

OUR VIEW

Educating people about mandates



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald, File

A sign outside of Hermiston's temporary city hall advises people to wear a mask on Tuesday, Sept. 1, 2020.

Umatilla County Sheriff Terry Rowan made probably the best point lately when it comes to the ongoing controversy regarding Gov. Kate Brown's mask and vaccination mandates.

Rowan made it clear his office doesn't have the statutory authority to enforce any kind of mandate, but made the point that the expectation for the mandates was not to enforce them, but to educate people about them.

Rowan is on the right track in two ways. First, he seemed unwilling to step into what is becoming a political quagmire regarding Gov. Kate Brown's recent edicts.

That's a smart decision. That's because the governor doesn't seem to have any intention of backing off her decisions to create the new mandates. In due course the issue will probably end up in the courts, which will create a lengthy process with no clear end in sight.

Secondly, Rowan is right that law enforcement — if it is to do anything — should be a platform for education. The job of providing information to citizens is a crucial one, especially now that a lot of the data available is either bogus or slanted.

We believe the choice to get vaccinated is an individ-

ual one, a decision between an individual and their health care provider.

However, it is a growing concern that information on the vaccines is fragmented and often twisted to fit an agenda.

Residents should be encouraged to gather all of the information they possibly can and then discuss their views with their health care provider. Then, and only then, should they make a judgement about whether they are comfortable with the vaccine.

It seems relatively simple, but an overload of bad information is clouding what

should be a routine decision by any resident.

Law enforcement should be involved in the vaccine drama only in an educational way. Let's face it, there are far more pressing problems local police and sheriff's deputies need to address rather than enforcing a mask mandate. Of course, the governor has not ordered any law enforcement agency that we know of to enforce any kind of mandate, and that is a good thing.

Providing a way to get information — unbiased information — to residents is a good plan and we hope that the sheriff follows through on his words.

COLUMN

Seeking joy and feeling guilt as the world burns

In a park early this morning, I had a thought about the joy I have been experiencing lately. The feelings I experienced following this initial thought started with guilt but then morphed into something different.

But first, let me introduce myself.

I am Erick Peterson, and I am the new Hermiston Herald editor and senior reporter. Some of you know me already, as I have lived in Hermiston for almost exactly four years. A handful of you may have only recently met me, as I have been trying to make new contacts around Hermiston, Umatilla, Irrigon, Echo and Stanfield. I have been making friends.

My life is pretty good right now. (I am sorry to boast.) I have a loving family, entertaining hobbies and a new job. What is more, I seek joy almost constantly.

Troubles beset the world; yet, I try to find ways to be happy. I read novels, listen to pop music, dance and try new things. Ironically, this joy also is a source of guilt. A single question enters my mind.

Is it right to seek joy while the world burns? I wonder. We are in the midst of a pandemic, with people dying every day. Meanwhile, environmental degradation, war and injustice continue to rage.

As disaster builds, I know of many people who cannot choose joy. Situations beyond their control limit their options. Poverty and politics, for example, keep them from doing much except for suffering. Their worlds are bleak. There is nothing they can do.

It is privilege that allows me to be happy — privilege due to nationality, just to name one example.

And though it is not fair that other people suffer while I do not, I am able to hold off my guilt with a couple of truths.

First, I am a helper. I look for people in need, and I have given money and other assistance to them. I also keep unprivileged peoples in mind when I vote, as part of helping is to hold government accountable for assisting the needy.

The second thought is this: Joy begets joy. When I seek joy, I create joy for other people. For example, I find pleasure in making dinner for my wife. Sometimes, she will join me in this activity, and we

are happy together. Joy follows as we eat together, whether or not our product is tasty.

When we would share dinners with groups of friends (in the "long-long-ago," pre-pandemic days), our joy would increase, as would theirs. We would share, laugh and talk. Often, our talks would lead to discussions of how we could help one another in other ways.

Misery, however, is rarely as productive as joy. When I have ruminated over troubles in the world, little good has come of it. Misery leads to more misery. There have been times when I have been in bed for days, sad, with nothing to show for it. Therefore, if I can choose, I will choose to seek joy.

This will not be the end of my guilt. At times, this feeling will reappear. When it does, it will be a reminder of my need to be a better helper. Perhaps I will need to reach out to more friends, or maybe I will look for local charities to which I can volunteer. Maybe the Agape House needs some help. It is just a thought.

Erick Peterson is the editor and senior reporter of the Hermiston Herald.



Erick Peterson

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Science and faith are intertwined

Where do you think the laws of science and the laws of the natural world come from? The Big Bang didn't create them. The Big Bang couldn't have happened without them. So what created them? Here's a hint though: Almost every scientist who explores this question turns to God. Incidentally, many of the world's first scientists, teachers and doctors were priests, monks and nuns. Most priests today have a more thorough and well-rounded education than most doctors.

The religious aren't meant to just blindly believe whatever they're told. God commands us to learn, discover, understand and reveal His creation. This includes the tools with which he brought it all about. Do you honestly believe mathematics just happens to be so much more reliable than any man-made language that it's considered a universal language? What caused these universal truths to exist?

True faith cannot exist without rationality, and true rationality cannot exist without faith. As is often said on the EWTN Global Catholic Network, they're two wings of the same bird.

Mark Elfering
Hermiston

COLUMN

Collaboration, not litigation, will build a sustainable future

Gov. Kate Brown, in a recent op-ed, made the case for urgent action to help salmon and steelhead in defense of her decision to have Oregon litigate over the future of salmon and hydropower and the breaching of the four lower Snake River dams. Her urgency is admirable, but she follows a misguided solution that represents a major step backward in the progress the region has made to date.

It will hurt Oregon's communities.

Roughly 1 million Oregonians are served by public power utilities, including UEC, that get power from BPA's hydroelectric and transmission assets, so her actions will be deeply felt.

Oregon's litigation threatens to greatly diminish



Robert Echenrode



Kurt Miller

the collaborative goals of the communities impacted the most, exposing the region to energy shortfalls and resulting in possible blackouts. Dams can support the regional power grid from blackouts during periods of life-threatening temperatures while supporting the energy transition championed by many Oregonians.

How can energy transition and salmon recovery, expected to have huge implications for the environment, economy and relationships around the region, be accomplished?

The region must all work collaboratively, pulling together for a balanced solution for all stakeholders. We can await technological advances, public sentiment and social awareness or by government regulations and policy. Yet to have our future driven by the courts through litigation on complex issues can have devastating impacts. We must find another path to success.

Oregon's litigious path is also misguided in another way. Oregon, as co-convenor of the newly formed Columbia Basin Collaborative, undermines the one existing forum that could possibly bring the region together to help address the plight of salmon and move all the region forward. Instead, with Oregon as a litigant, trust in the process has

been damaged and confuses Oregon's real agenda.

Instead of litigation, we urge innovation and collaboration, the only path forward Columbia Basin communities have known from which we have built a vibrant but fragile economy.

The region's farmers and food processors rely on a sustainable supply of water and stable energy prices — threatened by Oregon's litigation. When we say the lack of either will devastate this rural economy, it's not without precedent. In the 1980s, when energy prices spiked, crop prices plummeted and water pulled from the basalt aquifers dried up, farmers faced going broke. The same farmers who feed millions of Oregonians and the world.

Only innovation and col-

laboration spared our farmers — rapid development of precision irrigation techniques saved 25% of water and energy needs to grow the same crops, technology that Columbia Basin irrigators now help spread around the world.

If the dams are removed through litigation, and rolling blackouts occur and our farmers no longer have adequate supplies of water, it undermines the collaboration we've demonstrated over the years. When we raise concerns about litigation or ineffective decisions made in the name of salmon recovery, we truly fear for the region's way of life.

Gov. Brown, the citizens of the Columbia Basin welcome your offer to sit down and share these proven ways of building a sustainable future for all.

The same innovation and collaboration are what we have to offer Oregon and the region to work through the opportunities before us for a successful energy transition and salmon recovery. We just ask: Can we sit down at the same table together?

Robert Echenrode is CEO and general manager of Umatilla Electric, a Hermiston-based cooperative serving electricity to 10,700 members in portions of Morrow, Umatilla, Union and Walla Walla counties.

Kurt Miller is executive director of Northwest RiverPartners, a not-for-profit organization representing community-owned utilities, farmers, ports and businesses that support clean energy and low-carbon transportation.

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No personal attacks; challenge the opinion, not the person. The Hermiston Herald reserves the right to edit letters for length and for content.

Letters must be original and signed by the writer or writers. Anonymous letters will not be printed. Writers should include a telephone number so they can be reached for questions. Only the letter writer's name and city of residence will be published.

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