

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Bulletin
AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERHeidi Wright Publisher
Gerry O'Brien Editor
Richard Coe Editorial Page EditorDeschutes County
may finally get
needed judges

It looks like this may be the year Deschutes County finally gets not just one, but two more needed circuit court judge positions.

It's not a done deal. But the potential was clearly there Thursday morning in black and white in a pair of amendments to two House bills.

An amendment to House Bill 3011 would increase the number of judges in Deschutes County from 7 to 9. An amendment to House Bill 5006 adds money to pay for two judges and support staff.

Deschutes County's need for more judges has been clear for years. It's been one of the most "underjudged" counties in the state. The Oregon Judicial Department found it to have one of the worst balances of judicial workload and staff.

That means getting justice for people before the courts takes longer. Accusations of crimes, child custody, business disputes and more take more time to resolve. That's not good for anyone.

The Legislature always has to make decisions about balancing revenue and need. Judges across the state have come up short. There have been efforts going back at least to 2002 to increase judges in the state. There has been some progress. Deschutes missed out time and time again.

2019 was one of the more memorable examples. What did the legislative leadership do? An anonymous amendment was submitted to House Bill 2377 with no judge for Deschutes County. We'll al-

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ways remember what Mike McLane said reacting to the amendment in committee.

He was then a state representative and is now a judge on the circuit court for Jefferson and Crook counties.

"Not Deschutes?" he asked.

His question was met with only silence.

This year may be different. This year should be different.

"It has been 18 years since Deschutes County was granted a new judicial position," state Rep. Jason Kropf, D-Bend told us. "In that time our population has grown significantly, and although our courts have done incredible things with limited resources, it has been stretched thin."

Public records advocate
deserves to be independent

Oregon's public records advocate should be an advocate for openness and transparency.

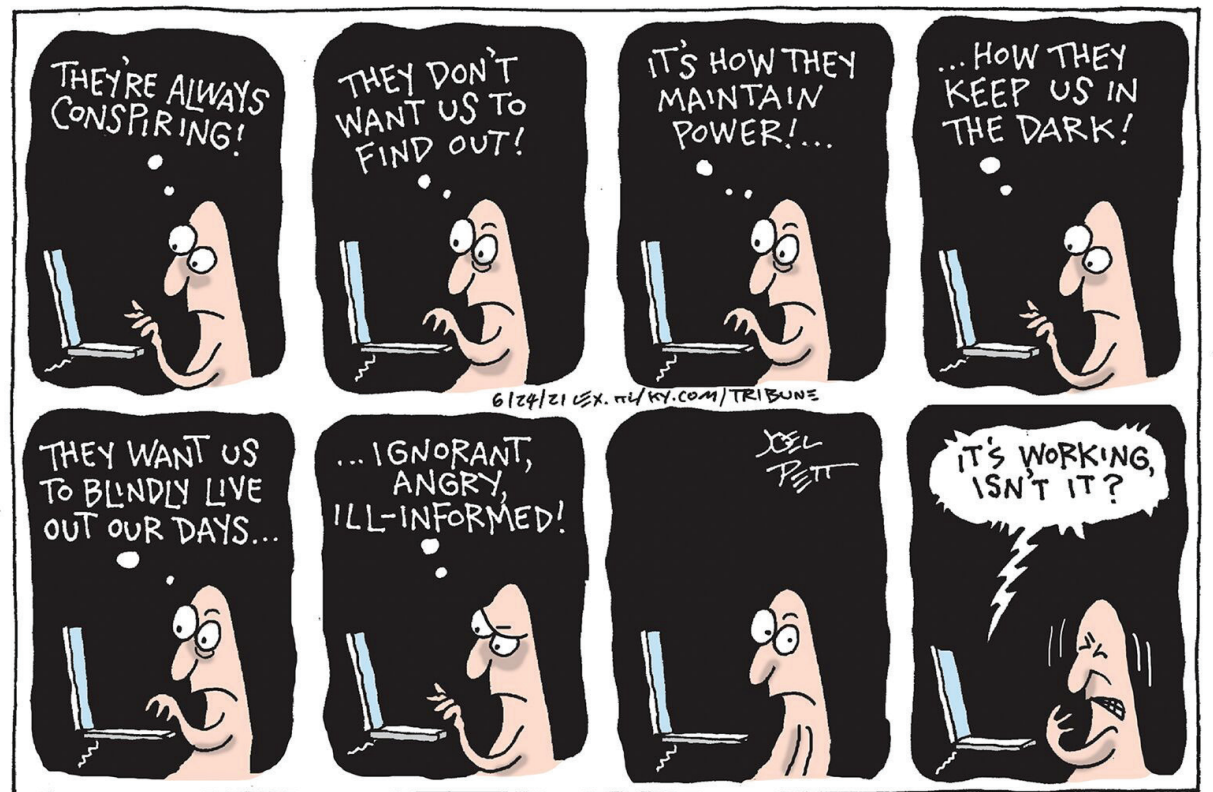
Senate Bill 500 would make it clear that the position will be more independent, too. The governor will no longer get hiring and firing authority. That will become the purview of the state's public records advisory council.

The public records advocate is part of government, but it also must push government to adhere to the law and encourage improvements in the law. It's not an easy path to walk. And it's even more complicated if the governor controls your hiring and firing and may have different priorities for openness.

Ginger McCall, Oregon's first public records advocate, resigned in 2019 because she felt she was getting undue pressure from the governor's office. Maybe nobody did anything technically wrong. But it did make it clear that a change in the law would be a good idea.

The advocate can hold government accountable for how it complies with the law. The advocate can help educate the public and government about the law. And the advocate can point out where changes are necessary in the law. But to do all that right, the office does need to be independent.

S.B. 500 surely seems on its way to be signed by Gov. Kate Brown. That's just what should be happening.



Worry more about China than Russia

BY JAMES HOHMANN

The Washington Post

The salute was carried live to 1 billion people but went unnoticed by most of the world.

Three astronauts aboard China's new rival to the International Space Station gave military salutes to President Xi Jinping during a videoconference broadcast Wednesday on state television. "We in Beijing await your triumphant return," Xi told the three officers of the People's Liberation Army standing in front of Communist Party flags as they orbited 242 miles above Earth.

Last week's launch from a base in the Gobi Desert was followed obsessively inside China but largely overlooked in the United States — overshadowed by President Joe Biden's summit with Russian leader Vladimir Putin. Although both adversaries threaten U.S. interests, Americans need to worry more about a rising and militarizing China than a revanchist Russia. The new space race helps illustrate why.

The Chinese didn't put an astronaut into space until 2003, 42 years after the Soviets, but Beijing has been making cosmic strides that, unlike the Kremlin's advances during the Cold War, have yet to rouse Washington out of its relative complacency.

Last month, China landed a rover on Mars — becoming the only nation besides ours to do so. Last September, the Chinese launched and recovered a spaceplane that spent two days in low Earth orbit. In 2019, China became the first country to land a craft on the far side of the moon.

The same day Biden met with Putin, Russian and Chinese officials unveiled a road map in St. Petersburg to jointly build a lunar base that could

accommodate humans by 2036. The Chinese have also conducted tests that indicate advanced capabilities to knock out U.S. satellites. Last June, they launched the last in a constellation of 35 satellites to create a rival network to our GPS system.

In April, the U.S. intelligence community's annual threat assessment warned that "Beijing is working to match or exceed US capabilities in space to gain the military, economic, and prestige benefits that Washington has accrued from space leadership."

This threat isn't limited to the vacuum of space. China's efforts must be viewed in the context of its ongoing genocide in Xinjiang, smothering of Hong Kong, saber-rattling against Taiwan and obstruction of independent investigations into the origins of the coronavirus.

Fortunately, most leaders in both U.S. political parties recognize the need to counter China and support our space program. In 2019, the Trump administration moved up by four years, to 2024, the timetable for returning astronauts to the moon. The Biden team embraces this aggressive, if underfunded, goal.

If we are to maintain U.S. supremacy in space, we should also try to learn from our early setbacks. Jeff Shesol's "Mercury Rising," published this month, tells the fascinating backstory of how John Glenn became the first American to orbit Earth in 1962. Even though John F. Kennedy campaigned on closing the space gap, his initial commitment seemed more rhetorical than real. Kennedy's budget director resisted spending on manned spaceflight.

When Kennedy told a joint session of Congress that America should try to land a man on the moon by the end of the decade, he and his top aides

were struck by the lack of applause in the chamber. The Democratic chairman of the House Appropriations Committee called Kennedy's budget request "wholly unrealistic and fantastic beyond measure."

Gallup polling in 1961 found that almost 6 in 10 Americans opposed spending the \$40 billion they were told it would cost to put men on the moon. When respondents ranked the issues for which they'd be willing to pay more taxes, space came in fifth. Early media coverage focused on the expense, not excitement, of a mission whose prospects were considered remote.

The success of Glenn's Friendship 7 mission created momentum and built support for additional spending. "Everything in retrospect has an air of inevitability, but it wasn't," Shesol said.

Even after Glenn's achievement, many Americans remained skeptical about exploring the final frontier. Shesol said that's why Kennedy delivered what became his famous "we choose to go to the moon" address at Rice University. "This generation does not intend to founder in the backwash of the coming age of space," Kennedy declared. "The exploration of space will go ahead, whether we join in it or not. . . . No nation which expects to be the leader of other nations can expect to stay behind in the race for space."

Half a century later, in the face of a different communist threat, another new age is dawning. Yes, Russia remains a threat. The global pandemic is still with us. And red ink is spilling for decades to come. But for all the competing budget and political concerns, the martyred president's words feel freshly urgent.

■ James Hohmann is a columnist for The Washington Post.

Letters policy

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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.

I had the coronavirus dripped into my nose, on purpose, for science

BY ALASTAIR FRASER-URQUHART

Special to The Washington Post

A month ago, in one of the most terrifying moments of my life, I was deliberately exposed to SARS-CoV-2. The coronavirus itself came as a clear liquid dropped into my nose — a process that took a team of six, with some unsealing the virus, some recording the doses and a nurse counting down the seconds. I submitted to this for one simple reason: This was my way to help advance our fight against the novel coronavirus.

I'm part of the world's first COVID-19 human challenge study. Challenge studies, which have been instrumental to our understanding of diseases such as influenza, malaria and cholera, pose risks to volunteers that can make them controversial. Given the potentially massive scientific and social benefits of learning more about the disease, I felt willing to shoulder the risks: The dangers of COVID-19 for someone my age are similar to routine medical procedures (live kid-

ney donation being a particularly apt example). But when, in June 2020, I joined the nonprofit 1Day Sooner, which advocates for potential challenge study volunteers, there were no challenge studies planned anywhere in the world. That changed when one was announced in mid-October and granted ethical approval in February.

My journey as a research subject began in London in January, with a half-day's worth of screening: swabs, tests and sampling to ensure I was healthy, my lungs were working properly, I was antibody-negative, and I didn't have any preexisting conditions that increased my susceptibility to the virus. A few weeks later, I got the call I'd been hoping for:

I would proceed to the next stage, which involved two meetings with a study doctor where, over several hours, we read and discussed an informed-consent form of more than 30 pages. (Study volunteers were compensated approximately \$6,375, an amount based on the London living wage. As I receive the payments over the next year,

I am donating them to nonprofits.)

The study started in late March. I underwent a rigorous health check for the first two days, involving X-rays, scans, lung tests and blood samples. Then, on the third day, I was given the virus.

One of the essential requirements for challenge studies is strict isolation, to ensure that the virus can't leak into the outside world. I was confined in a biocontainment room, designed from the ground up to stop viruses from leaving. Slightly larger than a standard hospital room, it was kept at a slightly lower air pressure than the ward beyond. Nobody entered without wearing gloves, gown and a breathing hood, with a unit that pumped in decontaminated air. I couldn't even see into the hospital — only into a small antechamber where the staff scrubbed themselves in and out. Apart from them, I had no human contact — not even with the other trial participants.

I was awake each morning by 5:30 for the study health professionals to take my vital signs, three swabs and a saliva sample; my last checks finished as late as 11:30 p.m. I gave daily blood samples and took smell tests and CT

scans and had my lung function analyzed. By the end of the study, I had racked up well over 100 swab tests. While not all of that was pleasant, it was surprisingly satisfying to think about the sheer amount of data my body was generating as a study subject. The downtime was mundane: I read books, got some work done and watched a lot of Netflix.

From the outside, my family and friends constantly checked in: Every morning, I woke up to concerned texts about my health. Though the risk of severe illness was low, the study team had steroids, oxygen and remdesivir on hand in case I took a turn for the worse. None of those treatments were perfect, which meant I was unsettled about the virus throughout the study. Fear that I might develop "long COVID" dominated all our thoughts. (At the moment, I'm free of any long-term symptoms.) My mum fussed about my lung capacity, complaining that I'd "started giving her trouble before I was born and hadn't stopped since."

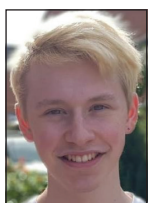
The study is ongoing in London. Suffice to say that I felt rough for quite a few days after getting the virus. It

felt like something I would expect from a bad cold. I fully recovered (and had two consecutive negative coronavirus test results) by the time I left the quarantine facility — and I had a newfound respect for the power of the virus. By the time my 17 days in the study were up, I was more than ready to go home.

I felt as though I was doing something to end the pandemic misery by voluntarily exposing myself to the virus. I also carried the disheartening knowledge that this study was not as effective as it could have been. If we had run it earlier on, perhaps the world could have learned more about the virus faster. Perhaps, we would have made swifter progress toward testing a vaccine or effective treatments.

I don't think challenge studies only teach the world about the coronavirus. More fundamentally, they show us that there are people who are truly happy to take on physical risks to advance human knowledge and health.

■ Alastair Fraser-Urquhart lives in Stoke, England, and works as the UK Chapter Manager for 1Day Sooner, a group that advocates for COVID-19 challenge trial volunteers.



Fraser-Urquhart