

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Bulletin
AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERHeidi Wright Publisher
Gerry O'Brien Editor
Richard Coe Editorial Page EditorYouth suicides
are not on the
rise in Oregon

Gov. Kate Brown recently explained one reason why she wanted to prioritize COVID-19 vaccinations for teachers.

"I made the decision based on the fact that we have got to get our children back in school," she said last week.

Her voice then colored with emotion and she reached her hand up to touch her chest.

"I know of families where 12- and 13-year-olds years are committing — attempting — suicide," she said. "I talked with the CEO and president of Salem Health on my vaccination tour this week. She is hearing of many 11- and 12-year-olds attempting suicide."

That is frightening. You may have heard rumors that suicides or attempts among youth in Oregon have increased during the pandemic. Television stations reported what Brown said.

But it is important to put those concerns in perspective. The information Gov. Brown presented was anecdotal. We asked her staff if there was data to back up her concern. Charles Boyle, a spokesman for the governor, said he was not aware of any.

We checked with the Oregon Health Authority. OHA tracks suicides and Oregon hospitals, are required by law to report suicide attempts by people under the age of 18. The data for both categories for 2020 actually look remarkably similar to 2019.

"According to our Zero Suicide in Health Systems program, based on

preliminary data, Oregon has not seen an increase in the number of suicides for the first 11 months of 2020 when compared to the same time period in 2019 for both youth and across the lifespan," said Jonathan Modie, a lead communications officer with the Oregon Health Authority. "Until more data (finalized data) become available, it is premature to identify any changes since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic."

Let's be clear. That doesn't mean that what Gov. Brown said is not true. It is just that currently available data in Oregon does not support an overall increasing trend. And it is certainly true that any youth suicide or youth suicide attempt is a reason to be concerned.

Brown also was correct when she added at the same news conference: "We know that our schools are a place of social interaction. They're a place where young people, students, can get their behavioral health and emotional supports met."

Coping skills, support and treatment work for most people who have thoughts about suicide. And schools can help identify children who need help and get them the resources they need. A return to more social interaction would undoubtedly be good for everyone's mental health. But at least according to the data the state has, Brown's anecdotes are not examples of a trend.

Rep. Zika proposes bills
on housing, child care

The bills legislators introduce tell you something about them. So we took a look at the bills Rep. Jack Zika, R-Redmond, sponsored.

We don't pretend this is an exhaustive list. We are cherry picking a few that we found interesting.

You may recall Zika worked hard to ensure Redmond could locate a development that contained affordable housing outside its urban growth boundary. House Bill 2708 would make that more generally available to local governments for affordable housing. It couldn't be done just anywhere. For instance, it couldn't eat up high-value farmland. And there are other requirements. But this bill is an important step toward expanding a program that both Bend and Redmond were able to take advantage of. We hope it moves forward.

House Bill 2524 would make it easier for child care facilities to be sited in Oregon. It allows child care centers to be located in commercial and industrial zones. It also forbids local governments from imposing

more restrictive requirements than imposed on other uses in the same zone. Of course, this bill does not supersede other state health and safety requirements for child care facilities.

Zika is a Realtor, so perhaps it is no surprise that he sponsored a bill about home ownership. House Bill 2702 would require each school district to ensure students in grade 12 get one total hour of instruction on home ownership. It could be taught by a person licensed by the state's Real Estate Commission or someone from a bank. We would think schools — without this added requirement — would already give enough instruction that students could figure it out themselves or know where to go to learn more. He also has another bill, House Bill 2703, which would ensure that real estate continuing education courses include information about fair housing laws.

There are many more. If you go to the Oregon Legislature's website you can click on bills and search by name.



My Nickel's Worth

Sno-park bingo

I appreciated Jan. 15th's article on crowded sno-parks, especially since waking up at 4 a.m. on ski days has become my new reality.

I've checked all the boxes in Central Oregon sno-park bingo, including meeting the out-of-stater who said "the parking ticket was only \$130 — worth it!" and seeing the last legal spot at Dutchman fill before 6 a.m. — on a weekday.

Overrun sno-parks and the outpouring of interest we are seeing for public lands year-round is instructive should we choose to pay attention. The population of Central Oregon is set to double in the next few decades. COVID-19 has driven people to the outdoors more than ever before, shining a light on a clear supply-and-demand issue.

I am hopeful that the recent change in presidential administration will allow agencies like the U.S. Forest Service to finally throw some serious time and money behind planning for the future of recreation on our public lands. Values like fish and wildlife habitat, carbon storage, clean water and recreation have long played second fiddle to logging, and it's time for that to change.

We need a new plan for our public lands. One that addresses the supply and demand of recreation, conserves space for wild creatures and ensures historically excluded communities are able to access and enjoy them.

The Forest Service, and arguably more importantly, Sens. Wyden and Merkley and Rep. Bentz, should help craft a new and better vision for our public lands now before it's too late.

— Jamie Dawson lives in Bend and works for Oregon Wild.

Milquetoast editorial

The first week of January was one to remember for The Bulletin's editorial section.

First, there was the bewildering waste of ink headlined, "Did Cliff Bentz fail Oregonians?" You either failed or were too frightened to label Bentz's actions for what they were: tacit support for the insurrectionists who tried to thwart the tallying of the Electoral College vote. Did Bentz fail Oregonians? Did you really think that needed to be discussed? He also failed the United States and failed to honor the Constitution.

Second, there was publication Sunday, Jan. 10, of Ron Ross' letter to the editor "Sensationalizing the news," in which he claims "the widely media-touted and predicted Thanksgiving surge (in coronavirus cases) did not happen." According to the Oregon Health Authority's COVID-19 weekly report, the three highest weekly case counts in Oregon were the week of Thanksgiving and the next two weeks. So, even if the increase in cases did not meet the OHA's threshold for a "surge," the evidence is plain that the virus spread worse than it had. Yet The Bulletin allowed Mr. Ross to propagate misleading information.

A newspaper doesn't maintain its desired position as a thought leader by publishing pointless, milquetoast editorials in response to the most serious threat to our nation's form of government in more than 200 years. And a newspaper doesn't empower its community when it publishes misinformation on its most hallowed real estate, the editorial page.

— Michael Wilson, Bend

Bentz had his reasons

Recent letters to the editor have

made various claims against Cliff Bentz, our duly elected congressional representative. The recurring complaint was that he was wrong to challenge Pennsylvania's electoral vote. Writers also faulted him for opposing impeachment and claimed his action contributed to the civil unrest. These opinions disregard the fact that Bentz was simply exercising his constitutional duty to assure the elections were conducted in a free and fair manner. He had reason to do that.

The civic disruption due to COVID-19 required an adjustment of voting procedures. The problem is that adjustments to federal elections are the constitutional prerogative of state legislatures. Changes made in several states by court order or by secretaries of state are unconstitutional.

Stanford-MIT Elections Project monitors election court cases. They note Vote-by-Mail and Authority to Act cases totaled 132; many have been closed while 66 are still active. Hopefully, these active cases will result in states revising their invalid rules.

J. Christian Adams, a U.S. Civil Rights Commissioner, reports that billionaire Mark Zuckerberg donated \$350 million to a nonprofit that then made donations to local election officials. That money was used for voter turnout, specifically in Democratic precincts. The effort was successful in Pennsylvania: In Philadelphia, Democratic turnout exceeded that of 2016 by 43,000.

Bentz's challenge called attention to spurious voting rules, unresolved legal cases and billionaire vote buying; it reminded us that election laws must be corrected. Although Joe Biden's election will stand, it has an asterisk denoting its questionable constitutionality.

— Jared Black, Bend

Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's signature, phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of The Bulletin. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

Guest columns

Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words; they must be signed; and they must include the writer's phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere. Locally submitted columns alternate with national columnists and commentaries. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

How to submit

Please address your submission to either My Nickel's Worth or Guest Column and mail, fax or email it to The Bulletin. Email submissions are preferred.

Email: letters@bendbulletin.com

Write: My Nickel's Worth/Guest Column
P.O. Box 6020
Bend, OR 97708

Fax: 541-385-5804

The hill we climb: A poem written by Amanda Gorman

BY AMANDA GORMAN

Editor's note: This is a transcription of the poem written and read by Amanda Gorman at Wednesday's inaugural ceremony.

When day comes we ask ourselves,
where can we find light in this never-ending shade?

The loss we carry, a sea we must wade

We've braved the belly of the beast
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace

And the norms and notions of what just is
Isn't always justice
And yet the dawn is ours before we knew it

Somehow we do it
Somehow we've weathered and witnessed
a nation that isn't broken but simply unfinished

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 yes we are far from polished
far from pristine but that doesn't mean we are striving
to form a union that is perfect

We are striving to forge a union with purpose

To compose a country committed to all cultures, colors, characters and conditions of man

And so we lift our gazes not to what stands between us
but what stands before us

We close the divide because we know, to put our future first,
we must first put our differences aside

We lay down our arms so we can reach out our arms to one another

We seek harm to none and harmony for all

Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:

That even as we grieved, we grew
That even as we hurt, we hoped
That even as we tired, we tried

That we'll forever be tied together,
victorious

Not because we will never again know defeat
but because we will never again sow division

Scripture tells us to envision that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree

And no one shall make them afraid

If we're to live up to our own time
Then victory won't lie in the blade
But in all the bridges we've made

That is the promise to glade
The hill we climb
If only we dare

It's because being American is more than a pride we inherit,
it's the past we step into and how we repair it

We've seen a force that would shatter our nation
rather than share it
Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy

And this effort very nearly succeeded

But while democracy can be periodically delayed
it can never be permanently defeated

In this truth in this faith we trust
For while we have our eyes on the

future history has its eyes on us

This is the era of just redemption
We feared at its inception

We did not feel prepared to be the heirs of such a terrifying hour
but within it we found the power to author a new chapter

To offer hope and laughter to ourselves

So while once we asked, how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?

Now we assert
How could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?

We will not march back to what was but move to what shall be

A country that is bruised but whole,
benevolent but bold, fierce and free

We will not be turned around or interrupted by intimidation
because we know our inaction and inertia will be the inheritance of the next generation

Our blunders become their burdens
But one thing is certain:

If we merge mercy with might, and
might with right, then love becomes our legacy
and change our children's

birthright

So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left with

Every breath from my bronze-pounded chest,
we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one

We will rise from the gold-limbed hills of the west,
we will rise from the windswept northeast
where our forefathers first realized revolution

We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the midwestern states,
we will rise from the sunbaked south

We will rebuild, reconcile and recover
and every known nook of our nation
and every corner called our country,
our people diverse and beautiful
will emerge, battered and beautiful

When day comes we step out of the shade,
afire and unafraid

The new dawn blooms as we free it
For there is always light,
if only we're brave enough to see it
if only we're brave enough to be it

■ Amanda Gorman was the nation's youngest inaugural poet.