

Help the COVID-19 vaccine do its stuff

Deschutes County has a COVID vaccination rate of about 43%, as we write this. Jefferson County is at 34% and Crook County is at 30%.

Not enough to make you stand up and cheer, yet. It is progress — a stab in the arm to hurt the pandemic where it hunts.

The bad news is we seem to be in a trend of growing cases. Mask, gathering and spacing discipline may have slipped. It wouldn't be so frustrating except it is life and death.

We got an email Wednesday from Rep. Cliff Bentz, the Republican representing this district. He and the people he was meeting with in close proximity were unmasked in some of the photos.

OK, nobody's been perfect. Well, maybe some of you have been. Bentz

certainly believes in the importance of wearing masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19. His staff told us that in almost those exact same words. They added in their email: "Each of the engagements pictured involved a consideration of many factors, including at least the applicable government guidelines, setting, proximity & duration of the proximity, preferences of the group, and vaccination status of those involved."

That's fair. But the message from health officials and recent uptick in cases tell us: Keep wearing your mask and keep your distance.

Should road taxes give nudge to electric cars?

In 1919, Oregon was the first state to charge a tax per gallon of gas. And the state could be one of the first to charge everyone by mile driven.

Oregon's gas tax is scheduled to climb from 36 cents a gallon up to 40 cents in 2024. But the state's gas tax revenue is almost certainly heading into a permanent swan dive. It won't be enough to keep up the state's roads and bridges. Vehicles are getting more and more miles to the gallon. And electric or other alternatives are going to slowly replace them.

The Oregon solution is pay as you go, not pay per gallon. You can sign up for it now. OReGO participants pay 1.8 cents a mile. They get fuel tax credits based on gas consumption. Very few Oregonians are enrolled — about 700 — because the immediate benefits are limited.

House Bill 2342 tries to hit the accelerator for OReGO. It imposes a mandatory per-mile road usage charge for registered owners and lessees of passenger vehicles of model year 2027 or later that have a rating of 30 miles per gallon or greater. It would begin on July 1, 2026.

That makes sense, in some ways. The question is: Does it provide the right incentives? What's the goal?

One goal is to ensure there is

enough revenue to keep the state's roads and bridges repaired. This bill could help with that.

Another goal, for some, is to encourage Oregonians to drive more fuel efficient vehicles or more electric vehicles. Better for the environment.

The gas tax already does it. This bill doesn't really do much. There would be an added elimination of title registration fees under the bill. But if the goal is to give Oregonians a nudge, this bill adds a perverse incentive — new charges on more fuel efficient vehicles.

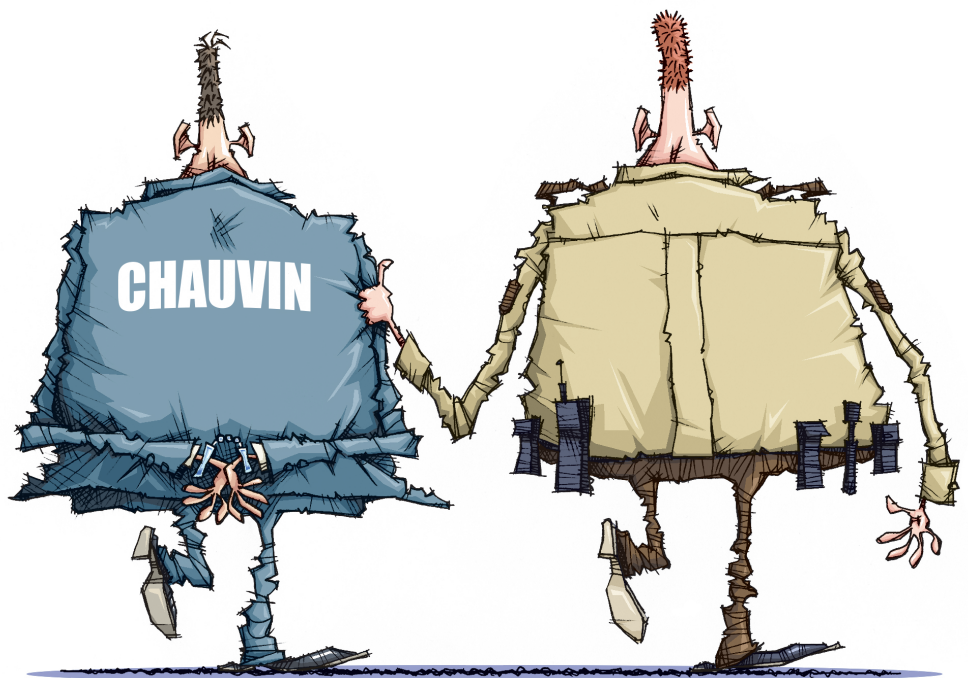
The bill could be altered so the pay as you go formula takes into account the fuel efficiency of the vehicle. That might encourage more Oregonians to go electric or pick a more fuel-efficient choice.

The complication is how that policy would impact lower-income Oregonians.

Want to buy an electric car? The long-term costs can have clear benefits. The upfront cost is usually more and that can be what people focus on.

The gas tax was never progressive. Should Oregon look to do more with a nudge for electric cars? If the Legislature simply opts to provide incentives for electric cars, it could be leaving some Oregonians behind.

Tim Campbell
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A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

For my brother, this is what justice feels like

BY PHILONISE FLOYD

Special to The Washington Post

This is what justice feels like: gut-wrenching relief, exhaustion. It's not sweet or satisfying. It's necessary, important, maybe even historic. But only with the passage of time will we know if the guilty verdict in the trial of Derek Chauvin is the start of something that will truly change America and the experience of Black Americans.

For the past two weeks, I have watched my brother George Floyd die over and over, thousands of times. The video testimony was hard to see. Now it is seared into my waking thoughts and my nightly sleep — what little sleep I get.

I watched as the strangers who stood on that street and saw George slowly, agonizingly die testified about how they pleaded for his life and felt guilty that they weren't able to save it, sometimes sobbing through their words. They never thought they'd have to stand there and witness his soul leave its body. That included a 9-year-old girl with the word "love" on her shirt, who saw something no child should ever have to see. She will be forever changed by it. Those good people who were there with George at the end, when we were not, are also now part of our family.

I saw tears on the faces of jurors who looked nothing like George or me as they listened to that testimony, and I felt bonds of humanity with them. In contrast to the jury that 66 years ago refused to convict the men

who brutalized, maimed and killed Emmett Till, this jury took a decisive stand for justice. As much as this verdict is a vindication for George, it is for Emmett, too.

Over the past 11 months, my family has forged relationships with the families of so many other victims of brutality and over-policing — Breonna Taylor, Daunte Wright, Eric Garner. We are members of a tragic club that we never would have chosen for ourselves. Many of these victims have not had their day in court. This verdict is for them, too.

Our family has absorbed the love of people from all over the world — from Germany, Britain, Australia, Ghana, France and so many other places — who felt a connection to George and were devastated by what happened to him. They put their lives on the line, marching amid a pandemic, and told us they hoped we would get justice. In death, as in life, George brought people together, leading to unlikely bonds.

So many Black people have shared with us how traumatized they were by George's death, reminding them that it could have been them or their children. And so many White people have shared that their eyes were opened by his death, that they didn't realize until now just how often people of color are brutalized, their lives trivialized, their right to justice denied. The video had a lot to do with it. People were horrified to literally see someone tortured to death for nine minutes, and they were shocked that the officer displayed no

remorse. People around the world had to explain that to their kids, and they didn't know how.

We saw law enforcement officers such as Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo break ranks and call out Chauvin's behavior for what it was, and Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison press for a vigorous prosecution. A crumbling of the blue wall and the start of a new era of law enforcement accountability? We hope and pray.

This verdict is historic, but it shouldn't be historic to punish people who do bad things, even if they wear a police uniform — especially if they wear a police uniform.

My brother told us a long time ago that his name would be all over the world. We didn't think it would be like this. This week, our family received a measure of justice because regular citizens and those in authority took the most basic human action: They did the right thing.

It's up to all of us to build on this moment. We must end the qualified immunity that too often shields law enforcement officers from responsibility, require police to maintain body-camera and dash-cam videos, and ban chokeholds and no-knock warrants. Now, it's time for the U.S. Senate to do its part and pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, and begin the work of transforming policing in the United States.

What does justice feel like? It feels like maybe we can finally take a breath.

■ *Philonise Floyd is the brother of George Floyd.*

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.

How do you get corner-office status if you work from home? GM will find out

BY MICHELINE MAYNARD

Special to The Washington Post

Generations of Detroiters sat through early-morning traffic jams on their way to auto factories and soaring downtown office buildings, only to repeat the time-consuming process in the afternoon and early evening. Factory workers started the day at 6 a.m. So did bosses whose offices kept "plant hours" that called for them to be on the job as soon as cars started rolling down assembly lines. For others, mornings often began at 7:30 and stretched a dozen hours into early evening.

Nobody questioned the routine: It was part of the rhythm of the Motor City, whose economy depended on those automotive employees who were driving the cars and trucks their companies built.

But on Tuesday, General Motors CEO Mary Barra called time on that tradition.

Writing on LinkedIn, Barra said GM was instituting a practice called "Work Appropriately." It allows employees, when able, "to work from wherever they can have the greatest impact" on achieving GM's goals.

GM trusts employees to "make smart decisions without overly prescriptive guidance," she wrote, an idea that might have made legendary GM

chiefs such as Alfred Sloan and Roger Smith blink.

Ford, for its part, announced last month that it was allowing 30,000 employees worldwide the option of working from home, although they can go to the office for group tasks.

It's as if a century of American business culture just cracked and crumbled to the ground. Perhaps most significantly, car company employees — and indeed, others in the corporate world — have long viewed their physical offices as company status symbols, comparing them in size, decor and proximity to power. In the Detroit headquarters buildings, and elsewhere, the goal was first an office with a window, then digs on an executive floor, then ultimately the coveted corner office that only a boss got.

At the old GM Building, just down West Grand Boulevard from the original home of Motown Records, Smith's office, which I visited in the early days of my years covering the auto industry, had a sprawling view of Detroit, all the way across the city to Canada beyond, a constant assurance of his company's reach.

Elsewhere, auto company managers stood in their entryways to survey the worker bees around them. They hosted guests in the executive dining rooms, had their cars washed and

gassed up during the workday and rode home in darkness to luxurious suburban homes with spouses and families that they only occasionally saw.

Eventually, cubicles and open offices came along, as did business casual (what GM calls "Dress Appropriately"), helping loosen some of those traditions, but offices themselves were still essential. In California, tech companies such as Google and Apple created vast campuses where employees were expected to congregate, bused in from San Francisco, but those less traditional layouts weren't all that popular or effective. Writing in the Harvard Business Review in 2018, Ethan Bernstein and Ben Weber found employees were figuring out workarounds that gave them more privacy.

"They avoid eye contact, discover an immediate need to use the bathroom or take a walk, or become so engrossed in their tasks that they are selectively deaf (perhaps with the help of headphones)," the two wrote.

These types of open offices caused face-to-face interaction to fall 70%, Bernstein and Weber found. So it might not be such a surprise that remote work has been something companies want to keep, post-pandemic.

Since stay-at-home orders took effect last year, millions of employees

have performed remote work, and at least 1 in 4 employees is going to continue doing so throughout 2021, according to an estimate by Upwork, a platform for freelance work. Upwork found 56% of hiring managers felt remote work had gone better than expected, and only 10% thought things were going worse for their companies.

Now, GM, long a leader in setting standards for American business culture, is on board. CNBC reported that GM held 52 workshops for 1,100 company managers to talk about the new effort, which remains fuzzy and won't include all 155,000 workers. You can't build cars in someone's den, after all, but the workers could receive training remotely in new manufacturing concepts, and they already perform numerous tasks via laptops right on the factory floor.

For an industry steeped in hierarchical practices, the move raises cultural questions; namely, how can proximity be power if you never see your boss? How can a sense of camaraderie be encouraged over Zoom?

All that is being studied, too. Researchers Pamela Hinds and Brian Elliott, also writing in the Harvard Business Review, interviewed executives from around the world to see how they were keeping company values intact. They discovered that companies

have shifted some of their team-building exercises online. For example, employees at Alibaba North America held a quilt-crafting exercise, creating one coverlet for each company location. IBM employees organized an effort to collect groceries for homebound parents and communicate over Slack to check in with one another.

"Leaders have a stark choice to make: do nothing, work to craft new ways of reinforcing the existing culture, or capitalize on the shift to remote work to profoundly reset the culture," Hinds and Elliott wrote in the review. "This time can be used as an opportunity to reset aspects of culture as an organization evolves or as a new way of working requires it."

For years, GM didn't change. It was so paternalistic that it was known in Detroit as Mother Motors, generously compensating its employees from the time they joined the company until they received their gold Patek Philippe watches at retirement. In return, they expected compliance with corporate customs.

But in her note this week, Barra wrote, "We are not yet 'back to normal' and in truth, we may never be." Anyone who was stuck in those traffic jams on I-94 is probably fine with that.

■ *Micheline Maynard is an author and journalist who was Detroit bureau chief for the New York Times.*