

# The long road ahead to a vaccine

The news of skyrocketing numbers of COVID-19 infections across the United States is reminding us of the original meaning of the phrase “going viral.”

If you’re talking about a social media post going viral, that’s a good thing.

If you’re talking about an actual virus, like COVID-19, viral spread is greatly concerning.

We are seeing fear that hospitals across the Midwest will soon be overwhelmed by COVID patients, mostly due to the challenges of having enough healthy staff.

Shortages of nurses and other health care workers in North Dakota have led the governor to allow those with a positive COVID test but no symptoms to remain on the job (but yet he has not initiated a statewide mask mandate).

We don’t want this to happen in Oregon. Especially in rural Oregon, where hospitals are small, few and far between.

Viral means uncontrolled. It means aggressive. It means rapidly spreading.

We know what we need to do to slow the spread.

The CDC announced this week that not only do masks work to protect yourself and others from COVID-19, but that “increasing universal masking by 15% could prevent the need for lockdowns and reduce associated losses of up to \$1 trillion or about 5% of gross domestic product.”

We’re at the point where we should assume that many people

around us are infected, and act accordingly. Wearing a multi-layer cloth mask, keeping your distance and limiting the time spent with other people indoors are all important.

News of the Pfizer vaccine achieving 90% of effectiveness in clinical trials is encouraging. However, there is a long road ahead. Assuming it gets FDA approval, there are significant logistical challenges that must be overcome before anyone in Eastern Oregon can be protected by the vaccine.

The Pfizer vaccine needs to be continuously stored at temperatures of -100 degrees Fahrenheit or colder, requiring an “ultra-cold” distribution chain that does not currently exist.

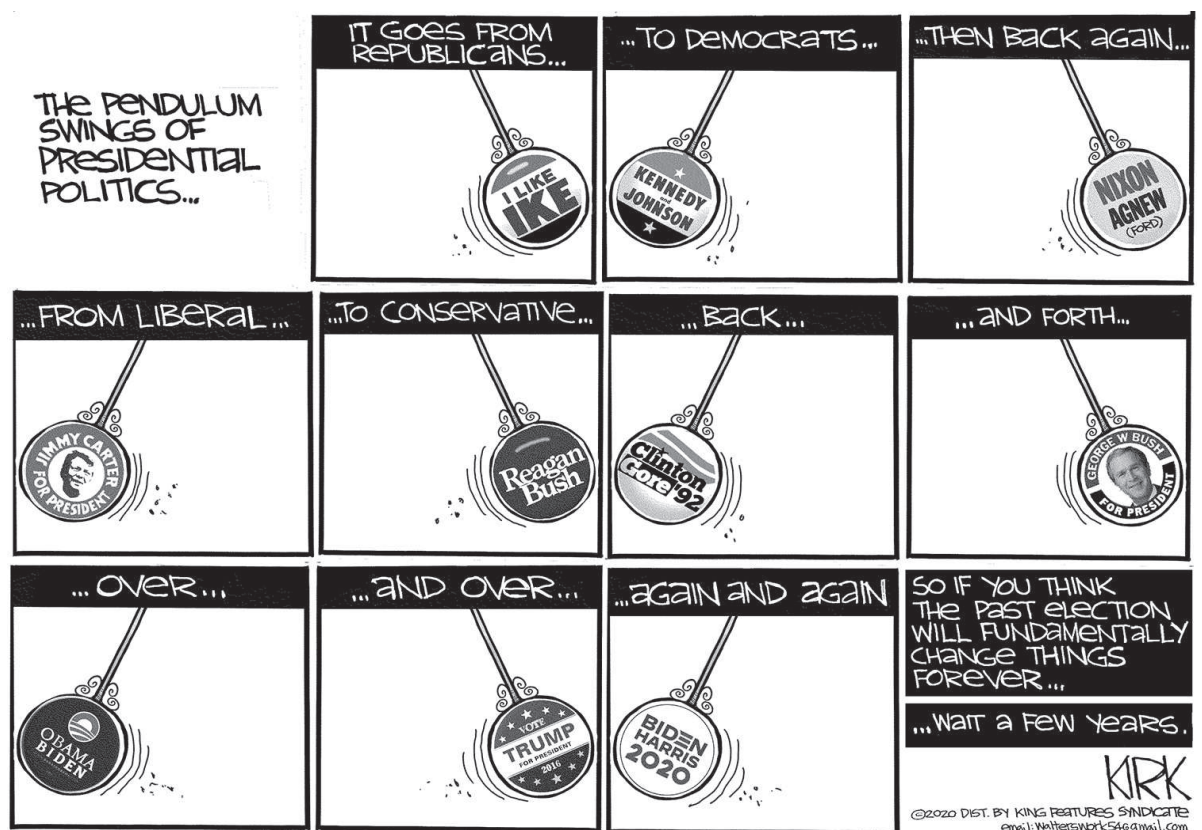
The vaccine is shipped in batches of 1,000. This could work well in urban areas, where it would be fairly easy to assemble that many people. Not so in rural America.

And it’s not a one-shot-and-you’re-immune kind of vaccine. Two shots are required, 21 days apart, and acquiring immunity takes some time after that point.

Health care providers, emergency personnel and other essential workers are likely to be put at the front of the line for the new vaccine, along with people at high risk for severe infection due to underlying medical conditions, and people 65 years and older.

So, we have many months ahead before a COVID vaccine will make a dramatic impact on the pandemic.

Our advice: Find a comfortable multi-layer cloth mask and hunker down.



## GUEST COMMENT

# Enhance migratory habitat

Oregon Hunters Association, a group of conservation-minded sportsmen, urges the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to develop and implement a policy to enhance and conserve migratory habitat for big game, and all wildlife that make seasonal movements. Habitat connectivity, the degree to which separate habitat patches are connected, is a crucial factor for conservation of wildlife. Increases in urban and energy development have resulted in extensive habitat loss and fragmentation for many species in Oregon. Fortunately, advances in wildlife tracking technology have allowed wildlife managers to more accurately identify where animals move on the landscape, as well as impediments to wildlife space use. For ungulate species (e.g., deer, elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep), migration corridors are fundamental to their life history, but until recently, these corridors were thought of as conduit between seasonal ranges rather than essential habitat.

Many big game migration corridors are currently obstructed by transportation infrastructure and energy development sites. Therefore, state agencies must consider the full extent of migratory habitat to better manage ungulate populations.

ODFW is making leaps and bounds through the Oregon Connectivity Assessment and Mapping Project, an innovative effort to map wildlife movement and corridors across the state. Oregon has an opportunity to ensure this new information leads to sound management solutions by develop-



Jim Akenson



Lori McKinnon

ing agency policy to formally identify migration corridors.

This action will bolster current conservation projects where many groups (including OHA) are working to conserve and enhance migratory habitat. For example, OHA has pledged over \$114,000 and many volunteer hours to the Gilchrist Wildlife Underpass Project aimed at reducing ungulate mortality and vehicle collisions on U.S. Highway 97. Additionally, a migration policy will frame new partnerships between private landowners, non-government organizations and government agencies, which will result in additional conservation projects and funding sources.

Recently, Coastal Farm & Ranch, after obtaining the low bid to provide fencing material, generously supported the Gilchrist Wildlife Underpass Project by providing fencing materials at a discount below their initial low bid. OHA’s Bend Chapter has invested hundreds of volunteer hours maintaining the fence that funnels wildlife to the Lava Butte wildlife underpass on U.S. Highway 97, approximately 50 miles north of the new Gilchrist underpass. The Lava Butte wildlife underpass has reduced vehicle-wildlife collisions by 86%. Indi-

viduals can support and help fund habitat connectivity and migration corridor projects by purchasing a specialized watch for wildlife license plate voucher at myowf.org/watchforwildlife.

Global Positioning System wildlife tracking collars have become commonplace in wildlife management today, and this shift to more efficient and accurate technology will allow for more precise management into the future. GPS collars collect an immense amount of animal location data on fixed time schedules, and these data are ideal for describing ungulate resource selection and utilization and migratory habitat. A migration policy will assist ODFW and their partners in obtaining additional grant funding to provide wildlife professionals with additional GPS collars, which will in turn further our knowledge of migration corridors, resource selection and population dynamics.

How can Oregonians assist with protecting wildlife and their habitats? By working with their local wildlife biologist, watershed managers, ODFW commissioners and legislators to promote continued research and policy development. In addition, the public can support protection of wildlife, their habitats and mitigation from land management, urban and energy development and transportation infrastructure projects through county, state and federal public comment processes.

Jim Akenson is senior conservation director for the Oregon Hunters Association, and Lori McKinnon is the president of Coastal

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Democrats and Republicans versus extremists

To the Editor:

My family history goes back to Grant County’s early days. My father was a sawmill worker, my mom worked at the hospital and whereas we didn’t have much income, we got by. Most of the people I knew were as my parents were: Democrats. When I got older, I became acquainted with some Republicans — but they seemed like good eggs. My how things have changed. I know part of the blame for disliking Democrats began in the Reagan years when people like me, with environmental leanings, thought that the forest had value beyond how much lumber it would yield. Then came Clinton/Gore and the spotted owl, and many jobs were gone overnight. I realize now that the way this happened was too extreme!

However, when I take a look at the people that have moved to Grant County in recent years, drawn here by far-right constitutionalists, I believe we have swung to the opposite extreme. I sat down at the computer with my wife recently and looked at some of the total garbage that was being offered on social media as factual information, and I was appalled. Some of the business people who are against wearing a mask to protect us all from the coronavirus go

beyond comprehension. They are not seeing neighbors who support their businesses; they see political enemies.

But the greatest outrage is how a person who claims to be a Christian could vote for a low-class, evil person like Trump. Jesus Christ is not a Trumpite.

Terry Steele  
Ritter

### ‘Teach our youth to value inclusion over division’

To the Editor:

Sunday evening a list of “mask-holes” circulated on Facebook — individuals who allegedly (and in most cases inaccurately) reported people for not wearing masks. The text read, “If anybody is interested in who has been turning people in for not wearing masks here in Grant County then this is who they are.”

This is an updated list from the last time it was shared, and this time my name was on it too. A few months ago I dismissed the list as absurd, thinking nothing would come of it. This time I’m a little upset — less for myself and more for what it says about our community.

Here’s the thing about lists. A list implies something should be done — like a to-do list to check off. Having just listened to the podcast Bundyville, I’m reminded of

Ammon Bundy’s call to do “whatever it takes.” You see, a list like this encourages action but leaves the to-do up to the reader’s imagination. This is alarming. Here we are post election with a president determined to undermine the legitimacy of the results, who has unnecessarily turned COVID-19 political, and who has inspired violence in a manner similar to Ammon Bundy.

I wrote to the men who shared the list and asked them to take it down. With one I had a lengthy conversation: “Do you really think it’s necessary to post a list like this at all? I think it’s rather dangerous. While you might be a reasonable man, someone who isn’t could very well decide to target folks on a list like this.”

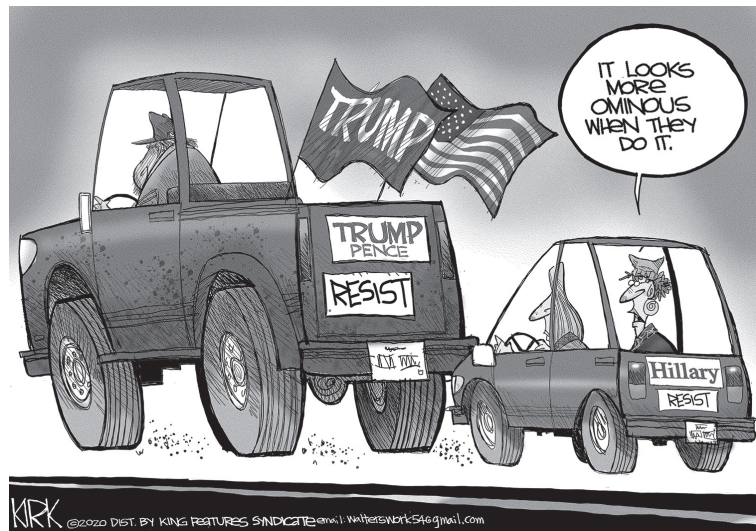
I added a friend in Prairie City said some boys in her daughter’s class were talking about killing liberals if Trump loses.

That’s the kind of divisive and hateful environment a list like this feeds. It’s irresponsible. Abhorrent.

And our youth are right here watching. A few of them are already threatening to kill liberals. Sure it’s probably just talk, but what if one goes through with it?

Please use your voice to denounce threats of violence and the spreading of fictitious lists. Stand for our community and teach our youth to value inclusion over division.

Ashley Stevick  
John Day



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