

## EDITORIAL

# Cliff Bentz and others talk about gun laws

Where Congress is on gun laws may not be where you are on gun laws. We took a look at what some local politicians think.

This is one of many topics we hope to explore on policy matters before the November election.

We asked Rep. Cliff Bentz, a Republican, who represents Baker County and the rest of Oregon east of the Cascades. And we also asked the two major candidates for the new Congressional seat that will include much of Central Oregon, Republican Lori Chavez-DeRemer and Democrat Jamie McLeod-Skinner.

All three responded. No surprises for us in their responses. Note that we asked about the Protecting Our Kids Act, HR 7910, and the Federal Extreme Risk Protection Order Act, HR 2377.

HR 7910 basically makes it so semiautomatic weapons can't be sold to people under 21; it creates a framework for regulating guns without serial numbers, commonly called ghost guns; bans the sale and possession of large capacity magazines; and more.

HR 2377 is what some people call a red flag law. It allows family members or law enforcement to petition a court for a temporary order to prohibit someone from purchasing or possessing a firearm. Oregon has a similar law, already.

Bentz opposes both bills.

"Each of these laws, if enacted, would be litigated, delayed in implementation, and in several cases, held to be unconstitutional," he wrote in an email. "What we should immediately do is forcefully tell the Department of Justice to prosecute individuals who lie on their background checks, end straw firearm purchases, conduct more detailed background checks, enhance (within the law) the capabilities of law enforcement agencies gathering background information, and crack down on people selling firearms from their personal collection without a dealer's permit. Instead of politicizing the response, we should be actually enforcing our existing laws and addressing the mental health crisis that results in these terrible events."

He pointed out he has co-sponsored other legislation that would allow schools to take unused COVID-19 funding and hire more school resource officers and mental health guidance counselors.

"Confiscating guns will not solve this problem," he wrote. "The rights protected by Second Amendment are integral to American liberty."

Chavez-DeRemer did not tell us how she would vote on the two bills, specifically. Read into her response what you will.

"I'm a strong supporter of the 2nd Amendment and will vote to protect our Constitutional rights in Congress," she wrote in an email. "Oregonians are being crushed right now by inflation caused by reckless spending. We desperately need commonsense leadership, so that families aren't extraordinarily burdened when we get gasoline for our cars or buy our family's groceries."

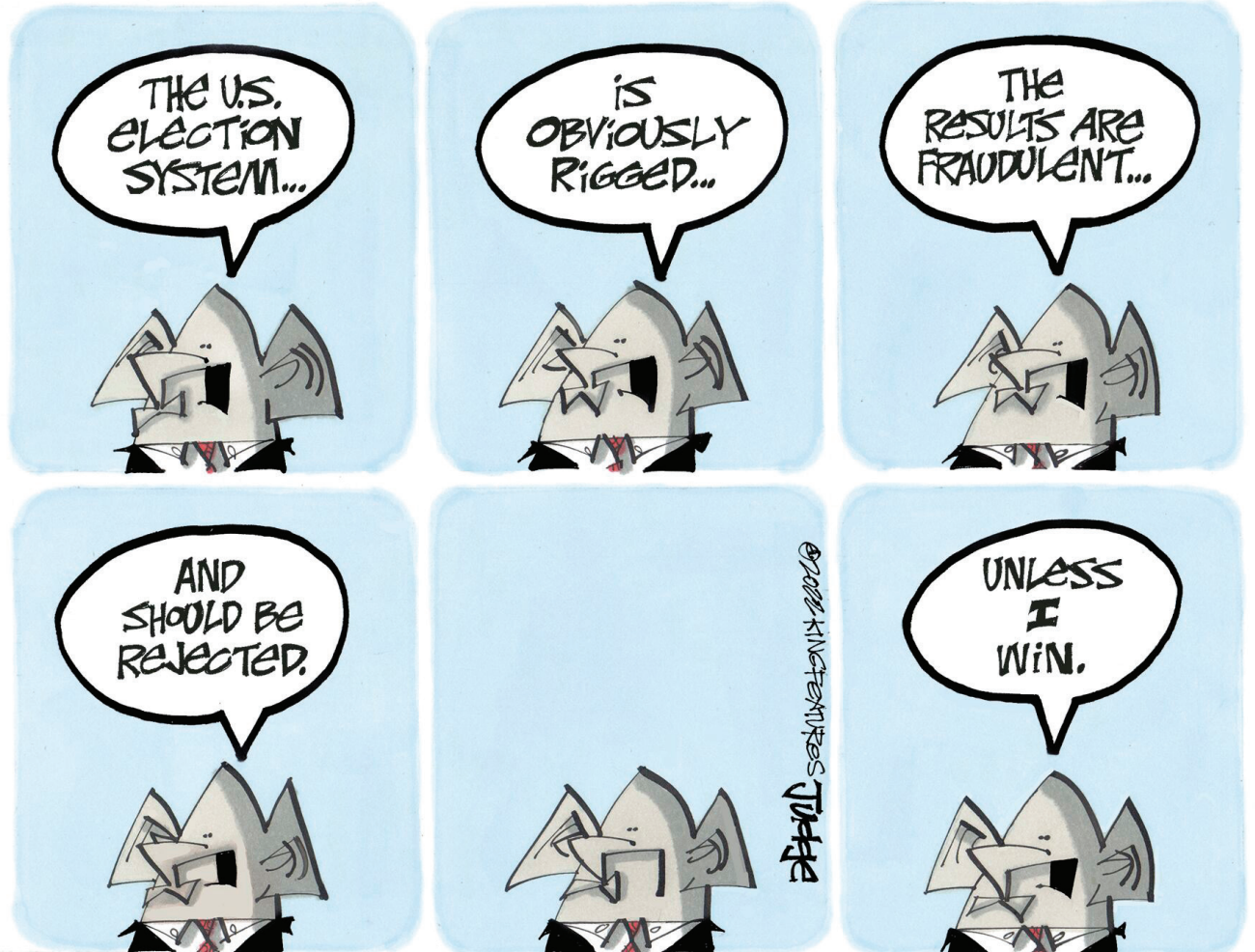
McLeod-Skinner says she would vote for both bills.

"Both bills are common sense safety measures to help protect our families and respect the rights of responsible gun owners," she wrote in an email. "My dad hunted to put food on our table, and I live in rural Oregon where a lot of people own guns. Responsible gun owners are committed to keeping our communities safe and they reject the fear-mongering of those opposing these common sense measures. Unfortunately, D.C. insiders and extremist politicians are out of touch with the vast majority of Oregonians and Americans, including gun owners, who believe that a felon should not be able to buy a gun in a parking lot without a background check, or that an 18-year-old or someone who is a known danger to themselves or others shouldn't be able to buy a weapon of war."

Bentz may be your representative. Chavez-DeRemer or McLeod-Skinner may be your representative in the future. You can tell them what you think about these bills and gun control.

You can email Bentz at <https://bentz.house.gov/contact>. A campaign email for Chavez-DeRemer is [info@lorichavezderemer.com](mailto:info@lorichavezderemer.com). A campaign email for McLeod-Skinner is [campaign@jamieforeregon.com](mailto:campaign@jamieforeregon.com).

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## YOUR VIEWS

### Agree that railroad quiet zone plan is unnecessary

In response to Mr. Haskell's opinion, "City's quiet zone is misguided and costly" — I totally agree.

When some folks move into the serene and beautiful valley that Baker City has to offer, they want to start campaigning for change.

"Geez, what's that train whistle we hear daily? We can't allow that to continue. That's got to go! It's ancient history!"

And while we are at it, why

don't we allow zoo animals to be placed on downtown rooftops and sidewalks. (Oops, you already allowed that.) That will really encourage tourism, won't it. Why do we need monuments adorning our city depicting the history of the Oregon Trail and how the rough, tough, and brave pioneers made their trek out West?

Insanity? I think so. Pleeeeease Baker City residents, hold onto your traditions and common sense.

**Jan Smith**  
Vancouver, Washington

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**Mail:** To the Editor, Baker City Herald,  
P.O. Box 807, Baker City, OR 97814

**Email:** [news@bakercityherald.com](mailto:news@bakercityherald.com)

## OTHER VIEWS

# Pandemic opens door for measles

BY SAAD B. OMER

Pandemics have consequences beyond the death and disease directly caused by the novel pathogen. In the 1918 influenza pandemic, more deaths were caused by the pneumococcal bacterium among those made susceptible to bacterial infection by influenza than by the flu itself.

One potential byproduct of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic is the threat of an old scourge: measles. In the United States, two doses of measles vaccines are recommended for all children. These doses are usually administered as the measles, mumps and rubella combined vaccine. The first dose is given at 12 to 15 months of age, and the second dose at 4 to 6 years of age. Schools in all states require measles vaccination for entry, though they allow various medical or nonmedical exemptions.

But early in the pandemic, there were substantial disruptions to routine non-COVID vaccination — including fewer children coming to vaccination appointments, and fewer students enrolling in kindergarten, meaning they skipped the requisite vaccines. Many children who missed their recommended doses still haven't received them.

The World Health Organization has already warned this year of a "perfect storm" for measles outbreaks worldwide and recorded nearly twice as many global cases in the first two months of 2022 than in 2021.

In one of the country's most significant public health achievements, the U.S. eliminated measles cases originating within its borders in 2000, thanks to vaccines. Since then, measles has reached the U.S. mainly via Americans returning from abroad, or in secondary outbreaks associated with these importations from other countries.

Yet this public health victory now faces a twofold threat: missed vaccine doses in 2020 and 2021, and growing anti-vaccine views because of opposition to the COVID-19 shots.

Herd immunity against measles was under threat even before the pandemic. Increasing vaccine refusal over the last

two decades has created a population of unvaccinated individuals from toddlers to young adults.

Looking at outbreak investigations, my colleagues and I found that from 2000 through 2015 a large majority of measles cases started in people who were unvaccinated despite being vaccine-eligible. More than 70% of these had nonmedical exemptions — i.e., exemptions for religious or philosophical reasons.

In another 2016 study, my colleagues and I estimated that 12.5% of U.S. children and teens were susceptible to measles — accounting for those who had refused or missed vaccine doses, as well as those who were too young to be vaccinated but were not protected through maternal antibodies. Alarming, among children 3 years old or younger, about a quarter did not have measles immunity. Since measles is highly infectious and requires very high levels of population immunity to prevent outbreaks, the U.S. was at high risk.

In fact, in the years before the COVID-19 pandemic, large measles outbreaks brought the United States close to revocation of its measles elimination status by the World Health Organization. If COVID vaccine misinformation and opposition ramp up vaccine mistrust in general, as health experts fear, measles vaccination rates in the U.S. could dip below 90% — the approximate childhood rate as of 2019 — and enter the danger zone.

In the U.S. before a measles vaccine became available, the disease was associated with a substantial number of hospitalizations and deaths. Even in the post-elimination era, hospitalizations and need for outbreak control can be costly. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention review of measles outbreaks between 2001 and 2018 found that the median cost per case was \$32,805.

And measles infection can depress the immune system for years, hampering the body's ability to respond to other infections, as was found in a 2019 study that aligned with decades of clinical and epidemiological observations.

The risk of large measles outbreaks is

increasing with most COVID-19 mandates ended and international travel resuming largely without enforced restrictions. Public health authorities will be gambling if they do not preempt and prepare for these outbreaks. Past public health emergencies demonstrate the considerable threat: During the 2014-16 Ebola outbreak in West Africa, disruptions in routine vaccination resulted in more children dying of measles than the Ebola virus in some countries.

But there are straightforward ways for federal, state and local authorities to mitigate the risk right now.

Childhood immunization mandates continue to play an important role, but because they are imposed at school entry, they do not cover the younger age groups at highest risk of measles infection and its complications. Just ensuring that the shots reach a high number of the children who become eligible for vaccination this year is not sufficient — those who missed measles doses in the last couple of years should be vaccinated as well.

There needs to be a national "catch-up" campaign to vaccinate those who missed their doses of routine vaccines during the pandemic, with a particular focus on kids younger than 5 (school age). Since mid-2020, many countries have planned catch-up campaigns to reduce the risk of measles and other childhood diseases.

Research indicates that doctors and nurses remain the most trusted source of vaccine information even among the vaccine-hesitant. Any national measles catch-up campaign — led by the CDC in collaboration with state and local health departments — must prioritize healthcare providers' voices and patient interactions for strong public health communication, especially since anti-vaccine misinformation is a growing problem.

The COVID-19 pandemic has already taken a heavy toll on children. We can prevent further damage by stopping the return of an already vanquished foe.

■ Saad B. Omer is the director of the Yale Institute for Global Health and a professor at the Yale University schools of medicine and public health.

## CONTACT YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

**U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley:** D.C. office: 313 Hart Senate Office Building, U.S. Senate, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-3753; fax 202-228-3997. Portland office: One World Trade Center, 121 S.W. Salmon St. Suite 1250, Portland, OR 97204; 503-326-3386; fax 503-326-2900. Baker City office, 1705 Main St., Suite 504, 541-278-1129; merkley.senate.gov.

**U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden:** D.C. office: 221 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510; 202-224-5244; fax 202-228-2717. La Grande office: 105 Fir St., No. 210, La Grande, OR 97850; 541-962-7691; fax, 541-963-0885; wyden.senate.gov.

**U.S. Rep. Cliff Bentz (2nd District):** D.C. office: 1239 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20515, 202-225-6730; fax 202-225-5774. Medford office: 14 N. Central Avenue Suite 112, Medford, OR 97550; Phone: 541-776-4646; fax: 541-779-0204; Ontario office: 2430 S.W. Fourth Ave., No. 2, Ontario, OR 97914; Phone: 541-709-2040. bentz.house.gov.

**Oregon Gov. Kate Brown:** 254 State Capitol, Salem, OR

97310; 503-378-3111; [www.governor.oregon.gov](http://www.governor.oregon.gov).

**Oregon State Treasurer Tobias Read:** oregon.treasurer@ost.state.or.us; 350 Winter St. NE, Suite 100, Salem OR 97301-3896; 503-378-4000.

**Oregon Attorney General Ellen F. Rosenblum:** Justice Building, Salem, OR 97301-4096; 503-378-4400.

**Oregon Legislature:** Legislative documents and information are available online at [www.leg.state.or.us](http://www.leg.state.or.us).

**State Sen. Lynn Findley (R-Ontario):** Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., S-403, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1730. Email: [Sen.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:Sen.LynnFindley@oregonlegislature.gov)

**State Rep. Mark Owens (R-Crane):** Salem office: 900 Court St. N.E., H-475, Salem, OR 97301; 503-986-1460. Email: [Rep.MarkOwens@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:Rep.MarkOwens@oregonlegislature.gov)

**Baker City Hall:** 1655 First Street, P.O. Box 650, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-6541; fax 541-524-2049. City Council meets the second and fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers. Councilors Jason Spriet, Kerry

McQuisten, Shane Alderson, Joanna Dixon, Kenyon Damschen, Johnny Waggoner Sr. and Dean Guyer.

**Baker City administration:** 541-523-6541. Jonathan Cannon, city manager; Ty Duby, police chief; Sean Lee, fire chief; Michelle Owen, public works director.

**Baker County Commission:** Baker County Courthouse 1995 3rd St., Baker City, OR 97814; 541-523-8200. Meets the first and third Wednesdays at 9 a.m.; Bill Harvey (chair), Mark Bennett, Bruce Nichols.

**Baker County departments:** 541-523-8200. Travis Ash, sheriff; Noodle Perkins, roadmaster; Greg Baxter, district attorney; Alice Durlinger, county treasurer; Stefanie Kirby, county clerk; Kerry Savage, county assessor.

**Baker School District:** 2090 4th Street, Baker City, OR 97814; 541-524-2260; fax 541-524-2564. Superintendent: Mark Witty. Board meets the third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. Council Chambers, Baker City Hall, 1655 First St.; Chris Hawkins, Andrew Bryan, Travis Cook, Jessica Dougherty, Julie Huntington.