

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Bulletin
AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERHeidi Wright Publisher
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Beat COVID-19 by getting vaccinated

There is a way out of COVID-19 surges. Get vaccinated. Plenty of vaccine is available. The supply keeps rolling in. If you're 16 and older, get your shot. Please, get your shot. It's the best shot we have of bringing this under control.

Who the virus is striking in Deschutes County has shifted. There's a very high concentration of the new cases among younger adults and teens.

Deschutes County health officials believe it's at least partially related to people gathering and not wearing masks.

Vaccination rates also play a part. In Deschutes County, the vaccination rate is as high as 90% for people 75 and older. Among people ages 20 to 24, it's only at about 25%. Some of that disparity is related to the way the vaccination program was rolled out.

Most young people are able to recover from the virus much more easily than older people. But when they get it, they can spread it. It also might get nasty.

County health officials pointed out in a briefing to Deschutes County commissioners on Wednesday that 1 in 5 previously healthy young adults weren't back to normal 14 to 21 days after testing positive. Some experience months of debilitating symptoms, such as fatigue and fuzzy thinking.

Michael Johnson, a senior data scientist for the St. Charles Health System, told commissioners that the news is not all bad. The proportion of people with COVID-19 being hospitalized has declined by about 40%.

There are, though, two unfortunate caveats. The severity of condition for those who are hospitalized has ticked up. And of those hospitalized with COVID-19 in the St. Charles Health System, about 10% die. That's been a fairly consistent mortality rate throughout the

pandemic, Johnson said. It's unsettling. As of Wednesday there had been 78 COVID-19 deaths at the hospitals in the system.

The county has only experienced very few of what medical professionals call breakthrough cases. That's when somebody who was vaccinated gets COVID-19.

Three patients who were vaccinated in Deschutes County had severe enough COVID-19 cases they ended up in the hospital. They were quite elderly, Johnson said, and none died.

With allergies kicking in this spring it can be difficult to figure out if a cough is COVID-19 or allergies. First of all, if you are worried, don't listen to editorial writers, call your health provider. But there are a couple things to remember: body aches, chills, fever and loss of sense of taste or smell are indicators it might be COVID-19. If you ever have shortness of breath that is not due to a chronic condition, call your doctor or 911.

Starting next week, the county is going to start to ramp down its mass clinic at the Deschutes County fairgrounds. Vaccines will still be widely available at other clinics put on by the county, at Mosaic Medical, at pharmacies and more.

Want to get vaccinated? Have questions? Go to deschutes.org/covid19vaccine.

You can also call the county health department at 541-699-5109. They are happy to help.

And by the way, the county still needs volunteers to help with vaccination clinics. Volunteer to help them help us all.

Don't wait in line at the DMV; go online

A great breakthrough is that starting next week many Oregonians won't have to go to the DMV.

You will be able to do things like renew your driver's license online. A new license will then be mailed to you. The program is scheduled to begin on May 5.

If you are one of those people who haven't been able to get an appointment at the DMV, this could be the answer. And by taking some of the load off the DMV offices, it should

help those who do need to visit an office.

The Legislature does seem likely to extend a grace period for drivers whose licenses have recently expired. And the federal government has also pushed out the deadline for REAL ID to 2023. REAL ID licenses will be one of the few forms of licenses acceptable for doing things such as boarding a flight or going to a federal facility.

Go to oregon.gov/odot/dmv for more information.



My Nickel's Worth

Douglass for Bend schools

I'm writing to offer my strong endorsement for Carrie McPherson Douglass in her reelection campaign for Bend-La Pine School Board. I've worked in education with Carrie for over a decade. Simply put, Carrie has the wisdom, tenacity and effectiveness we need on the school board.

Unlike her opponent, Carrie has been a leader through the pandemic. As chair of the Bend-La Pine board, she's helped shepherd us through the COVID-19 crisis, working tirelessly to ensure Bend-La Pine was the first large district in Oregon to safely reopen schools.

Unlike her opponent, Carrie has the professional experience needed to lead from Day 1. She's been a teacher, school system leader, and is co-founder and co-CEO of a national education nonprofit that helps school boards in cities across the country improve public education.

Unlike her opponent, Carrie can't put more than \$25,000 of family money into her campaign, and she doesn't live in an 8,000-square-foot home in the Highlands.

Carrie was born and raised in Bend and graduated from Bend-La Pine Schools. Carrie's opponent moved to Bend in 2018 from the Bay Area and has no professional experience in education.

This election matters. Carrie is the right choice. That's why Carrie has such strong support from Bend-La Pine teachers, parents and commu-

nity members. Please show the special interests backing Carrie's opponent that the Bend-La Pine board isn't for sale.

—Ethan Gray, Bend

Provide adequate parking

This will be the first time I've written a letter to an editor. This idea of removing the requirement for developers to provide adequate parking for residents is absurd because it lacks forethought and proper planning.

Yes, this has been tried in many large cities in the U.S. I wonder how that has worked out. In one neighborhood I know of in Concord, California, residents living with reduced parking availability have been forced to walk home in the dark after work because they had to park blocks away from their homes. They have risked parking in red zones and in other people's reserved spaces out of desperation, sometimes finding their cars towed the next morning.

This idea places the cart before the horse. Provide reasonable access to public transportation. Provide safe walking and biking routes (not like the bike lane on the Bend Parkway, which is dangerous, littered with bike-unfriendly gravel and almost entirely unused, in my observation). First, document a measured increase in use of these alternatives, then approve your reduced parking requirement.

Please think this through, councilors, before you vote.

—Elizabeth Wamimont, Bend

Republicans are back to slow

Republicans cut a deal on April 15 to get representation on the redistricting committee by agreeing to stop slowing things down or walking out as explained in The Bulletin: "Deal gives GOP more redistricting power to speed up bills: Democrats have agreed to give up an advantage in redrawing the state's political districts for the next 10 years in exchange for a commitment from Republicans to stop blocking bills in the Oregon Legislature with delay tactics."

Now, Republicans are back to their old tricks, asking for the reading of all bills. Slowing down the work of the Legislature is so hurtful, and your promise lasted only 13 days!

As for the reason, no one likes the shutdown, but if we keep complaining instead of complying, we will keep going around the same cycle over and over again. The graphs in the April 29 Bulletin show the surge in cases in Deschutes County plain as day. The reason: "if we don't act now, doctors, nurses, hospitals, and other health care providers in Oregon will be stretched to their limits."

Figure it out! This is needed to stop the surges and protect health care systems. Stop being a bunch of babies and maybe start encouraging people to get vaccinated. Most of all, get back to work. The business of the state of Oregon is what you were elected to work. Your antics may please your base, but it will lose you the thinking person's vote.

—Tom Kelley, Sunriver

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

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Voter turnout is low on purpose; be prepared for more suppression

BY JON GRINSPAN

Special to The Washington Post

In the debate over restrictive new voting laws, many have warned about what President Joe Biden called "backsliding into the days of Jim Crow." But there is a stronger, subtler parallel: the deliberate discouragement of working-class voters, around 1900, by wealthier Americans scared that "hordes of native and foreign barbarians, all armed with the ballot" would replace them at the polls.

This nearly forgotten panic caused a century of low turnouts.

Voter participation hasn't always been lousy in America: Although for the past century it has averaged just 56% of eligible voters in presidential elections, in the second half of the 1800s, an average of 77% of voters turned out, and often exceeded 80%. And participation didn't always correlate with wealth or education. In our own time, Americans who did not finish high school vote at less than half the rate of those with a postgraduate degree. But in the late 19th century, poorer voters predominated.

This was still a deeply flawed de-

mocracy, bigoted when it came to race and gender, but it was surprisingly inclusive across class, boasting a diverse working-class electorate of native-born and immigrant voters. Election days mobilized farmhands, butchers and streetsweepers — what Teddy Roosevelt called America's real "governing class."

Meanwhile, the wealthy stayed home, repeating the mantra "a gentleman never votes."

Those gentlemen finally targeted working-class politics in the Gilded Age, fearful about talk of unions, strikes, maybe even socialism. Though often hailing from old abolitionist families, Northeastern elites began to argue in the 1880s and '90s that they were the new enslaved people, with an impoverished, immigrant electorate as their masters. The Manhattan economist Simon Sterne complained (ridiculously) that "our better class voters, in our larger cities, are as much disenfranchised ... as any plantation negro was anterior to 1860."

Often, the well-to-do complained that working-class voters lacked education, but at a time when only a pros-

perous minority could afford to finish high school, let alone college, the class implications were obvious. These attacks rejected the principle of equality, as when a writer in The Washington Post complained that the ballots of "illiterate foreigners ... count as much as those of college professors."

The historian Francis Parkman hissed that "an invasion of peasants" was drowning the republic in a "muddy tide of ignorance." Democracy, he asserted, was perpetuating the notion that "the weakest and most worthless was a match, by his vote, for the wisest and best."

This fight took place as Southern states were stealing the vote from African Americans. After the mid-1870s, America began to backslide from the principles of equality and majority rule nationwide. In the three-quarters of the country outside the South, however, "reformers" could not simply disenfranchise their lower classes. But perhaps, they schemed, they might make participation unappealing enough to discourage turnout.

Under the guise of "good government," reformers targeted the three

pillars of working-class democracy: the saloon, the rally and the ballot box. Saloons had served as party headquarters, intellectual salons and even polling places for poor voters. By shutting them down on Election Day, "reformers" stifled a key institution. And by introducing permit requirements for demonstrations, they helped quiet the noisy rallies that had once energized public opinion.

Most important, states passed new registration laws and literacy requirements, moved polling places into unfriendly neighborhoods, and most employers stopped letting their workers take time off to vote. Authorities switched from the tradition of casting color-coded ballots in a public box — to private voting with dense, text-heavy, government-printed "secret ballots." None of these changes amounted to anything like the brutality of Jim Crow, but they were enacted with what one pastor called "the secret cause" of ending "unqualified suffrage."

Turnout crashed, falling by nearly one-third from the 1890s through the 1920s, until fewer than half of the eligible were voting. It fell especially among

populations who were poorer, younger, immigrants or African Americans. Election Day in the 19th century was a holiday. In the 20th century, it required literacy, identification papers, education, leave from work and, most of all, the confidence to move through elite-dominated political spaces.

The harm to turnout lasted for a century. While the Voting Rights Act of 1965 fought racial discrimination in voting, the discouragements preventing low-income participation have never been addressed. In 2020, heated voter turnout reached 66% for the first time since 1900. But it's as if this new engagement triggered some automatic alarm, and we're met with renewed talk about purifying the ballot.

This history shows that even small discouragements can do grievous harm to participation. And it reminds us that we should be prepared for such suppressions to continue, until Americans can accept the basic principle that there is no such thing as an "inferior type" of voter.

■ Jon Grinspan is curator of political history at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.