

THE INAUGURATION

Day One

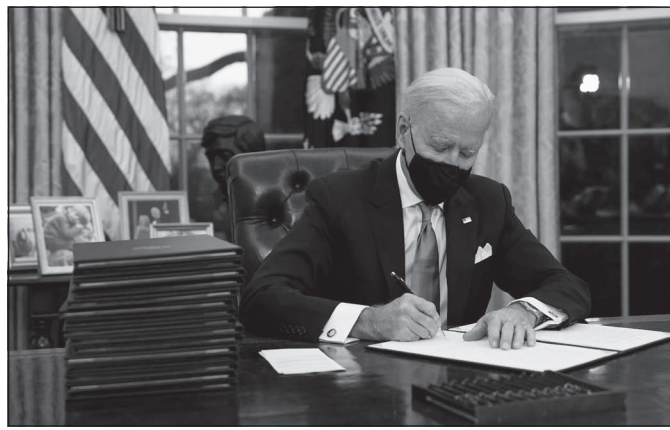
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But Biden, facing the debilitating coronavirus pandemic, a damaged economy and a riven electorate, is intent on demonstrating a sense of urgency and competence that he argues has been missing under his Republican predecessor. “There’s no time to start like today,” Biden said in his first comments to reporters as president.

Biden wore a mask as he signed the orders in the Oval Office — a marked departure from Trump, who rarely wore a face covering in public and never during events in the Oval Office. But virus precautions are now required in the building.

Among the executive actions signed Wednesday was one requiring masks and physical distancing on federal property and by federal employees.

Biden’s order also extended the federal eviction freeze to aid



Evan Vucci/AP

President Joe Biden signs his first executive order in the Oval Office on Wednesday hours after taking the oath of office.

those struggling from the pandemic economic fallout, created a new federal office to coordinate a national response to the virus and restored the White House’s National Security Council directorate for global health security and defense, an office his predecessor had closed.

But Biden’s blitz of executive

actions went beyond the pandemic. He targeted Trump’s environmental record, calling for a review of all regulations and executive actions that are deemed damaging to the environment or public health, aides said Tuesday as they previewed the moves.

Another order instructs fed-

eral agencies to prioritize racial equity and review policies that reinforce systemic racism.

His press secretary, Jen Psaki, held a briefing for reporters, a practice the Trump White House had all but abandoned in the final two months of the presidency. Psaki said she intended to restore regular briefings as part of the White House’s commitment to transparency.

“I have deep respect for the role of a free and independent press in our democracy and for the role all of you play,” she said.

Also Wednesday, three new senators were sworn into office Wednesday, securing the majority for Democrats in the Senate and across a unified government.

In a first vote, the Senate confirmed Biden’s nominee for Director of National Intelligence, Avril Haines. Senators were working into the evening and overcame some Republican opposition to approve his

first Cabinet member in what’s traditionally a show of good faith on Inauguration Day to confirm at least some nominees for a new president’s administration. Haines was confirmed 84-10.

Vice President Kamala Harris drew applause as she entered the chamber to deliver the oath of office to the new Democratic senators — Jon Ossoff, Raphael Warnock and Alex Padilla — just hours after taking her own oath at the Capitol alongside Biden. The three Democrats join a Senate narrowly split 50-50 between the parties, but giving Democrats the majority with Harris able to cast the tie-breaking vote.

Taken together, their arrival gives Democrats for the first time in a decade control of the Senate, the House and the White House. At the same time, the Senate is about to launch an impeachment trial of Trump.

Inauguration

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Redemption and reclamation were the themes of the televised and livestreamed inauguration of the 46th president of the United States and the 49th vice president, Kamala Harris. Their very presence, along with a much smaller than usual crowd of invited guests, former presidents and congresspeople, made the point that democracy had prevailed despite the challenges of the past four years, culminating in the Capitol insurrection of Jan. 6.

Gone were the noose that rioters erected in the building’s shadow and the Confederate flag paraded through the Union’s most hallowed halls. In their place was a return to civility, order and protocol — and the guarded hope that America will finally stop eating itself alive.

The 59th inauguration

Conventional wisdom about inauguration ceremonies — that they are routine because they happen every four years, and that they are remarkable for the very same reason — rang true, even as circumstances, from the scourge of COVID-19 to the threat of more violence, led the 59th installment of this grand American tradition to be pared down to essentials. On a chilly day with the occasional flurry of snowflakes, many finally found the chance to exhale, and to mourn the victims of the pandemic, inside of that relative quiet.

“Somehow we’ve weathered and witnessed a nation that isn’t broken, but simply unfinished,” said Amanda Gorman, 22, of Los Angeles, whose inaugural poem “The Hill We Climb” embodied the changing of the guard, and the reflective mood, with its words about

resilience and opportunity. “We, the successors of a country and a time where a skinny Black girl descended from slaves and raised by a single mother can dream of becoming president only to find herself reciting for one.”

And as a trio of former presidents from both parties stood, in unity, to witness the transfer of power, the view was dappled with bipartisan purple — the color chosen by Harris, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and former first ladies Laura Bush and Michelle Obama, whose long coat and gold belt gave her the appearance of a superhero.

In Harris’ case, it was also a tribute to Shirley Chisholm, the first Black major-party presidential candidate. Like Chisholm when she became the first Black woman elected to Congress in 1969 and later launched a campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination, Harris made history Wednesday when she was sworn in as the first woman and person of color to become vice president.

The gravity of the moment was underscored further by the presence of Eugene Goodman, the Capitol Police officer who almost surely saved the lives of elected officials by leading rioters, among them white supremacists, away from the Senate chamber during the Jan. 6 breach. Goodman, who is Black, escorted Harris to her seat; the first Latina Supreme Court justice, Sonia Sotomayor, administered Harris the oath of office.

‘Let’s start afresh, all of us’

Such moments added to the poignant nature of the ceremony, which represented both historical change and a potential return to normalcy, striking a deft balance between turning the page, dealing with today’s challenges and reckoning with our past.

“Let’s start afresh, all of us,” Biden explored during his inaugural address, in which he also pledged to defeat “political extremism, white supremacy (and) domestic terrorism.” “Politics doesn’t have to be a raging fire, destroying everything in its path. Every disagreement doesn’t need to be a total war.”

His message was bolstered by a ceremony that wove together the traditional and the new: Lady Gaga sang the national anthem in a billowing red skirt and blonde Greta braids; Jennifer Lopez, dressed in the crisp, clean white of a fresh start, belted out a medley of “This Land Is Your Land” and “America the Beautiful,” replete with a message in Spanish and the urge to “Get loud.”

No mention of Trump

And then there was the glaring absence of former President Donald Trump, who left the capital for Mar-A-Lago rather than admit he’d lost the election. Instead, it was left to now former Vice President Mike Pence to show up in a demonstration of basic decency, while now-Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell — who only recently began to come out more forcefully against baseless claims of election fraud — later addressed Biden in a particularly awkward moment while he and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi gifted the new president and vice president a pair of U.S. flags.

It was clear that things had shifted quite dramatically.

The National Mall featured 200,000 flags in place of those who could not attend the ceremony because of pandemic restrictions and tightened security, and on Tuesday evening 400 lights illuminated the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool to honor the 400,000 who have died in the U.S. from the coronavirus. And

Biden’s self-described first “act as president” was asking for a moment of silent prayer for those lost to COVID-19, their loved ones, “and for our country.”

Those attending the inauguration — speakers and Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Roy Blunt, Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett and likely future Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg among them — all wore masks while looking on, and the lectern was wiped clean between each speaker.

Biden never mentioned his predecessor, who defied tradition and left town ahead of the ceremony, but his speech was an implicit rebuke of Trump. The new president denounced “lies told for power and for profit” and was blunt about the challenges ahead.

Central among them: the surging virus that has claimed more than 400,000 lives in the U.S., as well as economic strains and a national reckoning over race.

“We have much to do in this winter of peril, and significant possibilities. Much to repair, much to restore, much to heal, much to build and much to gain,” Biden said. “Few people in our nation’s history have been more challenged, or found a time more challenging.”

Swearing the oath with his hand on a 5-inch-thick Bible that has been in his family for 128 years, Biden came to office with a well of empathy and resolve born by personal tragedy as well as a depth of experience forged from more than four decades in Washington. At age 78, he is the oldest president inaugurated.

Both he, Harris and their spouses walked the last short part of the route to the White House after an abridged parade. Biden then strode into the Oval Office, a room he knew well as vice president, for the first time as commander in chief.

TODAY

Today is Thursday, Jan. 21, the 21st day of 2021. There are 344 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On Jan. 21, 2020, the U.S. reported its first known case of the coronavirus, in Washington state.

In 1793, during the French Revolution, King Louis XVI, condemned for treason, was executed on the guillotine.

In 1924, Russian revolutionary Vladimir Lenin died at age 53.

In 1942, a court banned pinball machines in New York City, calling them gambling devices.

In 1977, on his first full day in office, President Jimmy Carter pardoned almost all Vietnam War draft evaders.

In 2007, Lovie Smith became the first Black head coach to make it to the Super Bowl.

In 2019, Kamala Harris entered the Democratic presidential race.

Ten years ago: Arizona Rep. Gabrielle Giffords was transferred to Trix Medical Center to undergo months of therapy.

Five years ago: The Obama administration tightened restrictions on European and other travelers who had visited Iran, Iraq, Syria or Sudan in the previous five years.

One year ago: A rancorous dispute over rules marked the first full day of President Donald Trump’s impeachment trial.

Today’s Birthdays: World Golf Hall of Famer Jack Nicklaus is 81. Opera singer-conductor Plácido Domingo is 80. Singer-songwriter Billy Ocean is 71. Former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder is 70. Actor Geena Davis is 65. Basketball Hall of Famer Haakeem Olajuwon is 58. Singer Emma Bunton (Spice Girls) is 45.

—Associated Press

Arrest

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After his arrest Jan. 7, prosecutors filed a motion to forfeit Dahl’s security. Instead, Dahl offered to return to jail if the state did not seize the thousands of dollars his relatives posted on his behalf.

On Wednesday, Dahl appeared by video from the jail before Judge Beth Bagley to hear the new charges read against him. In one case, he’s accused of attempting to kidnap and rob Redmond man Adam Wattenbarger.

In the other case, filed days later, he’s accused of threatening Wattenbarger with a handgun



Dahl

and attempting to get him to not testify against him.

He pleaded not guilty in those cases. Trials in the three cases are scheduled for the spring.

Dahl’s legal problems began in May, when he and Taylor were hanging out and Taylor started to think Dahl was hitting on his girlfriend, according to a search warrant request filed in circuit court. They got into a heated argument before going “separate ways,” the document states.

Several days later, on May 5, Dahl called Taylor saying he’d like for them to get together, smoke weed and “squash the beef.”

Dahl picked up Taylor in his gold Chevrolet Tahoe behind the Shop Smart in La Pine and drove to a railroad access road off Reed Road and parked. Dahl got out and walked to the passenger side door, sprayed Taylor in the eyes with pepper spray and “ripped” Taylor out of the Tahoe, according to court documents.

Dahl allegedly pulled off Taylor’s prosthetic leg, threw it in the brush and punched Taylor repeatedly in the head. After the alleged assault, Taylor told police that Dahl poured gasoline on him and began flicking a lighter, threatening to burn Taylor alive.

Dahl reportedly put Taylor in the back of his Tahoe and drove him to Taylor’s girlfriend’s house, where he threw Taylor on the ground, rang the doorbell and drove away.

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Schools

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In that year, there was a 19-percentage point gap between the two groups at Summit and a 14-point gap at Mountain View. In 2020, those gaps shrunk to about 1 and 2 percentage points, respectively. Summit has a fairly small Latino student population — only 7.5% of Summit students in the class of 2020 identified as such — which means data like graduation rates can quickly fluctuate. But Mountain View’s Latino population is larger, representing about 16% of the class of 2020, giving extra heft to that group’s 90.2% graduation rate.

Michael Hicks, principal at Mountain View, declined to be interviewed, but noted that his school’s rising Latino graduation rates was “wonderful news.”

Katie Legace — Bend-La Pine’s executive director of high schools and deputy superintendent — noted that graduation rates rose for many groups of underserved students districtwide in 2020, from students learning English to students with disabilities. She credited these boosts with the district’s recent efforts to fight chronic absenteeism and help students with mental health struggles.

“We have been working very hard to decrease those gaps over the years,” Legace said.

La Pine High School’s graduation rate rose sharply to 76.7%. However, the school had Oregon’s third-lowest graduation rate for a noncharter high school with at least 100 students in the graduating

class, only ahead of Springfield and Reynolds high schools, according to state data.

A few high schools in the region with previously high graduation rates — Bend, Sisters and Ridgeview — essentially held steady, all with about a 91% graduation rate or higher.

Bend Tech Academy at Marshall High School — which just finished transitioning from a traditional alternative high school to a technical-education magnet school — had a lower graduation rate than Bend-La Pine’s four large high schools, at 62.7%. But it also saw the biggest jump in its rate, with a 16 percentage point increase.

Sal Cassaro, principal at Bend Tech, said his goal is to eventually catch up to Bend-La Pine’s traditional high schools. Bend Tech’s combination of rigorous academics and hands-on career and technical education is driving this increase in graduates, he said. “That is the magic recipe,” Cassaro said.

The local traditional high school with the biggest jump in graduation rates was Redmond High School, rising 8 percentage points to 83%. In particular, Latino students at Redmond High excelled in 2020, with a 12-point bump to an 80.9% rate, state data showed.

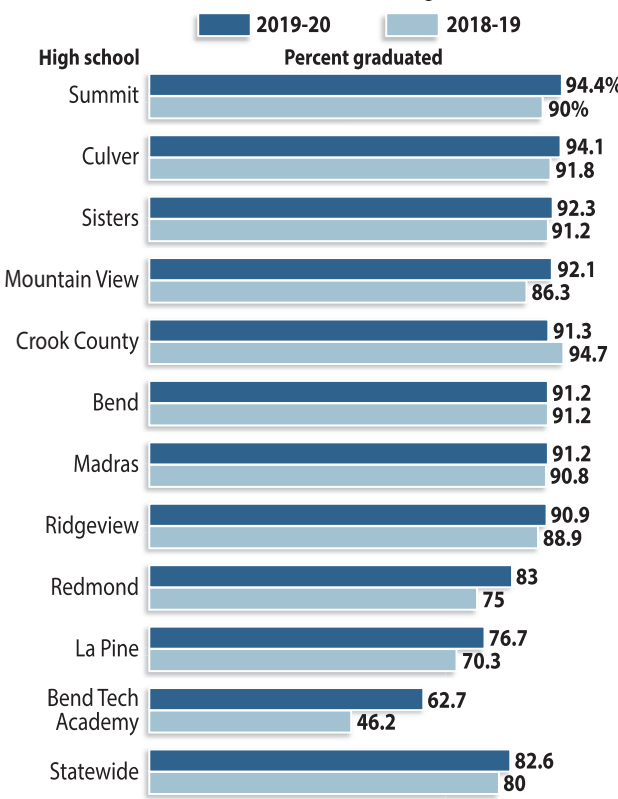
Principal Audrey Haugan cited multiple factors in this increase, including programs like Juntos and ¡AVANZA! designed to reach out to local Latino families.

“There are a lot of things in place that have been going on for the past 3-4 years we felt this senior class would benefit from,” Haugan said.

Madras High School, which

Class of 2020 high school graduation rates in Central Oregon

Nearly every major high school in Central Oregon saw graduation rates rise for the Class of 2020 — a group that ended high school in a pandemic. All major local high schools’ graduation rates surpassed the state average except La Pine High School and Bend Tech Academy, the latter of which is in the midst of transitioning from an alternative school to a technical education magnet school.



Source: Oregon Dept. of Education

Alan Kenaga/For The Bulletin

has seen its graduation rate skyrocket in the past few years, essentially held steady in 2020 with a 91.2% graduation rate. But there were major shifts underneath the surface of Central Oregon’s most ethnically diverse high school.

Latino students in Madras earned diplomas at about the

same rate as 2019, at 94.3%. But white students’ graduation rate leaped from 81.8% to over 95%. And Madras’ Native American students saw their graduation rate fall for the first time since 2016, slipping from 92.9% to 81.2%.

Brian Crook, principal of Madras High School, was un-

available for comment.

Crook County High School — which had the region’s highest graduation rate in 2019 at 94.7% — saw a slight dip in 2020 to 91.3%.

Central Oregon’s smallest high school, Culver, had a 94.1% graduation rate — about 2.5 percentage points higher than 2019.

Did COVID-19 impact graduation rates?

When COVID-19 shuttered schools in mid-March, the state ordered that classes would become pass/fail, and students who were already passing their classes at the time would automatically receive class credit.

School leaders, both locally and statewide, had mixed feelings on whether this impacted graduation rates. Gill, the state schools chief, said he doesn’t believe the students who received automatic passing grades impacted graduation rates very much. Those students were likely to earn those credits in June and get their diploma without this change, he said.

Gill did acknowledge, however, that many school staffers gave extra focus to struggling students as the pandemic began, which could have boosted graduation rates.

Haugan, Redmond High’s principal, said the state’s changes in grading, and the cancellation of state proficiency testing, absolutely impacted graduation rates.

“I do think the graduation rates this year were inflated,” she said. “We expected to see a rise, but certainly not a leap.”

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