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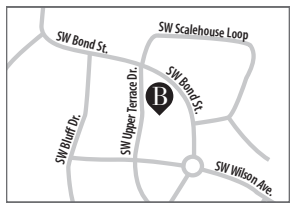
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LOCAL, STATE & REGION

COVID-19 data for Friday, July 23

Deschutes County cases: 10,357 (23 new cases)
Deschutes County deaths: 87 (zero new deaths)
Crook County cases: 1,368 (2 new cases)
Crook County deaths: 24 (zero new deaths)

Jefferson County cases: 2,456 (9 new cases)
Jefferson County deaths: 42 (zero new deaths)
Oregon cases: 214,869 (613 new cases)
Oregon deaths: 2,836 (2 new deaths)
COVID-19 patients hospitalized at St. Charles Bend on Friday: 15 (4 in ICU)

The Bulletin had been tracking the seven-day average case count based on state data since local coronavirus cases were first reported in March of last year. Starting with the July Fourth weekend, the state stopped providing county-level data for weekends or holidays. When data is available, The Bulletin will continue to publish information about the pandemic.

VACCINATIONS IN OREGON COUNTIES

Trump-Biden voting split aligns with rates

BY AIMEE GREEN

The Oregonian

What's true across the nation appears to be true in Oregon: If you're a Republican, you're less likely to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

The Oregonian looked at the county-by-county statistics of Oregonians inoculated against the coronavirus and saw a clear correlation: The 10 counties with the lowest percentages of residents vaccinated all voted — by a landslide — for Donald Trump in the last presidential election. That's Lake, Malheur, Umatilla, Grant, Harney, Gilliam, Morrow, Union, Douglas and Baker counties.

Eight of the 10 counties with

the highest vaccination rates voted overwhelmingly for Joseph Biden. That's Washington, Hood River, Multnomah, Benton, Lincoln, Deschutes, Lane and Clackamas.

Polk and Tillamook — where Trump beat Biden by slim margins of less than 2 percentage points — also made Oregon's top 10 list of most-immunized counties.

Another way to look at it? Compare the most-Republican county in the state — Lake — with the most-Democratic — Multnomah. Eight out of 10 voters in Lake County voted for Trump in November 2020, and 35% of residents 16 and older in the county had

received at least one shot of COVID-19 vaccine as of early July.

Conversely, nearly 8 out of 10 voters in Multnomah County chose Biden, and 73% of residents 16 and older — more than double the figure in Lake County — had received at least one jab.

Asked about Lake County's low inoculation rate, James Williams, chairman of the County Commission, bristled at the correlation between voting and vaccinations.

"If you are looking to attack or degrade the majority (or any part) of Lake County's population, based around their political affiliation and/or their

medical choices," Williams wrote in an email, "I would say that it not only shows a shameful personal bias on your part, but possibly the need to find a new profession."

Meanwhile, George Murdock, chair of the Umatilla County Commission, said he's a Republican and got vaccinated on the first day he was eligible. "Mind boggling" is how he describes the Republican-Democrat divide.

"It just doesn't make any sense to me," Murdock said. "There's absolutely no reason for it to be polarized between political parties."

Umatilla County, where 64% voted for Trump, has the third

lowest vaccination rate in the state with just over 41% of residents 16 and older having received at least one shot.

Murdock, 78, is vocal about his vaccination status and the story of his daughter, 46, who is still a COVID-19 long-hauler seven months after she came down with the virus.

In Oregon, it's also worth noting that the counties with the highest rates of vaccine hesitancy or resistance are generally the smallest and most rural in the state. Some observers say that might contribute to lower vaccination rates: Residents don't perceive COVID-19 as a significant threat.

Taxpayers foot \$100,000 bill for governor's political consultant



Kristyna Wentz-Graff/OPB file

Gov. Kate Brown speaks at the Reopening Oregon Celebration at Providence Park in Portland on June 30.

BY HILLARY BORRUD

The Oregonian

Gov. Kate Brown is on track to spend more than \$100,000 in taxpayer funds for one of her longtime advisers to serve as a part-time political consultant.

Under an arrangement dating back to early 2020, Brown hired her former communications director, Chris Pair, through a no-bid state contract at a rate of \$6,500 a month to attend weekly meetings of the Western Governors Association on expanding electric vehicle infrastructure, the governor's signature initiative during her time as chair of the group. So far the state has paid Pair \$91,000 under the contract, according to the governor's press secretary.

During the same time, Brown also paid Pair an undisclosed amount through her political action committee for work that she has declined to describe, beyond saying it was unrelated to state business.

Brown did not disclose that

GO ONLINE

• To read the complete story, view it at www.bendbulletin.com

Pair might be hired back on the state's dime as a consultant when a reporter asked about the longtime communications director's departure at a Jan. 17, 2020, press conference. "We're continuing to work together in other capacities," the governor said of Pair. But she refused to say what that work was because she said the duties "don't have to do with stateside at this point" and were paid for by her political action committee.

A month later, the governor's staff asked state procurement officials to prepare a no-bid contract worth up to \$150,000 for Pair's consulting company, Althea, so that Pair could assist with Oregon's share of work on the Western Governors' Association electric vehicle recommendations, according to public records. The contract called for the state to pay Pair \$78,000 a year, roughly half the

\$158,000 salary he previously earned as the governor's communications director and senior adviser.

Brown declined to comment on why it was necessary and beneficial to taxpayers for her to hire her former staffer through a no-bid contract. Pair also did not respond to calls for comment.

Liz Merah, press secretary for the governor, wrote in an email that Brown had tasked Pair with developing her initiative for the Western Governors' Association when he was still her communications director, so "when Chris chose to move on from the governor's office in late 2019," Brown asked Pair to complete the work.

Merah said Pair's state-paid work for the governor has been strictly separated from any other political work he does for Brown. "All work performed by Althea LLC under this contract is related to the Western Governors' Association," Merah wrote.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Open house now online for Wilson Avenue Corridor Project

The Wilson Avenue Corridor Project has been chosen as the first project to be done out of dozens promised in the \$190 million Transportation General Obligation bond passed by voters last year.

The corridor project will replace a damaged and aging traffic signal, improve walking and biking infrastructure and upgrade a water line, among other improvements, according to the city of Bend.

This project was selected by the transportation bond oversight committee, which is made up of residents to oversee how and when the bond money is allocated. The city is moving toward design work for the west section of Wilson Avenue from Second Street to Douglas Street, according to the city.

A virtual open house is accessible now through Aug. 9 at bendoregon.gov/wilson.

An in-person open house will be at the Vince Genna Stadium parking lot from 4 to 6:30 p.m. on Aug. 2.

— Bulletin staff report

Citing delta variant, Washington state urges indoor masks

The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Washington state's top epidemiologist is recommending that everyone wear a mask or face covering in crowded indoor places because of the rise of the COVID-19 delta variant — even if they have been vaccinated.

Dr. Scott Lindquist said Friday the state is seeing a "fifth wave" of the new coronavirus that is sending more people to the hospital.

The state saw 2,572 new cases reported for Wednesday compared with 750 seven

days earlier.

The state Department of Health reports that about 350 people statewide are hospitalized with COVID-19, which is roughly half the figure for earlier waves of the pandemic.

"The majority of these hospitalizations can be prevented by people getting vaccinated," Lindquist said.

Washington state's population is about 7.65 million.

The Department of Health and Gov. Jay Inslee aren't formally reinstating mask mandates or other measures yet, Lindquist said.

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