

Be transparent about Bend's police bodycam videos

When Mike Krantz began as Bend police chief in August, the estimate was it would be 18 months before Bend police officers would have bodycams.

That was too long for Krantz. He and his staff worked together, and now, they may be implemented this summer.

Chemical irritants. Chokeholds. Police discipline and training. Changing when and if police should be sent out on calls. Those issues and more get debated about law enforcement. But communities, political leaders and police tend to agree about the need for body cameras. They provide added transparency and accountability for police and the public.

Krantz did make a good point Friday when he was interviewed by Bulletin Editor Gerry O'Brien on Facebook. Cameras "don't tell everything," he said. They only show what they show. Sometimes what you want to see will be out of frame. But he wants them, and thanks to his efforts, the work of his department and Bend city councilors providing the money, Bend will have them.

There are going to be added costs. It will cost the department \$300,000 to \$400,000 a year to properly store the video. Krantz also asked for two employees. One would handle records requests. Another would be responsible for keeping the 120 or so cameras and other equipment running right.

Krantz said department policy will not be that the cameras must be on all the time. He mentioned several situations when it will be department policy to have them on: when officers have reasonable suspicion or probable cause, during interviews, when they are interacting with people in a mental health crisis,

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traffic stops and if what seems like a routine contact turns adversarial. That is not necessarily an exhaustive list. He said it will be optional at other times, such as when police are transporting people who are not in custody.

What's not clear yet is how public records requests for police videos will work. What will it cost? How long will it take to get a video?

We urge the Bend department to track and release statistics, including the length of time it takes to release videos, costs charged and any denials of requests. We also would like to see records kept of officers who fail to comply with department policy for when cameras should be on. And we urge the Bend City Council to review the department's performance with the new technology and on records requests.

Should stimulus end up increasing your state taxes?

The federal stimulus checks helped a lot of Oregonians out when they needed it. And it is also going to help out Oregon government — about \$100 million in federal stimulus payments is going to wind up in the state treasury.

The federal government is not taxing the stimulus payments. In Oregon, they are not taxed as income, either. But the payments can impact the federal tax calculations used on your Oregon income tax. And so the stimulus payment may mean you owe state tax on more of your income and wind up paying more taxes or get a reduced refund.

Does that sound right to you? The stimulus checks sure seemed to be aimed at helping individuals, not helping state government.

U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio, a Democrat, wants state lawmakers to pass a bill to eliminate the state tax liability owed by Oregonians on federal stimulus payments. State Sen. Dick Anderson, R-Lincoln City, is already working on such a bill. The idea has at least half a nod from Oregon House Speaker Tina Kotek, a Democrat. A spokesperson said Kotek "supports the House Revenue Chair evaluating this issue."

Tell your legislator what you think.



Seniors turn to a 13-year-old to get vaccination appointment

BY GREG HARRIS

Special to The Washington Post

Senior citizens across the country have been wrestling with computer systems to sign up for coronavirus vaccines. My mother, who is 79, is among them. On a recent call from a suburb of Chicago, where she has been living alone throughout the pandemic, she sounded defeated. "I'm trying to figure it out! I can't. None of my friends can, either," she said. She couldn't even explain the difficulty, just that it was hard.

Ours is a far-flung family. We speculated on options to help: Could my sister, a software engineer, take over using remote desktop control software?

Then my mother called back to announce: "I got the first shot!" We were baffled. How did she even get the appointment?

It turns out a 13-year-old boy handled it for her.

She didn't know him — he was the grandson of a friend of a friend of hers — and she didn't fully understand how he'd done it.

"Something on Twitter?" she guessed. "But he's amazing!"

"He got me one appointment, then he called back and told me, 'No, you don't want that one, they won't guarantee a second shot.' So he canceled it and found a better one. He's gotten appointments for all my friends."

For all her friends? A 13-year-old. I had to understand how this was happening, so I called him.

I reached him by phone in the Chicago suburb where he lives with his younger brother and parents. Eli, who didn't want his whole name used, had to check first with his mom whether it was OK to talk to me. We set up a

Zoom call.

Meanwhile, I talked to another woman he'd helped.

"He's doing this just out of concern for others," she said. "It's not part of his business."

"His business?"

"Oh, he runs a tech support business, where he fixes problems with your computers and phones, and researches how to save you money on your cell-phone plan. He's saved me, oh, thousands of dollars. Has his own website and everything."

"At 13?"

"Yes, such a boy you never saw," she continued. "I went to his bar mitzvah, which was virtual because of the pandemic. He refused gifts and didn't want a party. He just wanted donations for a community composting program he's started."

"What makes him so good at getting vaccine appointments?" I asked.

"At my age, we're all slow at computers," she said. "So even if we find an appointment, and start to enter our information, it's gone. His fingers fly over the keyboard like wind. Did you know he's helping people in Florida now?"

The day I connected with Eli over Zoom, he appeared with tousled dark hair and a gangly build. He was disarmingly earnest. I was glad his mother had joined the call, because she, in her pride, coaxed out the stories where he was perhaps too humble to tell them.

They couldn't agree on how many people Eli had helped, for example. She thought 28, but he didn't want to count some who had canceled their appointments. "I didn't technically help them," he said.

When I asked how much time he was spending, he answered, "not

much." His mother pointed out he'd been on hold on the phone for three hours the day before. "But I was doing other things during that time," he said.

"Why don't you want your name used?" I asked. Talk about doing good deeds — didn't he want credit?

He pointed out that the internet has a way of generating fan and hate mail — neither of which he wants. And he doesn't have the capacity to help more than five or six people at a time, and he has more than that on his list.

More surprisingly, and to his credit, he saw the problems of equity and was aware of the phenomenon where more affluent white people snag vaccination appointments in poorer communities of color.

Astonished by his political awareness, I asked, "So what can fix this vaccination rollout?"

In response to my question, Eli looked, for the first time, frustrated.

"Honestly, what the providers need to do is just create phone systems for the elderly who don't have access to the internet."

Immediately, though, he realized the problem of such a system — the endless queues, people calling in simultaneously on a dozen devices, enlisting their friends to call — and he trailed off.

He circled back later to the idea that he might build a website to help more people find appointments. But fundamentally he has come to the same conclusion most analysts have. "There needs to be a national, coordinated system. That would help."

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Congress already went 'big' on coronavirus relief

BY STEVE SCALISE AND TIM PHILLIPS

Special to The Washington Post

President Joe Biden says the risk of coronavirus relief legislation is not in going too big but in going too small. This is a false choice, and we shouldn't let platitudes about "going big" mask the need for smart and effective policy.

Congress has already gone "big" — so big that more than \$1 trillion of previously enacted assistance remains unspent. Doing more of the same won't solve the country's problems.

We need to get pandemic relief right. But instead of working with lawmakers of both parties on legislation that could more effectively overcome the pandemic and help our country recover, the president is mustering support for a \$1.9 trillion package loaded with a partisan wish list of items that have nothing to do with the pandemic.

We've heard firsthand from friends and family who want to get vaccinated but can't. We've heard from neighbors who simply want to get back to normal and get back to work. What the coun-

try needs is focus. That involves an approach to COVID-19 relief spending that is timely, temporary and targeted to those hit hardest by the pandemic.

Congress has already enacted roughly \$3.7 trillion to develop and distribute vaccines, save small businesses and fund schools. Scientists developed multiple safe and effective vaccines, and distribution recently began reaching more than 1 million Americans a day. Just the first round of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) helped keep more than 51 million workers employed last year.

As of Thursday, the more than \$1 trillion of that assistance that remains unspent or is still in the process of being disbursed includes \$183 billion for another round of the PPP, \$199 billion for health care, \$136 billion for expanded unemployment insurance and \$46 billion for direct stimulus payments.

We have no business borrowing an additional \$1.9 trillion from our children's future when all of that remains to be spent to help our country reopen safely.

No doubt, people are hurting — especially in the restaurant and hospitality industry. We agree that targeted relief is appropriate for those individuals, families and businesses hit the hardest. But we shouldn't be blind to the fact that Americans are also adapting and innovating. Our economy is significantly stronger than many had predicted last year that it would be.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office projected last week that the U.S. economy will grow 3.7 percent this year without any additional stimulus. The economic downturn last year "was not as severe as expected," the CBO said, and "the first stage of the recovery took place sooner and was stronger than expected." As more and more Americans are vaccinated, lockdowns will end, businesses will reopen and jobs will return.

Even state governments are faring better than anticipated. Collectively, they have already received hundreds of billions from the federal government over the past year. "From the start of the pandemic in March

through October, tax revenues in 38 states were down 5% or less from the same period the year before," the New York Times reported in December, drawing on data from the Urban Institute. Some states, including California and Minnesota, experienced budget surpluses. Another bailout for these states to cover fiscal irresponsibility that predated the pandemic doesn't make sense — yet that's what the president is calling for.

There are people who desperately need help, but the country is not in a free-fall. The president's relief package isn't just focused on the wrong things — it also contains unrelated provisions that would undermine the recovery already in progress.

Take the proposed federal \$15-an-hour minimum wage. The CBO recently estimated that this heavy-handed wage hike could cost up to 2.7 million American jobs. Why would we double the minimum wage at a time when thousands of businesses are struggling to make payroll and millions of Americans are looking

for jobs? For small businesses such as restaurants that have survived a year of incredibly tough conditions, a federal requirement to raise wages up to 600 percent for employees who work off tips would be a death blow.

We need to increase vaccine production and distribution so people have confidence they can safely get back to work and get the economy going again. We should not spend needlessly on things that don't directly affect COVID.

The president's \$1.9 trillion relief package isn't the way to get there. It fails to accomplish the key goals of defeating the virus and recovering stronger. It would pile up debt and impose counterproductive policies that would hurt the people who need help.

We shouldn't confuse big spending with smart or effective policy. Americans deserve better.

Steve Scalise, a Republican, represents Louisiana's 1st Congressional District and is minority whip of the U.S. House. Tim Phillips is president of Americans for Prosperity, a grass-roots advocacy group.