

# Vaccine skepticism isn't a rural/urban issue

When Oregon Gov. Kate Brown reinstated the mandate that Oregonians must wear masks to halt the spread of the COVID-19 delta variant that threatens to overwhelm hospitals in some areas, she singled out rural elected officials for not taking steps to curb the spread of the virus.

"I expected local elected officials to step up and do the right thing," Brown said. "What is clear is they are not taking action. That is why we are moving forward." Brown has misjudged many local officials who have refused to institute their own mask mandates. They did take action in the interest of their constituents — just not in the way preferred by the governor. Whether they made the right choice will never be known because Brown has made the opposite decision for them.

It is also wrong to suggest that vaccination resistance is found mostly in rural areas, or that it is the result of misinformation or misguided ideology. It is true when measured

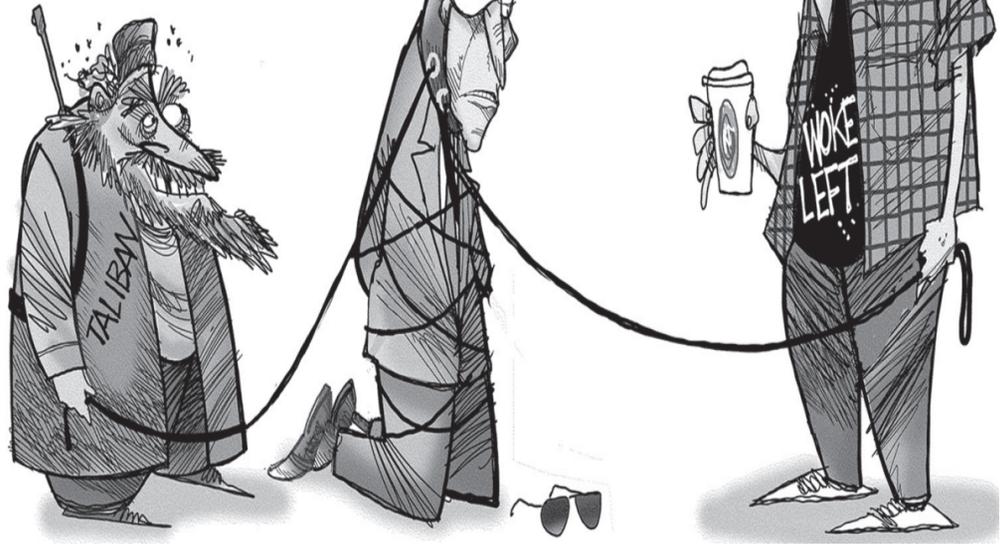
as a percentage, the rates of COVID-19 vaccination are lower in Oregon's rural counties than the urban counties. It is also true that many rural communities, particularly in the east, are more openly resistant to Salem's mandates. But, by sheer numbers, the bulk of the state's unvaccinated adults live in more urban areas.

Our combing of state data shows more than half of unvaccinated adults — 56% — live in the state's five most populous, and most liberal, counties. That suggests to us that deciding not to get a COVID-19 shot is more of a matter of personal choice than an ideological statement.

We have said at the outset that people who are able should get vaccinated. While we respect the right of informed adults to weigh their own options and decide what is right for themselves, we think the vaccine is the best option.

Turning COVID-19 vaccinations into a right/left, rural/urban battle is a mistake — one that will only harden the resolve of many who are yet to be vaccinated.

**BIDEN HELD HOSTAGE**



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KIRK

GUEST COMMENT

## Next steps crucial

By The Oregon Nurses Association board of directors

The question of whether or not health care workers should be required to get vaccinated has been answered: Mandatory vaccinations against COVID-19 for nurses and other health care workers are now the law in Oregon.

ONA calls upon all nurses to get vaccinated before the Oct. 18 deadline or, alternatively, fill out the necessary paperwork for a medical or deeply held religious belief exemption. Failure to do so may result in the termination of unvaccinated nurses at a time when Oregon faces an unprecedented staffing crisis.

Our patients and our communities need you at the bedside, now more than ever before. The science is clear: Vaccinations are safe and effective, and nurses and other health care workers who are vaccinated are acting in line

with our ethical, clinical and professional responsibilities to our patients.

To all nurses in Oregon who can, ONA says "get vaccinated."

ONA will continue to fight tirelessly for our members at the bargaining table on the impacts of this new mandatory vaccination requirement. That includes fighting to ensure you are provided appropriate levels of PPE, paid time off for adverse effects of the vaccination, more (and more substantial) retention and hazard pay, pushing hard for safe staffing and more.

At a time when nurses, and our state's health care system, are at the breaking point, we must stand united in the face of historic failures on the part of hospitals to ensure safe staffing. All nurses know that this staffing crisis has been years in the making; the COVID-19 pandemic has simply pushed those failures into the spotlight.

This current level of crisis was

created by hospitals who have failed to invest in their nursing staff, failed to recruit and retain experienced nurses, placed a greater focus on profitability than patient outcomes and have done so at the expense of nurses.

We have so much work to do for our patients, and for each other. We have so many more issues that unite us than we do that divide us; safe staffing, nurse recruitment and retention, increasing the number of future nurses, increased pay for nursing faculty, iron-clad protections against violence in the workplace, ensuring rest and meal breaks, improving working conditions and wages; these must be our focus now.

*The Oregon Nurses Association board of directors unanimously approved this statement regarding Gov. Kate Brown's recent rule change implementing mandatory vaccinations for health care workers in the state.*

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### 'I say again'

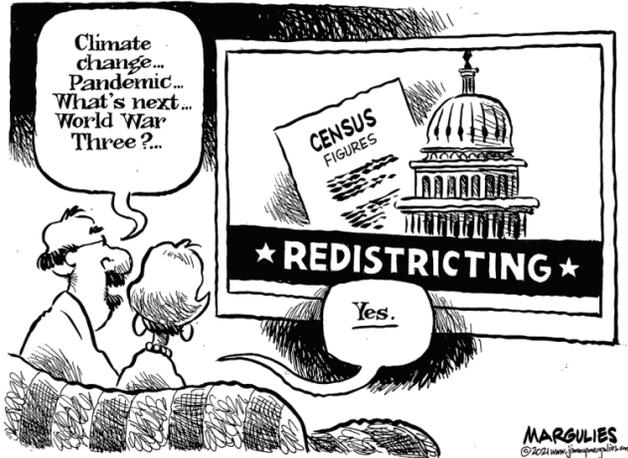
**To the Editor:**  
It's me again — kind of like COVID. This letter will go to all of our representatives as did the last. No response!  
I was off the coast of Vietnam so many years ago for that evacuation. As I remember it, it was somewhat of a cluster, but nothing like this one. Just one more check on Joe's list (or whoever is calling the shots) to ruin our country.  
As I have said before, the "honest politicians" and the "American people" need to do something very soon or our children and grandchildren are going to be living in a third-world country! It gets closer every day.

Eddy L. Negus  
Prairie City

#### 'Style, demeanor and effectiveness were outstanding'

**To the Editor:**  
I want to commend Oregon state Rep. Mark Owens. I am a former Democrat and former resident of Mr. Owens' district. Last year I engaged in a debate with Mr. Owens surrounding coyote derbies. Even though I'm not in his district he took the time to defend the hunts as vital to economy of his district. I completely disagreed with his position and went at him pretty hard.  
He surprised me. Instead of attacking me as an out-of-touch Portland liberal, he calmly and rationally showed me the errors of my ways. His style, demeanor and

effectiveness were outstanding. I became a believer in him after our exchange.  
Have I completely come around to his position? No. But I will never again argue against his position. He won. All without yelling or screaming. I don't admit defeat often (I'm a soldier), but on this occasion, I was clearly bested by a superior opponent.  
Please don't get mad at me if I try to recruit Rep. Owens to run for governor. The GOP in Western Oregon can't win. I don't know if they even try. They run sloppy and undisciplined candidates. After getting trounced myself by Rep. Owens, I can assure you he would be a challenge for any Democrat. Readiness. He has it. May we borrow it?  
Brian Fitzgerald  
Happy Valley



MARGULIES

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  - Oregon Legislature** — State Capitol, Salem, 97310. Phone: 503-986-1180. Website: leg.state.or.us (includes Oregon Constitution and Oregon Revised Statutes).
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