

EDITORIAL

Polio's tiny, but troubling, return

Polio, the specter that haunted America during the first half of the 20th century, leaving parents frightened that their children would be killed or paralyzed for life, can seem as relevant today as manual typewriters or black-and-white TV sets.

And for more than three decades, the viral disease has been relegated to history.

Polio hasn't spread widely in the U.S. since 1979.

And the federal government declared the disease eradicated from the U.S. in 1994.

The reason is simple — vaccination.

Vaccines have all but eliminated polio, along with other previously widespread diseases that mainly afflicted children, such as measles, mumps, diphtheria and whooping cough.

Yet earlier this month a young adult who is not vaccinated against polio and lives in Rockland County, New York, north of New York City, contracted the virus and was paralyzed. More troubling, the virus was found in sewage samples in a few New York counties, as well as in New York City.

Vaccination rates remain high in most of the country, fortunately. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that about 93% of 2-year-olds have had at least three doses of polio vaccine (federal officials recommend four doses, although some states require only three for students attending school).

But the CDC also notes, in a report on the recent New York state polio case, that vaccination rates have dipped during the COVID-19 pandemic, largely due to disruptions in some vaccination programs.

There's another potential concern — that the politicization of COVID-19 vaccines will convince some people to eschew polio and other vaccines whose effectiveness and safety are indisputable based on voluminous data over many decades.

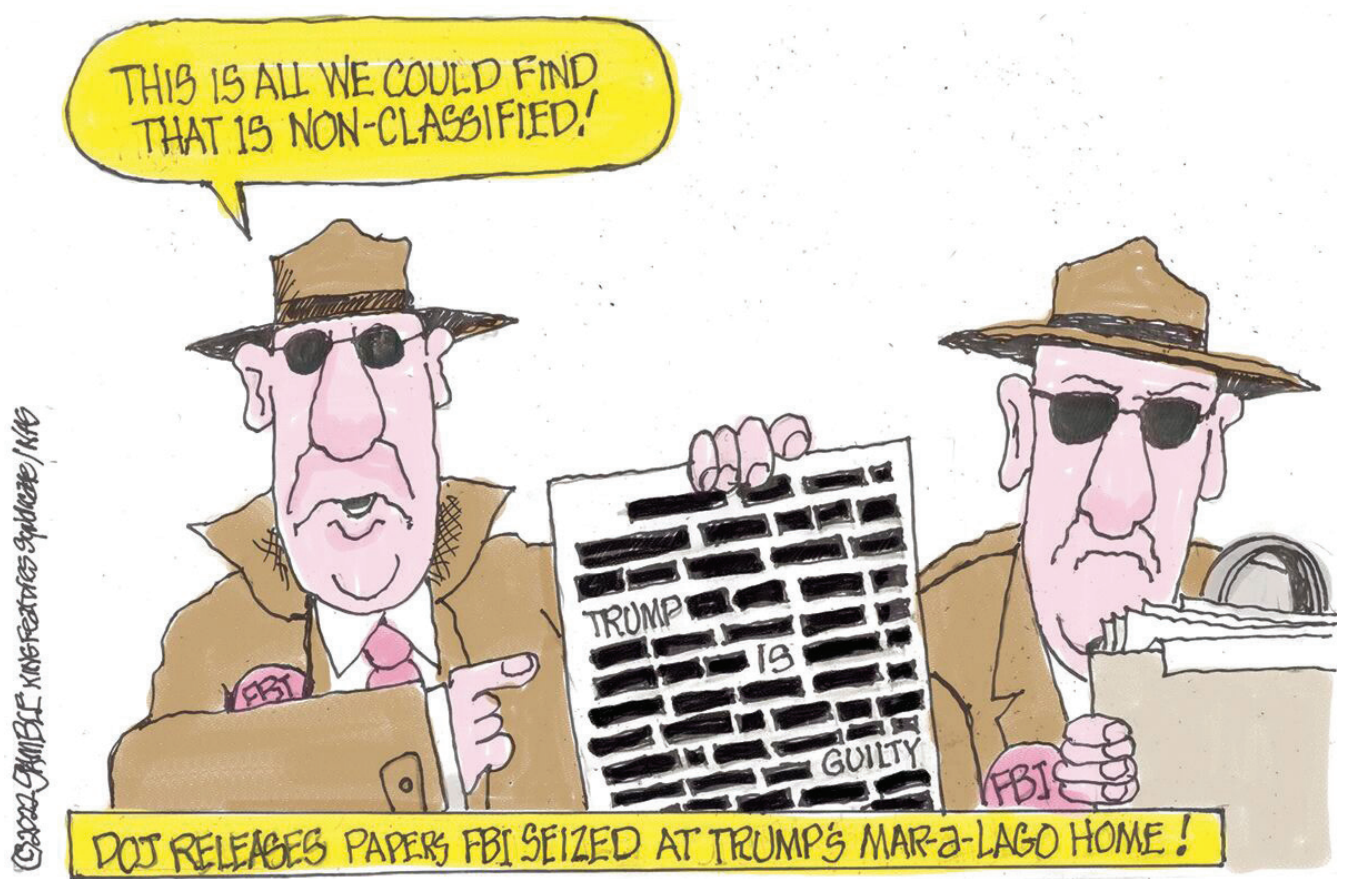
According to the New York State Immunization Information System, vaccination rates among children 2 and younger in Rockland County was 60.3% as of August 2022. In some communities, the rate was as low as 37.3%. That puts a significant number of children at risk of contracting a preventable disease.

New York officials believe polio arrived in the state by way of a person infected with a strain of the virus linked to samples found in wastewater in Israel and the United Kingdom. That person either had few or no symptoms — which is the case with most people who are infected with the polio virus — and then spread it to others, including the person who, due to the paralysis, became the first known confirmed case in the state.

The reappearance of polio, even in a very limited sense as is the case in New York, doesn't mean the disease is going to become widespread again. But the episode should be a valuable reminder to Americans of how vital vaccination is, and how much inoculations have done to spare both children and adults from terrible, and potentially fatal, infections.

Sadly, someone's life was irrevocably changed in the process.

— Jayson Jacoby, Baker City Herald editor



YOUR VIEWS

Mining is essential to America's economy

Our country has a number of serious problems; two of which particularly bother me.

Money and mining. I think our money problems have been created in part by the fact that far too many in our government have forgotten or don't know where money comes from. All wealth comes from the ground. It's created when we harvest food and resources from the earth. This wealth is expanded when products are treated and manufactured into more useful products for mankind. Everyone else makes a living by distributing or selling these essential products. All others in our country make a living by providing a service for others or working for the government.

Just living on printed money is going to backfire on us one of these days as it will be declared worthless and our creditors will demand payment in gold or solid goods.

Thus, our basic industries are the foundation of our economy. Farming, ranching, fishing, timbering, oil recovery and mining are absolutely essential — and mineral recovery is the most important. Our country has all these minerals except one — tin — and we could provide our industries if we would let our miners work. We cannot manufacture one thing without using minerals, either in the product or the tools and machinery needed to make it.

The sad fact is that we are completely dependent on China for 25 minerals and partially for seven more. If they wanted they can bank-

rupt and shut down our country in a few weeks. The only reason it hasn't happened already is that we are their biggest customer.

To add to all of this, Congress is thinking of rewriting the mining laws. These laws worked well for 130 years until Clinton and his secretary of interior started changing environmental regulations and stopped funding the Bureau of Mines. This group of explorers, mining engineers and metallurgists advised and directed government actions to develop and produce the essential metals that made it possible for America to win World War II and the Korean War. This created many jobs and a great deal of wealth for our country. Government agencies — Forest Service, BLM, DEQ etc. — have used environmental laws to regulate our mining and other industries out of business. When all agencies were created, Congress could not know all the problems they would encounter, so they gave them the right to write addenda to their laws and file them in federal records to give them force of laws. These regulations were supposed to follow the word and intent of previous law. Environmental control has taken over our country and environment concerns are only a front for a land control agency.

The mining laws, Multiple Use Act, Federal Land Management Policy Act and all mining laws are still in effect and mining land use is supreme over all other land uses. The Supreme Court confirms this but the Forest Service and other agencies completely ignore these laws and say their

regulations must be followed. They use a small book of regulations that they have written to give us our permits to mine. They never meet the 90-day completion time and most permits don't get approved for many years. All mining laws including the Federal Land Management Act and many Supreme Court decisions directly forbid agency actions. The Forest Service, BLM, etc. have very little expertise in mining and they have shut down or driven them overseas. We are buying timber from Canada, or minerals and other things from China, our oil from Russia and the Middle East. Let's reestablish the Bureau of Mines and start producing our own resources and making wealthy for our country.

Kenneth Anderson
Professional mining geologist
and engineer
Baker City

City Council should restore money to pave Indiana Avenue

During 2021, the Baker City Council voted to repave the west end of Indiana Avenue. At this meeting it was agreed that no money had been budgeted that year, but money would be budgeted in 2022, which was then done. This year, 2022, with several new members, they reversed the prior city council's decision and voted to not pave this section. Here are the facts, and I challenge anyone to dispute them.

Several years ago a trench was dug and a pipeline laid on this section of Indiana Avenue. At that time the road

was paved and a picture of it had been provided to the 2021 council after a special committee had been formed to study the problem, and the chairman of this committee who had previously worked for the city stated it had never been paved! Instead of the city paving over the trench, the whole road was plowed up and turned into a dusty gravel road and when it rains or snows it gets muddy and tracks into driveways and garages. This in turn devalues our homes and properties.

There is a lot of traffic on this road including UPS, Federal Express, cable companies, and Baker City water works and local homeowners. I find it hard to comprehend how one city council through majority vote can vote to pave and the next one cancels the funding for it which had been budgeted, especially after they probably weren't aware of the actual facts. The local homeowners were never given the courtesy or contacted for input and weren't even aware of the reversal until Aug. 23. This is a very poor way to run the city!

If each of the city council members lived on a paved street and one day the city turns it into a gravel road with dust and mud I would imagine they would be as upset as the homeowners are in this area of Indiana Avenue. The current city council should restore the funds and get it paved!

Gary McManus
Chairman, Sally's Addition
homeowners association
Baker City

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

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- Writers are limited to one letter every 15 days.
- The writer must include an address and phone number (for verification only). Letters that do not include this information cannot be published.

- Letters will be edited for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons.

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COLUMN

CDC admits it botched COVID-19 response

BY CYNTHIA M. ALLEN

FORT WORTH, Texas — It's been said that admitting you have a problem is the first step to recovery.

Maybe that's what Rochelle Walensky, the head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, was looking toward when she conceded recently that the agency she manages botched its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Her stunning admission came in reaction to an agency-initiated internal review that found the CDC wanting on multiple levels.

The review reportedly found that it "takes too long for CDC to publish its data and science for decision making," that its guidance is "confusing and overwhelming" and that agency staff turnover during the COVID response "created gaps and other challenges for partners."

Some of these failures, Walensky asserted, are a function of poor infrastructure, inadequate staffing and funding, and silos within the agency.

In a video message to CDC staff, Walensky echoed the review findings, pointing to the agency's habitually tardy release of relevant data, its muddled messages on virus mitigation measures, and its general inability to respond to public health threats effectively.

The CDC is "responsible for some

pretty dramatic, pretty public mistakes," she confessed.

I'll say.

Those are fairly substantial failures for an agency whose primary role is to protect public health. And I won't be the first to assert that funding doesn't have much to do with it.

It was politics, not staffing shortages or a hesitancy to release non-peer-reviewed studies or even bureaucratic failures, that motivated CDC leadership to repeat questionable or inaccurate information — whether on the origin of the virus, its mild impact on children, or the data regarding efficacy of masks and vaccines.

So in reality, Walensky's admission only confirmed what most Americans have known for a long time.

The CDC is now little more than another political entity; one more interested in following the polls than the science.

To be fair, the organization deserves grace for its performance during the early days of the pandemic, when very little was known about COVID-19. It made sense that early guidance would need to be modified as new information became available.

But the CDC earned no such indulgence when it doubled-down on bad data, bad guidance and bad decisions in the preceding two-and-a-half years

— even in the presence of voluminous contradictory research.

Indeed, the agency's muddled and ever-changing rules were adopted and enforced by many governing entities around the country.

It's why some schools remained closed for months — longer than in most other parts of the world.

It's why children as young as 2, including those with developmental challenges, were masked, and some remain so.

It's why vaccine mandates that were powerless to stop the virus' spread were put in place in businesses and workplaces.

The devastation caused by those policies (and the guidelines that prompted them) is difficult to quantify.

Learning loss, particularly among vulnerable and at-risk student populations, may take decades to recover.

There is increasing evidence that young children and even babies have suffered developmental delays during the pandemic; speculation is that social isolation and masking policies are to blame.

And the number of people who lost livelihoods on account of vaccine mandates is only now being fully realized — and legally vindicated, in some cases.

What's interesting about Walensky's admission, though, is the timing.

Her call for an overhaul has come just days after the CDC walked back its COVID mitigation guidelines, favoring individual discretion over rigid, draconian rules.

For example, it's now viewed as safe for those exposed to the virus to avoid quarantine. There is no distinction between the guidance for unvaccinated and vaccinated people. Screening for those without symptoms has been ruled unnecessary. And thankfully, students exposed to the virus may remain in class.

It's worth noting that these recommendations were championed by some doctors and disease experts earlier in the pandemic, and they were met with CDC officials' ire.

The rule changes are a quiet concession by the CDC that it was — yet again — wrong.

Of course, for all those suffering from the agency's botched COVID response, these admissions are too little too late.

However badly needed an agency overhaul may be, it will not restore the trust of the American public. And there's no telling the long-term consequences of that failure.

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