JAN. 6 CAPITOL RIOT

A year later, Congress more deeply divided than ever

BY LISA MASCARO
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A deeply divided Congress is about to show the world a very unsettled view from the U.S. Capitol: Rather than a national crisis that pulls the country together, the deadly riot on Jan. 6, 2021, only seems to have pushed lawmakers further apart.

Some members are planning to mark the anniversary of the Capitol insurrection with a moment of silence. Others will spend the day educating Americans on the workings of democracy.

And still others don't think the deadliest domestic attack on Congress in the nation's history needs to be remembered at all.

Where they stand on remembrance can be largely attributed to their political party, a jarring discord that shows the country's lawmakers remain strikingly at odds over how to unify a torn nation.

The president who had been fairly and legitimately defeated, Donald Trump, told his followers to "fight like hell" to stop the certification of Joe Biden's election and said he would march with them to the Capitol, though he did not. The result was violence and mayhem that left five people dead in the immediate aftermath, hundreds facing charges and millions of dollars in property damage.

But the lack of bipartisan resolve to assign responsibility for the siege or acknowledge the threat it posed has eroded trust among lawmakers, turned ordinary legislative disputes into potential crises and left the door open for more violence after the next disputed election.

It all sets Congress adrift toward a gravely uncertain future: Did Jan. 6 bring the end of one era or the start of a new one?

"One thing that people should consider when thinking about Jan. 6 is ... people should think about the fragility of democracy," said Joanne Freeman, a professor of history and American studies at Yale, whose book "Field of Blood" chronicles violence and bloodshed in Congress in the years before the Civil War.

Seeing few historical parallels, Freeman warned, "We're at a moment where things that people have taken for granted about the working of a democratic politics can't be taken for granted anymore."

Win McNamee/Getty Images file

A mob supporting then-President Donald Trump breaks into the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021 in Washington, D.C.

The aftermath of Jan. 6 hangs heavy over snow-covered Capitol Hill, in the relationships that deepened between lawmakers who feared for their lives that day and those that have frayed beyond repair.

The Capitol, before the riot a symbol of the openness of American democracy, remains closed to most visitors in part because of the coronavirus pandemic public health concerns, but also because of the escalated number of violent threats against lawmakers. Representatives are required to pass through metal detectors because Democrats say they cannot trust their Republican colleagues not to bring firearms to the House during floor proceedings.

Rep. Jamaal Bowman, D-N.Y., said every time he leaves his office he scans the hallways for potential threats — a feeling he said that, as a Black American, is familiar, but one that he never expected as a member of Congress.

"The lack of freedom of movement — without fear — is not there at the Capitol. And I'm a member of Congress," Bowman said.

Bowman has asked Biden to declare Jan. 6 a National Day of Healing.

But Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, a member of Republican leadership, has no plans to memorialize the day, and he doesn't think others should, either.

"This thing has already become way too politicized, and that would just further exacerbate it," he said.

Trump's false claims of voter fraud have continued to foment, met mostly with silence from Republicans in Congress unwilling to contradict his version of events.

"To continue offering what we have and offer spectators in the gym, we're asking spectators to wear a mask. This is about the kids. Parents, the least they could do is wear a mask and help us out."

— Jason Carr, Crook County School District spokesperson

Schools

Continued from A1

State calls for halt to extracurriculars, precautionary measures

The state's health and education leaders said in a joint advisory Monday that school districts "should expect rapid transmission of COVID-19" if they continue with extracurricular activities, such as athletic competitions and clubs. If schools won't cancel those activities, the state recommended enforcing measures, like masking or testing, to ensure kids can stay in school through the ongoing omicron surge.

Yet five school districts in Central Oregon said precautions beyond the usual measures — masking, testing, contact tracing and hand-washing — are not on the horizon for extracurricular activities.

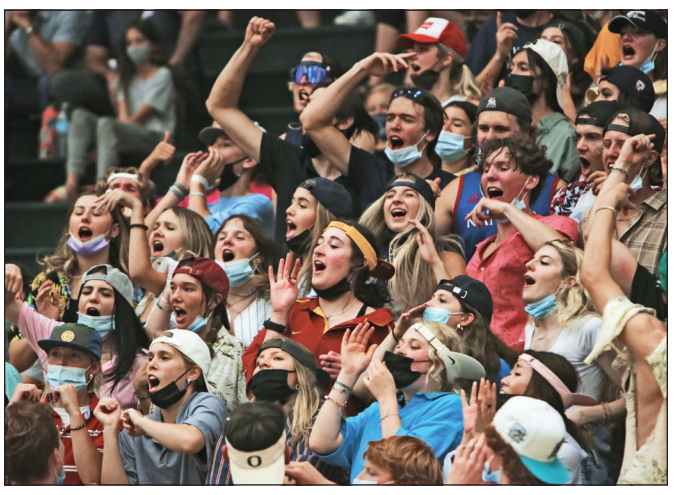
Bend-La Pine Schools' spokesperson, Alandra Johnson, said in an email: "No changes to date."

Jefferson County School District spokesperson Joey Prechtl said: "Right now, we're staying the course, but that, of course, could change."

Crook County School District spokesperson Jason Carr said: "We feel comfortable with the protocols we have in place."

And Culver School District Superintendent Stefanie Garber said: "We don't plan on changing anything until there's a reason to."

Keeping kids in school, several spokespersons said, remains the number one priority.



Dean Guernsey/Bulletin file

Bend High students cheer during a volleyball match at Summit High School on Sept. 7.

Central Oregon becomes COVID-19 epicenter

The Oregon Health Authority reported 6,203 new COVID-19 cases Wednesday, the second consecutive day with a record-shattering daily case count. That's a steep rise from the state's previous high of 4,540 cases reported Tuesday.

And Central Oregon is among the regions hardest hit. Deschutes County reported 280 cases Tuesday, but on Wednesday, that number jumped to 716, according to OHA.

Deschutes County continues to report the highest COVID-19 case count per capita in Oregon, with Jefferson County coming in second. The counties also reported the second and third highest COVID-19 positive test rates in the state Wednesday, according to OHA.

But Redmond School District won't pause extracurriculars, Miller said, pointing to the district's contact tracing efforts and its "test to stay" option. Most Central Oregon schools are using this option, which allows unvaccinated students who are exposed to COVID-19 to attend school and participate in extracurricular activities if they test negative.

Miller said the district plans to send a message to parents encouraging community members to take precautionary measures like wearing a facial covering.

Carr said Crook County plans to send a similar message to parents, particularly pointed at masking at sporting events. He said the district has no intention of canceling or shutting down attendance for extracurricular activities, but said he could not guarantee the state wouldn't act if cases rise and community members flout coronavirus precautions.

"To continue offering what we have and offer spectators in the gym, we're asking spectators to wear a mask," he said. "This is about the kids. Parents, the least they could do is wear a mask and help us out."

Other schools are already taking stringent measures to prevent coronavirus spread in extracurriculars.

Portland Public Schools announced Tuesday that it would require extracurriculars to enforce facial coverings at all times, limit locker room access, stop overnight competitive travel, shutter event concessions and require proof of negative COVID test or vaccination.

Carr said Crook County isn't looking at any measures like Portland's. The school district has yet to report a large spike in COVID-19 cases, with 17 students and one staff member reporting being positive for COVID. But Carr said the school district will continue to be flexible as the omicron surge unfolds.

He said, "It may take through this week before we see how omicron affects us."

■ *Reporter: 541-660-9844, bdole@bendbulletin.com*

Tests

Continued from A1

That means they should get tested, if needed and available and stay home and isolate as per (the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) guidelines."

And while positive cases are on the rise, the numbers could be far higher as the county's tracking doesn't include home tests.

The hospital expanded its drive-thru testing from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

According to the Oregon Health Authority dashboard, over the past seven days, Deschutes County reported 1,097.9 cases per 100,000 people — the highest in the state — and a 29.5% positivity rate. Jefferson County had the second highest infection rate with 738.4 cases per 100,000 people, and its positivity rate was 14.6% over the past seven days. Crook County had 610.1 cases per 100,000 in the same period with a 20.3% positivity rate, according to data posted Tuesday.

The number of cases in a community depends on the population and allows for a more even comparison between counties than just raw case numbers.

Deschutes County Commissioner Phil Chang said at the meeting Wednesday he's hearing from the community that the long waits at St. Charles and elsewhere for testing is due to staffing supply constraints.

"People tell me they're shaking every tree and trying to get an appointment and nothing is available for a week and then there is the challenge with test accessibility," Chang said. "Is there anything we can do?"

The omicron variant began showing up just a couple of weeks ago in Central Oregon. It has a shorter incubation period and is highly contagious, said Nahad Sadr-Azodi, Deschutes County Health Services director of public health, at the meeting.

"Get vaccinated and get boosted; that's still working, despite the variant's changing characteristics," Sadr-Azodi said. "Wear a mask, physical distancing is still clearly working and good hand hygiene."

■ *Reporter: 541-633-2117, sroig@bendbulletin.com*

OBITUARY

FloAdell Smith

May 12, 1930 - November 14, 2021

FloAdell Smith passed away November 14, 2021, at the age of 91. Flo and her husband Jack moved to Bend in 1976. She was an original employee of the Bank of the Cascades when it opened in 1977 and consequently was their first retiree in 1990. Flo is survived by her son and daughter-in-law Greg and Judy Smith, her daughter and son-in-law Tami and Bill Johnson, five grandchildren: Ryan, Angie, Joel, Jacque, and Amy, and seven great grandchildren.

A Celebration of Life will be held Saturday, January 15, 2022, at Aspen Hall in Shevlin Park at 11:00 am. Friends and family are welcome.

Donations may be made in her memory to The Bethlehem Inn.