

Republicans

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But with the Republicans facing a Democratic supermajority in both chambers of the Legislature just as the 2021 session began, many GOP lawmakers complained the state party was trying to score national political points instead of working to win Oregon elections.

"It's none of our business what US House Representatives from other states do," Rep. Bill Post, R-Keizer, wrote in a blog post demanding an agenda reset. "Focus, please."

The Senate did not make a group statement, but some also were angry with the timing, topic and tone of the attack.

"I have not seen any credible evidence to suggest that the riot at the United States Capitol was a 'false flag,'" said Sen. Tim Knopp, R-Bend. "I do not support the Oregon Republican Party's resolution. I find it disheartening that while Oregonians are struggling, these political distractions get in the way of helping them recover."

The uproar intensified when the Anti-Defamation League harshly criticized Republicans for misappropriating the Reichstag fire, a prelude to the Holocaust, to buttress an argument that those who were the target of the attacks were the perpetrators.

"The violence at the US Capitol on January 6th was a large-scale physical assault on our nation's democratic values and institutions perpetrated by right-wing conspiracy theorists, extremists, and supporters of former President Trump. That is a fact," the ADL said in a statement.

The Republican lawmakers said they were blindsided by the Oregon Republican Party pronouncement. They were never consulted or even told in advance what was coming from the party's 22-member executive committee of GOP activists.

The Oregon State Committee has provided fuel for a feud with GOP lawmakers before. The party hosted conservative political firebrand Roger Stone at its 2018 conference in Salem. A squad of Proud Boys, the right-wing group with a reputation for violence, served as Stone's bodyguards, flashing "white power" hand signs at a party after his speech.

Despite the sharply conservative tone of the statement, state GOP chairman Bill Currier has been criticized by some activists as not being conservative enough by requiring a litmus test on issues important to the party's increasingly Trump-oriented base.

Currier said he believes the party needed to be a "big tent" that can create winning coalitions with unaffiliated voters and disenchanted Democrats.

"We need to be more focused on issues rather than trying to decide whether some given candidate meets some litmus test," he said. "The party doesn't pick the candidates, the voters do."

Critics within the party say the hard right turn on the current version of the Republican Party would reject Oregon icons like Gov. Tom McCall and Sen. Mark Hatfield, who spearheaded environmental reforms and equal rights issues.

No Republican has won the governorship since Vic Atiyeh in 1982. The state has supported the Democratic candidate for president, win or lose, back to Mike Dukakis in 1984.

Republican lawmakers running in 2020 found themselves sharing a ballot and sometimes a stage with Jo Rae Perkins, a QAnon conspiracy believer, who was easily defeated by Democrat Sen. Jeff Merkley. Without strong statewide candidates, Currier and the party committee have been called out by some in the GOP for a "fixation" on launching recall efforts against Gov. Kate Brown that never got enough signatures to even trigger a vote.

Julie Parrish, a former GOP House member who is now a political consultant, said in 2019 that a recall was a sign of a party leadership low on good ideas.

"We need a strategy, and a recall isn't it," she said.

The ultimate fallout on the controversy won't be known for a while. Voters don't go to the polls again for major partisan offices until the May 2022 primaries.

Jim Moore, a professor at Pacific University, studies public reactions to politics as outreach director from a base named after one of those long-ago Republicans: The Tom McCall Center for Civic Engagement.

"The biggest impact of the 'false flag' assertion will be it driving more moderate Republicans out of the party — those that are still left after five years of Trump and decades of a party moving to the right on all issues," he said.

Winning elections is tough for Republicans in Oregon today. But the party's scant presence in Salem and Washington was given a jolt by the claims.

"That all being said, the Oregon Republican Party is getting international notice with its incendiary public pronouncements," Moore said. "The measure of how that is working out will be simple — does it bring in money to the ORP coffers."

■ gwarnier@eomediagroup.com

Redirected

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"That's currently about 60% of the 53,000 first doses to be sent around the state next week, reflecting the large number of health care workers and individuals from vulnerable populations in the region," Brown said.

Brown did not say where the doses would come from, but her office provided a list of 15 counties that are ahead of schedule on inoculating priority groups. Some of the doses are from a new shipment authorized by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The diversion was announced soon after news reports that Deschutes County and others were inoculating senior citizens 75 year old and up. Under the current guidelines, those groups were to receive shots as late as Feb. 14.

The reason that the 15 counties are ahead of schedule was not mentioned in Brown's statement or information from the Oregon Health Authority. Grant County has moved down the list because of an unexpectedly high rate of eligible people declining to be vaccinated.

Brown has made inoculating teachers and school staff a higher priority than vaccinations for those aged 65 and above who are most likely to get seriously ill and die from the virus. Oregon is the only state giving priority to teachers over seniors.

Brown praised counties that had moved more swiftly than expected through the early priority groups.

"Other counties have done a fantastic job and have finished their first round of vaccines for Phase 1a populations," Brown

Phase 1a completions

Counties that have completed vaccinating the 1a group, which includes medical staff, health care workers, elderly in nursing homes and staff working at the facilities:

- Deschutes
- Crook
- Jefferson
- Marion
- Wallowa
- Morrow
- Baker
- Polk
- Jackson
- Klamath
- Yamhill
- Grant
- Coos
- Malheur
- Lake

said. "We will push to give first doses to all Phase 1a individuals statewide before February 8."

The state will send second doses to the counties ahead of schedule so they can keep on a timeline for those who have already received their first shots.

In a related development, OHA said it would stop issuing specific information about COVID-19 deaths in Oregon. Since March, OHA has included the age, home county, place of death, the date of infection, the date of death and the existence of any underlying conditions.

Statistics on overall deaths will be maintained, but specific case information will not.

OHA said the compilation of the daily death toll information was stretching staff too thin.

Critics and the media questioned the timing, coming amid a debate over Brown's decision to prioritize teachers over the elderly. The daily reports showed that the deaths are overwhelmingly in the 70 and above age range.

It also comes the day before the Oregon COVID-19 vaccination committee is expected to issue ongoing prioritization for vaccines.

■ gwarnier@eomediagroup.com

CICELY TYSON • 1924-2021

Groundbreaking, award-winning actor dead at 96

BY MARK KENNEDY

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Cicely Tyson, the pioneering Black actor who gained an Oscar nomination for her role as the sharecropper's wife in "Sounder," won a Tony Award in 2013 at age 88 and touched TV viewers' hearts in "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman," died Thursday at age 96.

Tyson's death was announced by her family, via her manager Larry Thompson, who did not immediately provide additional details.

A onetime model, Tyson began her screen career with bit parts but gained fame in the early 1970s when Black women were finally starting to get starring roles. Tyson refused to take parts simply for the paycheck, remaining choosy.

"I'm very selective as I've been my whole career about

what I do. Unfortunately, I'm not the kind of person who works only for money. It has to have some real substance for me to do it," she told The Associated Press in 2013.

Besides her Oscar nomination, she won two Emmys for playing the 110-year-old former slave in the 1974 television drama "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman." A new generation of moviegoers saw her in the 2011 hit "The Help."

In 2018, she was given an honorary Oscar statuette at the annual Governors Awards. "I come from lowly status. I grew up in an area that was called the slums at the time," Tyson said at the time. "I still cannot imagine that I have met with presidents, kings, queens. How did I get here? I marvel at it."

"Sounder," based on the William H. Hunter novel, was the film that confirmed her star-



Andrew Harnik/AP file

Actress Cicely Tyson blows a kiss after receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama at the White House in 2016.

dom in 1972. Tyson was cast as the Depression-era loving wife of a sharecropper (Paul Winfield) who is confined in jail for stealing a piece of meat for his family. She is forced to care for

their children and attend to the crops.

Her performance evoked rave reviews, and Tyson won an Academy Award nomination as best actress of 1972.

In the 1974 television drama "The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman," based on a novel by Ernest J. Gaines, Tyson is seen aging from a young woman in slavery to a 110-year-old who campaigned for the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

In the touching climax, she laboriously walks up to a "whites only" water fountain and takes a drink as white officers look on.

"It's important that they see and hear history from Miss Jane's point of view," Tyson told The New York Times. "And I think they will be more ready to accept it from her than from someone younger."

Biden opens 'Obamacare' window for uninsured

BY RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden on Thursday ordered government health insurance markets to reopen for a special sign-up window, offering uninsured Americans a haven as the spread of COVID-19 remains dangerously high and vaccines aren't yet widely available.

Biden signed an executive order directing the HealthCare.gov insurance

markets to take new applications for subsidized benefits, something Donald Trump's administration had refused to do. He also instructed his administration to consider reversing other Trump health care policies, including curbs on abortion counseling and the imposition of work requirements for low-income people getting Medicaid.

"There's nothing new that we're doing here other than restoring the Affordable Care Act and restoring Medicaid to

the way it was before Trump became president," Biden said as he signed the directives in the Oval Office. He declared he was reversing "my predecessor's attack on women's health."

The actions were only the first steps by Biden, who has promised to build out former President Barack Obama's health care law to achieve a goal of coverage for all. While Biden rejects the idea of a government-run system that Sen. Bernie Sanders has pushed

for in his "Medicare for All" proposal, his more centrist approach will require congressional buy-in. But opposition to "Obamacare" runs deep among Republicans.

The most concrete short-term impact of Biden's orders will come from reopening HealthCare.gov insurance markets as coverage has shrunk in the economic turmoil of the coronavirus pandemic. That's an executive action and no legislation is required.

Mug shots

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It would prohibit the release of booking photos before conviction, except in certain, limited circumstances, including to aid in the identification of a fugitive or suspect in a criminal case.

The bill also targets online platforms that scrape local jail websites and automatically post mug shots on their pages, charging upward of hundreds of dollars to take them down. The industry was addressed with legislation in 2013 requiring them to remove mug shots in cases of expungement.

Under the new proposal, these websites would be required to take down mug shots within 30 days of a request and charge no more than \$50.

Bend defense attorney Shawn Kollie said he's seen defendants spend as much as \$1,000 to remove a mug shot from the many websites where it had been posted.

Kollie said he supports the bill's two main purposes: to reinforce the U.S. justice system's

presumption of innocence, and to set limits on pay-to-remove sites.

"If we truly presume folks are innocent unless and until the government proves their case beyond a reasonable doubt, it seems appropriate to not blast an innocent face around the internet/media," Kollie said.

In Deschutes County, arrest subjects are required to be "booked and printed" in every case, felony or misdemeanor.

Bend defense attorney Erick Ward said that rather than a punishment handed down by a court, the costs associated with having a mug shot in the public eye are often a client's No. 1 concern.

"The mug shot lives forever, even if your case is later dismissed, you're acquitted at trial, or the conviction gets expunged," Ward said. "The mug shot is often the first thing you see when you Google someone's name, so it often has catastrophic effects on a person's employment, reputation, love life and ability to rent."

Mug shots are also part of the arrest data that the media

uses to present the facts of a crime story, such as the name of the person arrested, charges filed and the basic facts of the case being made. They have generally been available to the media as public records since the passage of the Public Records Act in 1973.

Journalism groups have traditionally opposed efforts to curtail this information. Two groups in Oregon, the Society of Professional Journalists and the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association, opposed a similar 2013 law but representatives of both said they have yet to take formal positions on the new proposal.

The 2013 legislation focused on abuses of the pay-to-remove industry. Tim Gleason, journalism professor at the University of Oregon, said the draft legislation goes too far broadening the earlier law.

"While I understand the intent of the draft proposed bill, it essentially denies the public access to information when access to that information is in the public interest," Gleason wrote to The Bulletin. "Rather than craft a bill that would appropriately balance the pri-

vacy interests of the accused and the public interest in disclosure, this draft would take the public's interest out of the equation."

Fellow Oregon journalism professor Scott Maier said text and photo records should be treated the same by officials and released to the public when lawful to do so. Both are public documents, of public interest and central to the story, he said.

Journalists should exercise care on their end, as well, according to Maier. Some publications have a practice of withholding mug shots until criminal charges are brought, to guard against frivolous arrests.

"This doesn't mean the media shouldn't withhold publication. For example, responsible media often withhold or at least minimize visual portrayal of mass-murder suspects — no need to glorify or invite copy-cat incidents," Maier wrote to The Bulletin. "Just because media can publish mug shots doesn't mean they should."

■ Reporter: 541-383-0325, gwarnier@eomediagroup.com

Jail death

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Had Baksis indicated he had experiencing thoughts of suicide, he would have been referred to a mental health professional and placed on suicide watch, Hummel wrote. Baksis, however, answered no, and was booked into general population.

COVID-19 protocols at the jail require inmates to serve an initial 5-day isolation period with no interaction with

other inmates.

On Dec. 3, deputy Chad Bach was conducting hourly rounds of inmate cells when he found Baksis hanging by a towel tied to a bunk bed. According to the official investigation, Bach called for help from other deputies and entered the cell and lifted Baksis to relieve the pressure on his neck.

Jail and medical staff cut down Baksis and began life-saving measures, including use of an automated ex-

ternal defibrillator, CPR and administering oxygen, Hummel wrote. Paramedics arrived and transported Baksis to St. Charles Bend, where he died three days later.

Hummel said Baksis was also detoxing from prescription pain medication for a back injury and was "anxious about losing his liberty."

"Scott Baksis was loved and deserved to live," Hummel wrote. "Our lives are worse off without him. Today, I spoke with Scott's mother,

explained my decision, and extended my sympathies for her loss."

The Deschutes County Sheriff's Office has a policy regulating the administration of prescription medication to inmates. An office spokesman said Thursday the office needed more time to review whether it could disclose if Baksis had been provided his prescribed pain or anxiety medication.

■ Reporter: 541-383-0325, gwarnier@eomediagroup.com

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