

EDITORIALS & OPINIONS

The Bulletin
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Will new climate policy create bad incentives?

The story is that, in colonial India, the British governor wanted to get rid of the cobras in Delhi. He set a bounty. It was high enough that people started farming cobras to make money.

It's what people call the cobra effect or perverse incentives. The best plans motivated by the best of intentions can go awry.

One of the best plans with the best of intentions in Oregon is arguably from Gov. Kate Brown. If Oregon gets it right, the new climate friendly housing and transportation policies for the state ordered by Brown will lead to a much changed state.

More dense housing. More mixed-use development. Taller buildings. More use of bikes, walking and transit. Less parking. More focus on looking at policies through an equity lens.

State committees are writing the rules and regulations to require those kinds of changes right now.

That may not be the kind of place you dream of living in. But the motivation is to transform the state into something that reduces the impact on climate change, is more equitable and is just a smarter way for people to live and get to and from where they need to go.

A challenge the proposed changes face is creating perverse incentives. For instance, by compelling larger communities in Oregon, such as the greater Bend area, to adhere to the new policies will it drive people, businesses and development into areas that don't face the most demanding

requirements?

Think about an example. Larger areas like Bend will under the proposed rules be required to focus development in what are called climate friendly areas. That is where 30% of needed housing will need to be built. In Bend, maybe that would be in the city's core. Requirements for housing might become more dense than they are now. Rules would discourage the use of the car and encourage the use of bikes, walking and transit.

If Bend wanted to expand its urban growth boundary under the proposed rules, it would need to identify a new climate friendly area within the city's current limits to meet half of the housing needed. The other half would be allowed in the expansion.

Will people want to live in more concentrated development? Some will. Others may look to move where the limits don't apply.

Developers may find it easier to build where the requirements may be less stringent. Businesses may want to locate there, too. Smaller communities in Oregon below 10,000 in population or 5,000 in population where the rules will be more flexible may see an influx of growth. That wouldn't exactly be what Brown intended.

Maybe it will never happen like that. But how will policymakers design the rules to avoid it?

Bend's equity map: A powerful policy tool

You can already zero in on a city of Bend webpage and get an idea of the power of the city's equity mapping tool. Tune your browser to the following link to see an example, tinyurl.com/Bendequitymap.

It can be a powerful tool for policymakers. By matching demographic data with a map, you can see where people who are disabled, minorities, seniors, who are below the poverty line or who have limited English proficiency are concentrated.

It's already helped city officials understand better how transportation decisions may impact various communities. The Bend Park & Recreation District has already talked about using the tool to help

them make decisions about parks and trails.

But Bend's equity mapping is still a work in progress. It can still be improved. As Bend city councilors were briefed Wednesday night, more work could be done to talk to those communities and get their input about how the tool might and should be used. Anna Allen, the city's equity and inclusion director, also wants to look at the question of how the tool may be used to perpetuate inequity, instead of reduce inequity. Are there things the city could do to avoid that?

If you have thoughts about how the city should use the tool or could improve it, Anna Allen's email is aallen@bendoregon.gov.

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.



What Martin Luther King Jr. Day means to an immigrant American

BY NAHAD SADR-AZODI

I lived, studied and worked in Atlanta for several years. Atlanta is also where my twins and dog were born. I enjoyed my time there and some of my fondest memories included visiting the Martin Luther King, Jr., museum, which happened every time we had an out-of-town visitor. Dr. King, his life and what he stood for have been meaningful and inspiring for someone like me with Iranian heritage growing up as an immigrant in this country. I always thought of MLK as someone who bridged our visible and invisible differences. As I reflect on this week and struggle with my conscience, I am reminded of his quote, "There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor political, nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right."

Since I arrived in Bend in March of 2020, my struggles at Deschutes County Health Services are no secret to most. Part of that story is what I need to own in terms of my deficiencies to adapt to our county and organization. It has been an ongoing challenge for me to find my voice and leadership style within our established values, beliefs and experiences. I also believe that my experience is a reflection of the county's and organization's struggles to adapt to me. When we talk about diversity, equity and inclusion in our work settings, we are not just talking about a check mark on recruitment of a person of color. We are also talking about celebrating the differences that those candidates bring to the organizational culture. We cannot expect people of different

GUEST COLUMN



Submitted photo

Nahad Sadr-Azodi and children.

backgrounds, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, religions and genders to fit into our mold and culture without genuinely asking ourselves if we, as the dominant culture, have first examined our own biases, viewpoints and assumptions.

In the course of the last 2 years, I have heard many times, "we are so different," "we think differently," "we have different approaches" as though this is a bad thing. It's not. We can still achieve results with integrity but in different ways. There is no "one way" of doing things. No groups or races have a monopoly on productivity or a path toward it. It has taken me the last two years to realize that my struggles are a balance of my shortcomings and the organization's vision of how someone like me should act, be and communicate. I share all this because I am not alone in

these feelings and experiences. There are community members, colleagues, friends, business people and others who come with diverse views, backgrounds, ethnicities, skin color, and experiences. If we really want to translate diversity, equity and inclusion into meaningful action, we should start with examining how the predominant culture and behaviors might make those who are different from us feel left out, and how our preset expectations might make them feel inadequate or that they don't belong. Otherwise, in my view, we miss out on an opportunity to progress and enrich our relationships and ourselves.

As a person of color in a leadership position in our county, I have come to a realization that I am duty-bound to be one of the voices for these experiences. I don't welcome the undue attention, especially since most of my life I have tried to blend in, fit in and to have a sense of belonging to something meaningful. I will continue to learn about this county and my organization, and I will continue to seek and create belonging wherever I can. I will also try to be myself and avoid shying away from being different. I have made a promise that I will not view myself as a liability, but rather that I, and other people of color and of different backgrounds, experiences and identities living and working in our region are resilient, educated, productive assets to the future of our county and region.

As Dr. King said, "We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now." It is my wish that we make room for all of us in the boat.

■ Nahad Sadr-Azodi is public health director for Deschutes County.

Letters policy

We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's 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 and 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

To fix his presidency, Biden must track toward the practical

BY THE WASHINGTON POST EDITORIAL BOARD

President Joe Biden on Thursday closed a mixed year of both successes and frustrated hopes. At a news conference, Biden acknowledged "challenges" but also boasted of "enormous progress" fighting the pandemic and passing major legislation, saying that he would "stay on this track." In fact, despite his substantial achievements, his presidency could use a reset.

To be clear: Americans should be grateful every day that Biden is in office rather than former president Donald Trump and the band of incompetents who used to run the government. One can only imagine how much worse off the country would be if Trump were still dispensing bizarre medical advice from the White House, running a Russia-friendly foreign policy as the Kremlin prepares to invade Ukraine or continuing to deny climate change. Biden has also restored integrity to the Oval Office, neither lying nor abusing his authority the way Trump did. And the president can claim some important accomplishments. Most Americans are vaccinated. His COVID-19 aid bill alleviated child poverty during the worst of the pandemic. The country is only beginning to see the benefits of the \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure bill that will

fund massive investments in green energy, highways, bridges and rail.

Yet in recent weeks, the omicron variant has set records for new cases in the United States, jobs numbers are volatile, inflation is up and the Democrats' \$2 trillion Build Back Better plan has stalled in the Senate.

This history shows that the president controls only so much. He can do little about inflation and even less about the viral genetic mutations that lead to new coronavirus variants.

But that is not the whole story. Biden, who ran as a longtime Senate veteran able to get the executive branch and Congress working again, has committed several unforced errors.

Top on the list was his chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan, which resulted in the deaths of 13 American service members and consigned to Taliban rule a country into which the United States had invested vast resources.

As Afghanistan unwound, Biden allowed progressive expectations to outrun the reality of what Democrats could accomplish with their slim congressional majorities. Progressives talked of passing a Build Back Better bill running to several trillion dollars or more, using the Senate's reconciliation procedure that allows taxing and spending legislation to duck the fili-

buster's 60-vote requirement. In fact, conservative Senate Democrats Joe Manchin, W.Va., and Kyrsten Sinema, Ariz., would not support a bill that surpassed \$2 trillion. Once that reality sank in, Biden should have persuaded Democrats to prioritize a few programs to fund sustainably. Instead, House Democrats refused to sacrifice programs to save others, approving a bill containing a large number of underfunded initiatives. When Manchin balked publicly, the White House released a blistering statement that poisoned negotiations.

On voting rights, Biden and congressional Democrats pushed for sweeping legislation that would end partisan gerrymandering and mandate voting-access measures, warning that failure to do so could leave U.S. democracy in severe danger. This time, Manchin and Sinema supported the bill but did not favor changing Senate rules to pass it over a Republican filibuster.

Even on the omicron variant, the Biden administration could have been better prepared. It was foreseeable that the coronavirus would continue to mutate, perhaps in a way that made it more infectious and enabled it to evade vaccines. The White House should have built rapid PCR testing infrastructure throughout the country in case this occurred, which it did this winter.

In his second year, Biden must tack toward the practical. Manchin had offered to support a \$1.8 trillion Build Back Better proposal last month, which would have included hefty climate change provisions, before his talks with the White House collapsed. The president should have taken up Manchin then. Biden should say yes to Manchin now, salvaging as much of that proposal as he can in direct talks with the West Virginia senator. Progress could happen soon: Biden signaled Thursday that he would substantially pare down the Build Back Better bill to match Manchin's preferences, with the climate and energy provisions remaining at its core.

Meanwhile, the gravest threat to U.S. democracy is not vote denial but that administrators or elected officials will attempt to tamper with legitimate vote counts based on lies about fraud.

The president should also encourage lawmakers to keep working on reforming the Senate. Though Manchin refused to upend the filibuster to pass a voting rights bill, he has signaled openness to altering the rules in more modest ways.

Biden's first year was not as bleak as many reports have portrayed. But he could have accomplished more. He might yet do so if he behaves more like the pragmatic former senator he promised to be.