsaker
Baker City

No need to create a quiet zone in Baker City

First of all, I like trains and I like train horns. I cannot for the life of me see what possible benefit will be reaped by instituting a quiet zone. I have never lived more than 1/4 mile away from the tracks and personally have never been put out or traumatized by the sound. Locals who like the sound and want it to continue need to respectfully contact City Council members and voice their opinion. The group who are pushing for the quiet zone have been far more vocal than those in opposition, so far. I can’t help feeling that if the quiet zone is implemented that it will only be the beginning. What’s next? Police, fire, ambulance sirens? The noon chimes? AMBER alerts?

Has any thought been given to a partial quiet zone where trains would not sound their horns at night? Or lower decibel Wayside horns triggered by a train’s approach? As for the argument I have heard that silencing the horns will kickstart the development of new

housing and workers will come flooding in for jobs, I say, Who are you kidding? The population of Baker City has already increased and virtually every business in town is trying to hire help. This is a situation that deserves clear, level-headed discussion between both groups with neither flying off the handle and making the whole thing worse for everyone.

Mark Alderson
Baker City

Quiet zone would make Baker City safer, more livable

The quiet zone is all about public safety, livability and self sufficiency — three stated goals of the Baker City Council.

We know that horns are sounded at highly hazardous decibel levels.

Highly hazardous.

We know that horns disrupt students, workers, visitors and many of our citizens in their homes.

We know that a quiet zone makes all railroad crossings within the zone SAFER than train horns alone.

We know that conductors can always sound their horn if they see any danger on the tracks.

So a quiet zone makes roads and sidewalks safer, workplaces safer, classrooms and playgrounds safer, visitor lodging and sidewalk dining more enjoyable and neighborhoods both safer and more livable. It will enhance property values and therefore improve the housing market.

The Baker City citizens that have been working on this project with city staff for the past three years are committed to fundraise the costs associated with this public safety measure. That fundraising/self-sufficiency is dependent on the council supporting the next steps in establishing the quiet zone.

In addition to public safety, livability and self sufficiency, this is a tremendous economic development issue.

Over 50 business entities — in addition to the Baker 5J School District which first voiced their support for the quiet zone in 2019 when Superintendent Witty appealed to the City Council for support — signed on to the quiet zone proposal to illustrate how strongly they support this effort.

This isn’t controversial, it isn’t political — it is simply common sense because it will make Baker City safer and more liveable for everyone.

These employers, and the Baker City citizens behind them, believe that improved safety and greater livability will positively affect their bottom line, their customer satisfaction, the working conditions for their staff, the safety of their kids and their own good night’s sleep.

Baker 5J Schools, Baker Charter School, the YMCA and the more than 50 local businesses (in addition to all the citizens of Baker City that signed the petition) deserve recognition, respect, and our appreciation for “sticking their necks out” and supporting this appeal to council.

Twenty years ago, Chuck Phegley brought this issue forward while serving on our City Council. He believed in the benefits that the quiet zone could bring to Baker City and led a coalition of conservative, community-minded citizens to explore the options. I believe we

honor Mr. Phegley, and his foresight, by supporting the plan for a Baker City quiet zone.

Beverly Calder
Baker City

We need to speak up against government overreach

“Render unto Caesar ...” What does that oft quoted passage mean?

“Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God, the things that are God’s.” Christians have traditionally interpreted the famous passage to mean that Jesus endorsed paying taxes.

(See the lecture “Render Unto Caesar: A Most Misunderstood New Testament Passage” presented March 13, 2010, at the Ludwig von Mises Institute. <https://mises.org/wire/render-unto-caesar-most-misunderstood-new-testament-passage>)

Waking in the wee hours of the morning a thought came to me, what if the “Render unto Caesar” statement was really intended to remind us we are a duality? That we are a combination of the physical world and the spiritual. While our spirit finds solace in the contemplation of God and our place in His universe, the physical requires stepping out of our internal chapel to function in the crowded world our bodies occupy.

There are times where our physical courses intersect. Science tells us “two objects cannot occupy the same point at the same time.” Traffic accidents or collisions on a dance floor illustrate the concept. But what about collisions between different belief systems, or ideologies? Words have substance that can directly impact a person. Caution is necessary, nothing good comes from starting with an insult. This can lead to the cross-over from the spiritual (words) to the physical: from an insult to a punch in the nose. That punch is “Rendering to Caesar” in the strongest sense of the concept.

Likewise, God did not give us our physical life to be subjects to oppressors or tyrants. Now, daily, we see more enslavement of the American people by public servants at all levels of government. It seems a Caesar complex comes with the job. This continues with the blessing of subversives moving into our community. It will stand as the new order, rooted in the silence of clergy and citizenry who should be speaking out loudly at every opportunity.

News article: “A slide presentation with an invitation to join the QSA Club was presented to all 4th and 5th graders at Raleigh Hills Elementary School in Beaverton School District.” <https://www.northwestobserver.com/index.php?ArticleId=1970>

The above cited article demonstrates just how far schools are willing to go to compromise our children without the knowledge or consent of parents. The initials QSA reportedly stand for “Queer Straight Alliance.” Those are three words that should not be introduced to 10- to 12-year-old children in any school in America. Despite the smut seen in all media forms, parents must have the final say regarding their children’s exposure to adult themes in the schools.

Is everyone else as outraged as I regarding the reported sexual perversion of our young children in Oregon schools? This one topic

demands we stand up immediately and tell the school boards it will not be tolerated in our schools. Further, we need to have all district attorneys address this question, “Why are there no criminal charges filed against these purveyors of filth in schools across our counties and state?” We are entitled to a clear and definitive answer. There can be no excuse and no delay in removing the perverts who are compromising parental and church teachings while sexualizing children, destroying their innocence and attacking their understanding of moral behavior.

If we are resolute as a community we must be visible and heard every day if necessary. Our failure to speak out convinces our enemies that if they keep up their efforts they will win and our children will be lost to us. It only takes a year or two to destroy a community’s culture. Look at what has happened with the vax, the masks and our freedoms.

The fight is on or it is over, lost before your eyes. God Bless America and God give us strength.

Rick Rienks
Baker City

Idaho Power avoids the full story on Boardman to Hemingway

The headline in the Herald of Jan. 21, 2022 — “Power Companies announce deal on B2H” — doesn’t tell the full story. It should read: “BPA pulls out of ownership of the B2H; enters into transmission agreement.”

After 16 years of analysis the BPA (Bonneville Power Administration) decided that owning a portion of the B2H was not financially viable for them. Instead, in order to serve their customers in SE Idaho, they will give some unneeded equipment and transmission rights in return for lower wheeling charges (the fee to move energy on other companies’ transmission lines).

In return Idaho Power must absorb BPA’s share of 24%, bringing Idaho Power’s total share from 21% to 45%, more than doubling their cost. The public knew the BPA was withdrawing from ownership of the B2H in 2019 when Idaho Power informed the state utility commissions. In 2021 the Oregon Public Utility Commission told Idaho Power to recalculate B2H’s budget to show PacifiCorp 54% ownership and Idaho Power’s 45% ownership, adjusted for inflation. The budget of \$1.2 billion was developed in 2016. It is significantly outdated. In Idaho Power’s most recent filing to the OPU in December, there is still no budget documentation. They say they will provide a Transmission Supplement with a detailed analysis in the first quarter of 2022. They must still be crunching the numbers, attempting to justify their ability to finance almost half the B2H transmission line.

Idaho Power expects us to accept that doubling their financial obligations will still be the least cost/least risk scenario for their customers. Meanwhile they continue plans to pillage the landscape of Eastern Oregon while serving landowners pre-condemnation papers for a project that is still years from approval. I don’t trust them and neither should you!

Jim Kreider
STOP B2H Coalition
La Grande