

State money comes with a gag order

We read something peculiar in the Malheur Enterprise: The board of a public development company has dictated that a family in Nyssa is forbidden to talk to the media if it wants up to \$400,000 to help with an industrial road.

That's the government saying if you want a benefit, you get gagged. The background: The Froerers farm about 4,000 acres. The plan is to close a railroad reload center and move it to another location. That means the Froerers must truck their goods several additional miles to get them loaded. The money is from the Malheur County Development Corp. to build a new access road for the Froerers. The state department of transportation is providing funding, according to the newspaper. The gag order expires when the project is completed. The Froerers argue they were offered an unfair choice: Accept the gag order and get the money or no money. They signed. It's not clear exactly why a gag order was put in place, though one reason could be obvious. The Froerers have in the past criticized Greg Smith, the reload center project manager, director of the Malheur County Economic De-

velopment Department and a state representative. Smith said he didn't put the gag provision in the contract. Lawyers did.

Gag orders do occur in court cases to limit publicity and attempt to protect the right to a fair trial. And parties sometimes have similar provisions in legal settlements and nondisclosure agreements in development deals. For instance, Apple Inc. has had confidentiality agreements with Crook County and Prineville officials to keep them from talking about the company's plans there.

This seems different. State money is being spent only on condition that a family keep quiet, when the family has been outspoken in the past. Yes the farmers are getting a benefit to compensate them for an expense they will pay because the reload center is moving. But it also looks like state dollars are being used to muzzle criticism. Is that OK with you?

Which is right, require or encourage vaccine?

Oregon State University-Cascades will be following OSU policy and requiring vaccination for COVID-19. Central Oregon Community College will not require it, as of now.

Why are they different? Which is right?

The state has no regulation or mandate for colleges. The Oregon Health Authority says it's up to the individual institution.

Both OSU and COCC have requirements for other vaccinations. For instance, OSU already has vaccination requirements for measles, mumps, rubella; meningococcal; tetanus and diphtheria; chickenpox; and Hepatitis B. There are medical and other exemptions. For most students, if they don't have their immunizations lined up, they are prevented from registering for the next term.

OSU was the first public college in Oregon to require COVID vaccinations for faculty and staff. Students who only take part in classes online or staff who do not come on to campus don't need to have it.

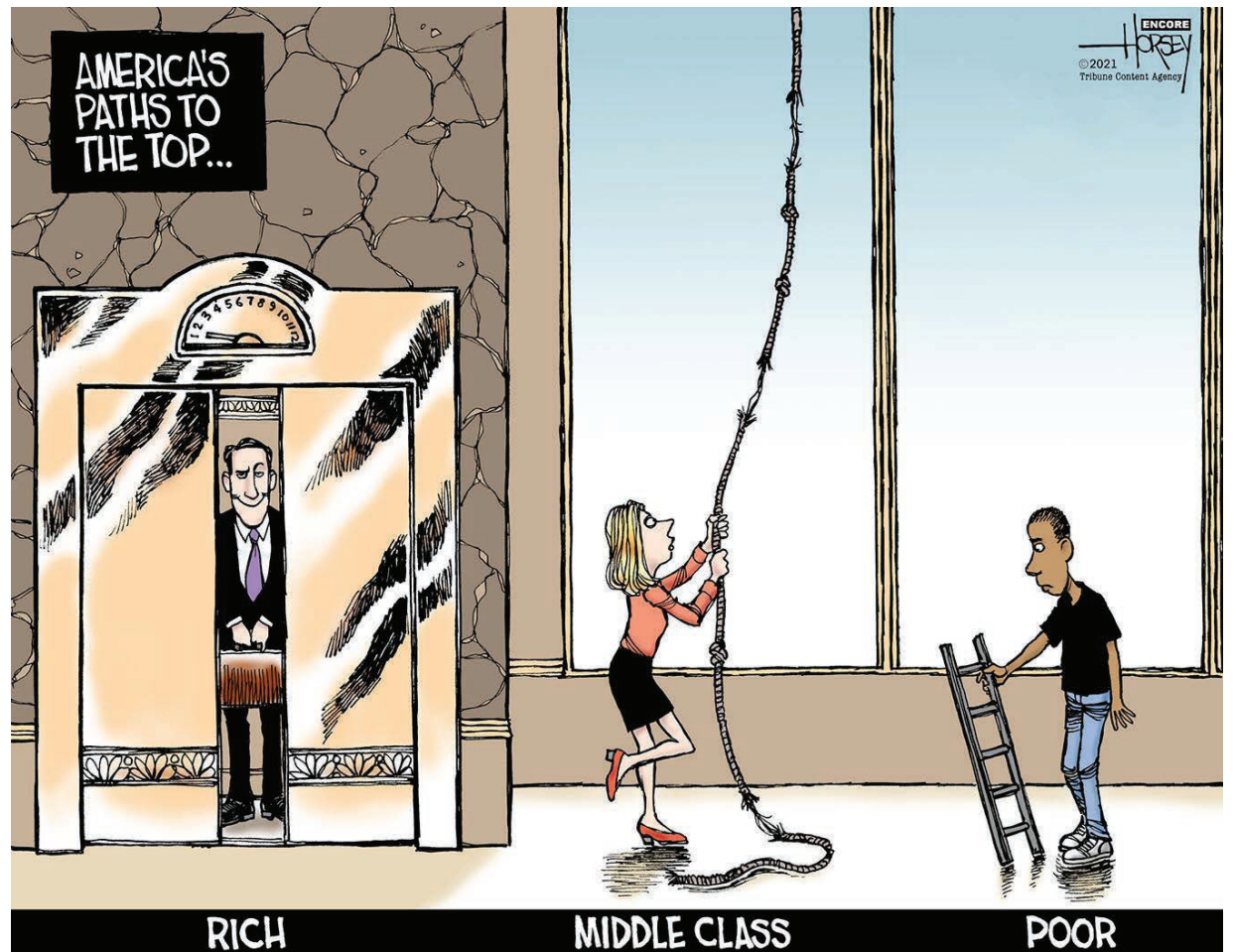
"This vaccination requirement is intended for students and university employees so that we mutually contribute to the greatest level of population protection possible from COVID-19," OSU interim President Becky Johnson said in a statement.

COCC's approach is to strongly recommend the vaccine for students and employees. COCC President Laurie Chesley told us COCC is following the guidance from the state Higher Education Coordinating Council, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Oregon Health Authority and Gov. Kate Brown's office.

"We are focusing our efforts on pro-vaccine education and availability," she wrote us in an email. "If OHA or the Governor's Office were to mandate COVID-19 vaccines at community colleges, we will certainly comply..."

Chesley believes COCC has the authority to require the COVID vaccination. It has chosen not to. The same discussion came up at the April COCC board meeting. At first, staff said COCC could not legally require the COVID vaccine. Then Chesley said it might be that such a requirement would be challenged and not hold up in court.

The question is: What approach is right? Strongly encourage and require the vaccination or just strongly encourage vaccination? Compulsory requirements may work. They can also alienate some people. The student populations at the institutions are also different. Could OSU and COCC both be getting it right?



My Nickel's Worth

Move our schools forward

For the past several years a multiracial group of students, parents, teachers and community leaders have been working closely with the Bend-La Pine school district to advance fairness, equity and inclusion in our schools.

The nonprofit Restorative Justice and Equity group organized student town hall meetings that brought together hundreds of students of all races in frank, informative and educational conversations aimed at improving race relations and fostering a greater understanding of what it is like to be a student of color in overwhelmingly white schools.

White students will attest that they were never "guilt-tripped" in these town halls and instead welcomed as friends and allies. This work has led to new multiracial, multicultural clubs run by students in our schools.

All this good work is now threatened by four school board candidates who have lied about what this diversity, equity and inclusion work is and what it has accomplished. Their negative spin would divide students along racial lines and make it much harder for students to come together.

Don't let this happen. Vote for Marcus LeGrand, Carrie McPherson Douglass, Janet Sarai Llerandi, and Shirley Olson to move our schools forward, not backward.

— Michael Funke, Bend

Irony in candidate's comment

Bend-La Pine School Board candidate Maria Lopez-Dauenhauer appeared on Laura Ingraham's Fox News program recently, decrying what she

alleged is being taught in American schools regarding race. Among her statements was: "We believe politics have no place in the classrooms."

That Lopez-Dauenhauer made her statement on national television to a far-right political pundit makes me wonder whether the school Lopez-Dauenhauer attended covered the topic of "irony" and if so, whether she was present the day it was taught.

— Rob Brazeau, Bend

No street racing

Northeast Purcell in Bend north of Empire and Yeoman have become dangerous raceways. Both the city road department and the police have been apprised of the situation, but nothing has changed.

Purcell from Empire to Yeoman is a school zone that few pay attention to. Additional signage reminding drivers would be beneficial. Enforcement would help tremendously. There have been motorcycle drag races at least twice, and hot rod "pedal to the metal" races occur regularly.

Yeoman has no speed limit signs posted, so the assumption seems to be 55 regularly. Riding your bicycle on Yeoman is dangerous. While I would love to see a speed bump on Purcell, I suspect that won't happen. So other speed reducing efforts need to be made.

— Linn Harrison, Bend

Resist identity politics

In my youth I was raised to treat others as I wish to be treated and to judge others by their character and abilities.

Since that has worked for me in life, I am taken back by the left's promotion of "identity politics" with its emphasis on race, gender, religious and sexual preferences.

President Biden and the press took this to the extreme by introducing his cabinet members in terms of their race, gender, sexual preference, or religious beliefs, not ability or qualifications.

To me, putting the emphasis on one's race is the definition of racism and is a losing proposition. When we select someone for a position largely because of their race, or gender we risk offending someone of another race, or another gender who wasn't selected. The potential for endless conflict is high.

We are approaching the point where every school board, or city council is evaluated for its racial or gender balance, with some emphasis on sexual preference and religion. Are teachers to be hired based on "identity politics," rather than ability? I hope not. Would you board a plane on an airline that placed racial, or gender equality as a higher priority than ability? As long as the selection standards are clear and everyone is given equal opportunity there should be no controversy.

I know racism exists and we should not tolerate it. However, the current trend of labeling people racist if they disagree with you, or having politicians and the media using "identity politics" is placing emphasis on our differences rather than our similarities and is dividing the country. The use of "identity politics" and wokeism should be resisted at every level.

— Steve Young, Bend

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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.

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GUEST COLUMN

Republican Party learned the wrong lesson about propoganda

BY RICH BELZER

The 2020 election had me worried. Over time, I became convinced that, given Donald Trump's authoritarian leanings, if he won reelection it would spell the end of democracy in the United States after more than 200 years. Naturally, I was relieved when Trump was defeated by Joe Biden, assuming that after losing the Senate and White House and having the Democrats retain the House, the GOP would back away from acting as a Trump cult and return to policy-based politics.

I was wrong. Even following the invasion of the Capitol by Trump supporters on Jan. 6, Republicans in both the House and Senate remained in Trump's thrall; the few Republicans in Congress who voted for impeachment (House) or conviction (Senate) be-

came virtual outcasts in Trump's GOP. Trump's final assault on democracy, the Capitol invasion, has now been characterized as understandable by many Republicans whose lives were in danger. It should be noted that over 400 participants in 1/6 have been indicted for a variety of crimes.

The Republican Party has learned a lesson from the four years of Trump's presidency but it was the wrong lesson. They learned about the effectiveness of an authoritarian tool known as propoganda; if you tell a lie over and over again, no matter how divergent from facts, your followers will believe it. Trump, if nothing else, was a master liar and it mattered not to him if his lies were easily proven false. He began his time in office with a lie about inauguration crowd size that was easily dis-

proved by photographic evidence. He ended his presidency with a lie about a stolen election, a massive fraud implemented by the Democrats that cost him the victory he so richly deserved.

Let's not forget that the Trump campaign and the Republican Party filed over 60 lawsuits challenging the supposedly fraudulent results in numerous states. None of these suits ever made it to trial; with a single exception (involving a handful of late votes in Pennsylvania), these cases were thrown out by judges because the plaintiffs were unable to provide any evidence of fraud in their filings. It is one thing to toss out accusations of fraud in a press conference at the Four Seasons (Total Landscaping), it is quite another for an attorney to walk into court and lie about fraud.

In Georgia, votes were counted three times, once by hand, and the results were the same each time. Results in

Maricopa County, Arizona, were confirmed by multiple reviews and certified by state officials. The Arizona legislature has now mandated another review, this one conducted by Cyber Ninjas whose CEO has been echoing Trump's false claims about voter fraud.

Trump's lie about voter fraud in the 2020 election has now been fully adopted by the GOP nationwide. Fifty-five percent of Republicans believe that Trump lost because the election was rigged so the propoganda campaign has been effective, at least with Republicans. Republican-led state legislatures around the country are relying on this big lie as a justification for passing bills designed to suppress minority voting. Georgia's has already been signed into law and Arizona seems poised to join them.

Georgia Republicans have been accused of passing a racist voting law, a contention they dispute. In a Senate Ju-

diary Committee hearing, Sen. John Kennedy, R-La., confronted Stacey Abrams, challenging her to specifically detail aspects of the law that were racist. Once her list reached seven items with no end in sight, Kennedy cut her off stating, "I get the idea."

What we are seeing is a classic propoganda effort designed to subvert American democracy. You repeat a lie about election fraud over and over again for months. Then you claim that new voting laws are needed to restore the faith of Americans in their elections. Finally, you pass as many restrictive voting laws as possible to limit voting by your opposition. This is classic authoritarianism.

■ Rich Belzer served as director of federal marketing for a NYSE-listed computer company and was subsequently a senior executive with two NASDAQ-listed high-tech companies. He moved to Bend to join Columbia Aircraft where he became VP of worldwide sales.



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