

# Candidates need to let public know what they would do

What if there was an election and some candidates declined interviews and refused debates?

It would make the choice in that election simple: Don't vote for them.

We can't say that is precisely what is happening in the elections for the board of the Bend-La Pine Schools. But the behavior of four candidates — Jon Haffner, Gregg Henton, Wendy Imel and Maria Lopez-Dauenhauer — is unusual.

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan group, tried to invite them to a forum that was scheduled to be recorded Tuesday. They did not respond. Their opponents did.

The Bulletin's editorial board tried to invite the same four candidates to do interviews before we make our editorial endorsements. We couldn't get any of those four to commit to an interview. Only two of them have even responded — Henton and Lopez-Dauenhauer. But we have been unable to set anything up.

Let's stop a second and give the four no-show candidates the benefit of the doubt. None are politicians. It appears that this is the first time they have run for office. It's not the easiest thing to do to answer a bunch of questions in a League of Women Voters forum or from a newspaper editorial board. So they may just be reluctant right now and waiting until later after they have had more time to get up to speed.

There is something to that except — three of the four other candidates

are relative newbies, too. And all four of them agreed to the League's debate. The editorial board has already interviewed the other four.

The voter's pamphlet does tell you a bit about each candidate. Haffner, Henton, Imel and Lopez-Dauenhauer all have campaign websites, which have a strikingly similar design. Voters could use more information. Some of them have apparently been frustrated at the current board's policies on reopening schools. OK, the schools are open. What would they have done differently? What other changes in board policy would they like to see moving forward?

We have no reason to believe any of the candidates running for the board would not take the responsibility seriously. But part of that responsibility is providing voters with information about themselves, so voters can make a better decision. Right now Haffner, Henton and Imel and Lopez-Dauenhauer are making the decision too easy. Voters should vote for incumbent Carrie McPherson Douglass and newcomers Marcus LeGrand, Janet Sarai Llerandi and Shirley Olson.

This race should be a debate about different ideas for school board policy. Instead, right now it's a referendum on which candidates make a sincere effort to tell voters what they are about.

# Oregon should track deaths of the homeless

Oregon can't understand how acute its homeless issue is without good information. The state does not even uniformly track how many homeless people die each year.

Senate Bill 850 sets out to change that. It has moved forward in the Legislature. It should become law.

The bill makes what seems like a relatively small change. It's already state law that a report of death is required to include the person's address at the time of death. The bill requires that the report for a person who was homeless state the person's address as "domicile unknown."

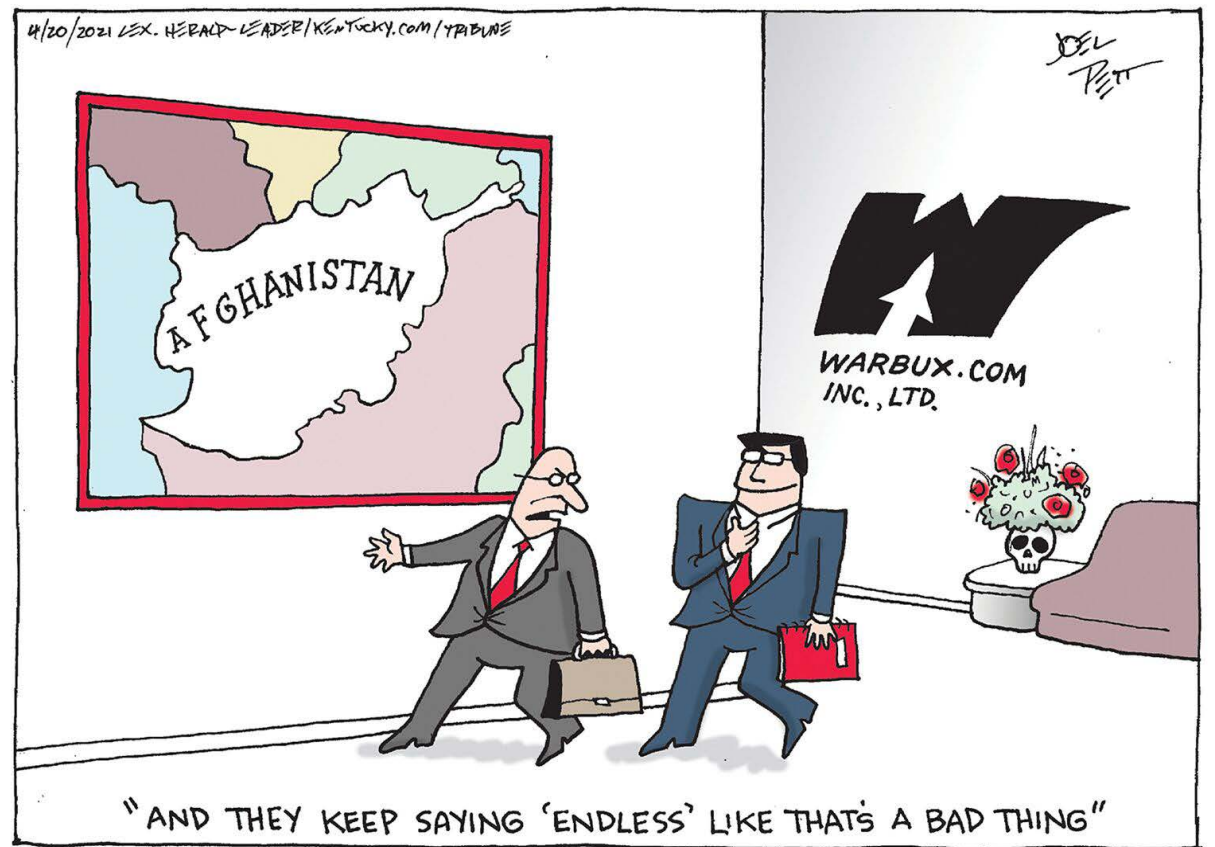
Most counties across the country do not track homeless deaths. Multnomah County was one of only 68 counties and cities in the United States that did, according to a 2020 study by the National Health Care

for the Homeless Council.

Formally tracking the deaths more closely will get us a better understanding of how COVID has impacted the homeless, as the Oregon Law Center pointed out in its testimony on the bill. It will also enable Oregonians to see the impact of homelessness on the state's mortality rates.

Jimmy Jones, the executive director of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency of Salem, told legislators that "the average age of death in the Salem homeless community is just 52." The homeless often have chronic and manageable conditions, but because they are homeless and have trouble getting access to treatment and shelter, they die.

Oregon should better track its homeless deaths. Pass SB 850.



# My Nickel's Worth

## Get the vaccine distributed

Oregon's economy has been trying to pull itself along throughout this pandemic. We need to reopen businesses and restore our economic stability. However, we must do so safely, and that will take reaching herd immunity.

After an entire year, it is apparent that getting vaccines into the arms of nearly every single Oregonian will be the only way we can return to pre-COVID normalcy and people living without fear.

Government, and private-public coordination to facilitate this vaccination program is crucial. Working alongside our health care system, state and local governments need to help speed up vaccination rollout across Oregon. Other states are ahead of us. We can and must pick up the pace.

Lawmakers should look to health care distributors — the vital link between pharmaceutical manufacturers and pharmacies, hospitals, long-term care facilities, and medical clinics. Distributors are experts at delivery logistics and have a long history of distributing medical supplies during crises. We are fortunate they are leading vaccine distribution during this pandemic, bringing doses from manufacturers to states across the U.S.

Before we had the promise of a vaccine, distributors worked with state and local governments to deliver critical medical supplies, helping Oregon fight back against the pandemic. Now,

with multiple vaccines at our disposal, this coordination could bring an end to the pandemic, allowing us to return to work and a thriving economy.

— Andrew Davis, Bend

## Editorial missed the mark

This is in response to your "Almost dead last is not a great place for Oregon to be" editorial about the corporate activity tax.

This editorial has missed the mark; this tax has been a frustration in my mind since its inception in the fact that it's called a "corporate activity tax," in essence it's more of a sales tax. Corporations don't pay this tax the consumer does. The people taking credit for making corporations pay more tax is laughable. Some of our customers have noticed and complained. We tell them to call your legislator. Corporations are not paying more; the consumers are. So, we Oregonians are chipping in, again and don't get me started on the "Privilege Tax," another sales tax. So, we Oregonians are chipping in, again.

— Hector Vijarro, Bend

## Don't destroy Worrell Park

Grinding down Worrell Park and spending \$2.5 million to do it for the sake of parking places, really? Have a heart whoever is in charge of this delightful little piece of old Bend. Perhaps spend a little of that money to enhance it with even more native plant species. I like the idea from let-

ter writer Donna Owens of adding it to the pollinator trail.

— Alice Elshoff, Bend

## Thanks for keeping us safe

My family wanted to give a massive thank you to everyone involved with the Deschutes County COVID Vaccine Clinic in Redmond. St. Charles, the county's Health Department and the Oregon National Guard have done an amazing job with the entire setup. Everything is organized and flows seamlessly. My grandmother really enjoyed the way they take care of the disabled and elderly. For those that need it, they have golf carts that follow you to your parking spot, pick you and any escorts up, and take you to the door where they have waiting wheelchairs available as well. She was so amazed and just had to make sure I made a note of how awesome that was. Paperwork is quick and easy, and getting your vaccine is a simple process from there. Overall, the experience was beyond anything I would have thought it would be.

On behalf of my grandmother, Betty, and myself thank you so much to the doctors, nurses, soldiers, and volunteers who make the clinic run at peak performance everyday. You all are the reason Deschutes County will come out of this pandemic stronger than we were before.

Stay safe out there everyone! We got this.

— Devin Linker, Redmond

## 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

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Editorials reflect the views of The Bulletin's editorial board, Publisher Heidi Wright, Editor Gerry O'Brien and Editorial Page Editor Richard Coe. They are written by Richard Coe.

# Public norms on mask-wearing outside need to shift, but slowly

BY DANIEL DREZNER

Special to the Washington Post

In the spirit of full disclosure, let me confess that I hate wearing a mask. It is not because of government mandates or coronavirus skepticism; the science on mask-wearing in indoor, poorly ventilated spaces is clear. I also wear glasses, however, and even the best masks inevitably lead to some fogging up of my lenses. I really prefer being able to see if I'm out in the world.

Since April of last year, my default has been to not wear a mask when outside walking my dog. Of course, if anyone started approaching me, I would immediately mask up (or, if I forgot to bring one, get the heck out of the other person's way). Experts knew early on that the risk of catching the coronavirus from brief outside interactions was rare. Mostly, I was putting the mask on to alleviate the concerns of my Massachusetts neighbors.

Another confession: I cannot shake the hygiene theater impulse. It was clear last summer that the coronavi-

rus was highly unlikely to spread through fomites. This month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention finally acknowledged that catching the coronavirus via contaminated surfaces was improbable and that costly "deep cleaning" was no longer necessary.

Still, when I go to the supermarket, do I wipe down the handle to my shopping cart? Yes, yes I do. I am embarrassed to say it makes me feel better even though I know that it does not appreciably affect my chances of contracting the disease.

I bring these behavioral quirks up because the United States is either approaching or has gone past the point where mask-wearing outside is unnecessary. Zeynep Tufekci has been banging this drum for quite some



time. Last week, Slate's Shannon Palus wrote, "now, as we've come to know more about the virus, as vaccinations are ramping up, and as we're trying to figure out how to live with some level of COVID in a sustainable way, masking up outside when you're at most briefly crossing paths with people is starting to feel barely understandable."

Variations of this point have also been made this week by The Atlantic's Derek Thompson, Reason's Robby Soave and The New York Times' David Leonhardt. Doctors in Massachusetts are acknowledging it.

Even if one is wary about the risks right now, those risks will abate considerably over the next month. More than half of all eligible Americans have received at least one coronavirus vaccination shot, which means that

by the end of May more than half of Americans will be fully vaccinated. A growing body of evidence suggests that fully vaccinated Americans are highly improbable vectors for transmitting the disease. This means the need for mask-wearing should be reduced even further.

And yet, just as mask-wearing was politicized last year, not wearing masks will be politicized this year. Because I am quite sure I am not the only person to act in a less-than-fully rational way when it comes to this pandemic. Add in the power of social norms and the mask-wearing habit looks tougher to change.

What to do? First, recognize that it will take some time to adjust. Brown University's Ashish Jha acknowledged to Leonhardt that, even though he had been fully vaccinated by the end of February, he had been reluctant to meet a vaccinated friend for drinks without a mask. "It was hard — psychologically hard — for me," said Jha, a physician. But in the end, he did. My wife, who has been fully vaccinated

for a month, has gone through the same process.

True conservatives — who, let's be honest, are the ones more likely to push for ending mask mandates — should recognize the idea that social change is best when it proceeds slowly. So they should let those still reluctant about giving up their masks to do so of their own accord. No mask-shaming in either direction right now.

Just let time work its magic. As more and more vaccinated people feel comfortable going maskless outside, the social norm of putting on a mask will subside slowly, then suddenly.

Finally, Americans should recognize this for the champagne problem that it is. Encourage the United States to export the vaccine to hard-hit areas of the globe as soon as humanly possible. Get the rest of the world in a position to have these same debates sooner and not later.

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