

# Opinion

## 'We're having a COVID outbreak right now'

Imagine this: You're expecting a lot of people for dinner. They show up around 5 p.m. and assemble beneath the covering over your front porch before entering your place. Now, imagine discovering that several of them are testing positive for COVID-19 and that you'll need to separate the ill from the well before accepting all of them into your place.

I witnessed such a scene Sunday.

In the late afternoon Sunday, while the sky was issuing ice-cold rain that felt unnecessarily cruel, about a dozen people sought protection from the weather on the Cedar Street side of Community Lifeline's shelter in downtown Shelton. A portico covers the entrance on that side of the street.

Those people were waiting to be allowed inside for food and a place to spend the night. A few people on the walkway leading to the entrance were apart from the huddle on the portico, including a man who was pacing and appeared to be in his



KIRK ERICSON

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early 20s. The temperature was just above freezing and the rain was nearly as thick and penetrating as the soaker setting on a garden hose.

The young man asked for the time.

"About 5:30," I said. The doors should be opening soon, I told him, according to what I thought I knew. What I didn't know was the people on the porch had just tested positive for COVID.

The young man looked around. "I don't have s \_ \_!" he said, perhaps addressing the universe.

That young man's statement appeared more true

than not.

I approached another man, one better equipped for the rain and cold, who said the doors weren't open because they were having a COVID outbreak.

During last week's inclemency, did you take a moment to imagine what not having shelter would be like in weather like this? It could have included this scene.

I walked to the Third Street side of the building to find someone who could tell me what was happening. I looked through the window in the door and saw a couple of workers inside the entrance alcove tending to boxes used for to-go food. I knocked. A worker opened the door, and I stated my business: I wished to talk to anyone who had spent the previous few nights outside in the sub-freezing temperatures.

After a minute of back and forth, one of the workers said, calmly, "We're having a COVID outbreak right now."

The worker went to get the shelter manager, and Athena Ayres appeared within

a few minutes. Ayres said they were in the process of giving COVID tests, which would allow them to identify the COVID-positive and COVID-negative people before separating them on different floors of the building. The people on the portico had tested positive.

Ayers explained all this without raising her voice, rushing her words or expressing any sign of being smack dab in the middle of a dire moment. It was a monumental display of battle cool, and I didn't want her to waste time on me. I said I'd call another day.

"We are dealing with a COVID outbreak," Ayers told me over the phone the next day. She said they were able to situate the positive people on a separate floor, where they had their own facilities, including a separate entry and exit.

She said, as of Monday afternoon, that about 13 people who use the shelter had tested positive, including two staff members, while about an equal number tested

negative. About six staffers were onsite Sunday night.

"We're doing well," she said Monday. They've received donations of cots and PPE (personal protective equipment). The United Way has pitched in.

What about the people who tested positive?

"If they're positive, they have to stay isolated; they're not supposed to leave the property, but we can't force them to stay," Ayers said. "We had one person leave, but the majority of them have been responsible and stayed."

And you're able to protect yourselves?

"Of course," Ayers said. "Mask and gloves. And social distance. But we also understand how important it is that we're here for these vulnerable people."

Sunday's COVID outbreak illustrates just how hard it can be to help people without shelter, but it's less hard to help the helpers. Find a way by going to [cillshelton.com](http://cillshelton.com).

■ Contact Kirk Ericson at [kirk@masoncounty.com](mailto:kirk@masoncounty.com)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### All joking aside on sewers

Editor, the Journal,

This is the third letter I've written about the sewer situation. I've had a good time with the double entendres, but here I will be a bit more serious. There is a lot of money on the line for our county, so we need to ensure that we are not blundering into a situation where we enrich someone and have the bill sent to you and I.

This hypothetical illustrates the potential danger. Let us suppose we have a landowner that has acquired a parcel with the intent to improve and sell it for profit. We will call that landowner Mr. Potter. The parcel in question we can call Boondoggle. The developer is MegaCorp.

In this scenario, Mr. Potter would like a sewer line built through Boondoggle. The sewer line will enhance the value of the property when Mr. Potter sells Boondoggle to MegaCorp. The increase in value is the result of various factors, but a significant part of the increase comes from the sewer line.

Let's assign some numbers to make

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it a bit easier to picture. Boondoggle as it initially stands is worth \$1 million. Let's say that the cost of the sewer portion on Boondoggle is \$500,000. The new value of Boondoggle is \$3 million. Now when MegaCorp buys Boondoggle for \$3 million, who gets the benefit and who gets the costs of the \$500,000 sewer addition?

MegaCorp has a benefit, but it paid for that benefit when it bought Boondoggle from Mr. Potter. But did Mr. Potter pay for that sewer addition? If the county has paid for the project, then Mr. Potter has obtained the benefit of that expenditure but has not paid for it. In essence, Mr. Potter has gotten a free ride. The only way to prevent

this is to structure the deal in such a way that MegaCorp's purchase money passes through Potter's hands and reimburses the county.

Now, how does this go wrong? There are a number of possibilities. But one possibility is that those in authority pay too much attention to Mr. Potter, who obviously benefits from not paying for the improvement yet reaps a benefit. Why? There could be all sorts of possibilities and I will leave it to the imagination of the reader. This is the hypothetical that we wish to avoid. And it would seem less of a worry if the authorities don't seem to be in a rush to avoid questions. Transparency in the negotiations would solve everything.

Otherwise, you and I could be stuck with a clay container of organic material with an obnoxious aroma.

Andy Makar  
Hoodsport

#### Nothing compares to this

Editor, the Journal,

During my 73 years, I and my generation have witnessed many historic events. President Richard Nixon's resignation, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Berlin Wall and others too numerous to mention, including finding planets beyond our solar system.

However, to me nothing, nothing compares to a treasonous president who tried on Jan. 6, 2021, to overturn the government of the United States.

Why then does the Republican Party not condemn his treason?

Greg Dallum  
Shelton

see **LETTERS**, page A-5

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# Opinion

## It's a crazy normal world

Last Saturday, while Mrs. Ericson and I were driving back from feeding the aquarium fish and the house cat at my sister-in-law's house, I stopped at the feed and supply store to check out its ivermectin supply, the substance you might know as "horse dewormer."

My sister-in-law has been away from home for several weeks because she's part of a crew fighting a wildfire in central Oregon. She runs the kitchen.

"Do you have any ivermectin?" I asked the young female clerk at Kiperts Korner Feed while she rang up my purchase — some trail mix



KIRK ERICSON

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that turned out to have a perfect nuts-to-M&M's ratio.

"Yes," she replied. She spoke in a tone as flat as a paving stone. She dipped her chin and looked at me by

rotating her eyes to the top of her sockets. It's the look the person at the Department of Motor Vehicles gives you when you don't have the right paperwork. It's the look that says, "You gotta be kidding me."

"Have you been selling a lot of ivermectin lately?" I asked the clerk.

"Yes," she replied.

"Have you sold some today?"

"Yes."

"Do you sell it to anybody who wants to buy it?"

"Yes," she said, this time with a sigh.

"Wow," I said. "It sure is weird what's going on."

"Do you want your receipt?"

This idea that ivermectin, which does have some tried-and-tested non-COVID treatment applications for humans, will prevent you from contracting or lessening the effects of COVID reminds me of a story.

A friend told me about his aunt who suffered from severe bursitis. In the 1980s, he said, she used the banned substance DMSO as a treatment. DMSO was hard to get, and when her supply ran dry, the aunt switched to applying the lubricant WD-40 to ease her ailing bursae.

The aunt's doctor noticed

patches of discolored skin on her body, my friend told me, so the doctor asked her about it. The aunt responded by saying she was using WD-40 as an ointment. The doctor paused, according to my friend, and then asked the woman, "Could you at least keep a window open while you're applying it?"

Maybe doctors can't fully deter patients from taking ivermectin as a COVID preventer, but maybe there's room to persuade them not to take a dose formulated for a 1,500-pound horse. Maybe. It could be a start.

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### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Fighting a common enemy

**Editor, the Journal,**

There have been so many incidents lately where people have felt that their individual rights have been trampled on because of vaccine and mask mandates.

According to the Journal, the Shelton School Board meeting erupted into chaos over the issue of masks. There were children present, but that did not stop the meeting from dissolving into catcalls and insults, never mind the refusal to wear masks. The result was a cancelled meeting.

Last Saturday, hundreds of Washington state workers demonstrated at the Capitol Campus in Olympia to complain about Gov. Jay Inslee's vaccination mandate. Almost all were unmasked. Some of them brought their small children and infants with them.

Recently, a friend of mine who works for Mason County told me Commissioner Sharon Trask doesn't comply with county and state mandates to wear a mask when she is inside the County Administration Building working near other people, and that she never got vaccinated against COVID-19.

I called two other people I know who work in the same building, and they confirmed this about Commissioner Trask not wearing masks. I was also told that there are other county employees who are anti-vaxxers who refuse to wear masks because of Trask's poor example. And many employees who do comply with these mandates

feel at greater risk because of this unlawful behavior. This is terrible leadership at the county level.

My big question is, "What is wrong with these people?" As much as I hate to sound like an old man reminiscing about the "good old days," I can't help thinking about the America I grew up in during the 1950-60s where almost nobody questioned getting vaccines that became available to fight off diseases like polio and smallpox. I also can't imagine my parents or any of my friend's parents being willing to put their children at risk as some of these parents did at the school board meeting and the demonstration. And because of vaccines, smallpox and polio were completed wiped out.

Can you imagine what it would have been like in the 20th century if we had the same percentage of idiots we have in this century? I think it's doubtful we would have eliminated polio or smallpox, or made some of the many other accomplishments that were made back then. Back then, Americans knew that in order to fight a common enemy successfully, whether the enemy was a disease, the Nazis, etc., we had to collectively come up with a solution and see it through.

I also find it upsetting that people would let party politics influence their decisions when it comes to their own health and safety and that of their children, and then double-down on their same talking points when our hospitals are filling up and people are dying. They often also act like they are the victims because most of society finds their behavior unacceptable, and don't want them around. If you choose to not be

vaccinated, that may be your right, but employers and individual businesses (like airlines, restaurants, bars, theaters, schools, etc.) should also retain their right not to hire you, keep you as an employee or allow you into their establishments.

Greg Sypnicki  
Shelton

#### Out of Afghanistan

**Editor, the Journal,**

President Joe Biden has a 74% disapproval on his handling of Afghanistan. His sole interest in leaving was the political optics of getting out of Afghanistan by 9/11. Biden didn't face the Taliban; he ran from them. He didn't want American casualties, yet his ineptitude caused 13 American deaths and hundreds of casualties. As of Monday, Biden still plans on abandoning Kabul and hostages.

Because of differences in cultures and religion, al-Qaeda, ISIS-K and the Taliban hate us; we are the infidel. Even though they hate each other, they hate us more. The old proverb says, "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." None are our friends.

Biden abandoned Bagram Air Force Base leaving \$80 billion worth of equipment to the Taliban, including thousands and thousands of rifles, machine guns, grenade launchers, howitzers plus a small air force in Apache helicopters. The Taliban will now use our equipment against us or sell it to our enemies. Instead of leaving with honor, we're running away. Biden's

our surrender in chief.

The Taliban released 5,000 terrorist prisoners we incarcerated. We have open borders; a defund the police movement; a cut in Homeland Security's budget; and Democrats wanting to increase their political base through illegal immigration. They have 5,000 angry terrorists seeking revenge who will attack us here, in America, thanks to the Biden/Kamala cabal.

Our military and intelligence services are doing a great job, in spite of the ineptitude and interference by Biden and his politicians running Defense, Homeland Security and State. These politicians don't understand that we can leave the battlefield, but we can't leave the war; the war on terror will continue, here in America. If we don't get all the Americans out by the deadline, Biden must extend the deadline or he should resign.

Biden tells people this is Trump's policy. The only problem is: Trump isn't president. Biden ignores the fundamental responsibility of political leadership: accepting political reality. Biden did show up at Delaware when the bodies came home. That I respect.

At news conferences, Biden gives political statements then walks away without answering a single question from the press. Walk-Away Joe cannot walk away from the truth. I hope he now listens to military advisers instead of political advisers. He can lie to us; he can't lie to history.

Ardean Anvik  
Shelton

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LETTERS, continued from page A-4

## Leadership during a pandemic

Editor, the Journal,

I have been reading about the hospitals filling up with COVID-19 patients. This strain has been hitting Mason County medical providers. Unfortunately, our county has been lagging when it comes to vaccination. I cannot help but think that part of the problem is appalling leadership by some politicians.

When one takes leadership training, they are told how people take their cues from those in authority. If the leader is slack in certain areas, then the organization tends to be deficient as well. When political, economic or social leaders downplay things, then so will society in general. The lesson is that with authority, you have increased responsibility. In a way, a good leader must sacrifice some of their normal autonomy for the sake of those who follow them.

I cannot help but think that the resistance to vaccination and mask wearing is directly attributable to those in authority. We have media figures who have people hanging on their every word downplaying vaccination and mask wearing. When the predictable happens and virus spread becomes endemic, they are doubling down. It is bad enough that these charlatans motivate people to be slack, but the political leadership caves to this also.

It is easy to point to the usual suspects like Gov. Death Sentence in Florida. But we apparently see it very locally. It has been reported that, while others mask up, Commissioner Sharon Trask feels the need to flaunt her "freedom" regardless of the consequences to anyone else in her office. This is what is commonly referred to as "piss poor" leadership by bad example.

Folks, wake up. We have a seriously strained medical system in this nation. That strain is shown by the fact that most states are running out of ER and ICU beds. This is not just individual states. It is across entire regions of the nation. It is particularly bad in states with poor leaders. I would have thought that when funeral homes, crematoriums and cemeteries were backlogged, people would get the hint. They are not. And I blame the leaders who downplay and demagogue the issue.

Andrew Makar  
Hoodsport

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## Tactics of diversion

Editor, the Journal,

We should certainly be mourning the loss of 13 brave U.S. servicemembers and at least 170 Afghan civilians in last week's horrific suicide bombing. We should also be thanking all the men and women who protect us daily both in our Shelton homesteads to outposts around the world.

But while President Joe Biden's Afghanistan surrender continues to unfold across our TV screens, Democrats have switched quickly to a tactic of diversion. At home it goes something like this: Spouse No. 1: "Honey, you drove the car this afternoon. How did you get the big dent in the fender?" Spouse No. 2: "How would you like a nice lasagna dinner?"

Last week's letter's section in the Journal showed some of this deflection by "vax" shaming to climate change scaring. A few missives did address today's most important issue, which, of course, was our epic fail in

Afghanistan.

Mr. Earl Burt of Bremerton described how some "dirtbag" (his word) spit on a store employee. We weren't told if the ne'er-do-well perp had COVID-19, but I found the act itself repugnant. Burt called the spitter a "murderer."

Were I you, Mr. Burt, I would gather some friends, hunt down this "bully and coward" (again, your words) and somehow scare the ever-loving crap out of him. Before leaving, ask him whether he wants to spit on anyone again. This is called "deterrence."

Finally came a crowd of climate change cultists and Greta Thunberg wannabes. (By the way, I wonder where the young Swedish environmental activist/scold is today?) Symbolizing all of the pearl-clutchers is a certain Bill Pfender of Shelton, a frequent letter-writer to the Journal.

Mr. Pfender is a staunch Democrat who is very dramatic and thinks he is funny. He cries out for attention in his letters, so perhaps I can help — but

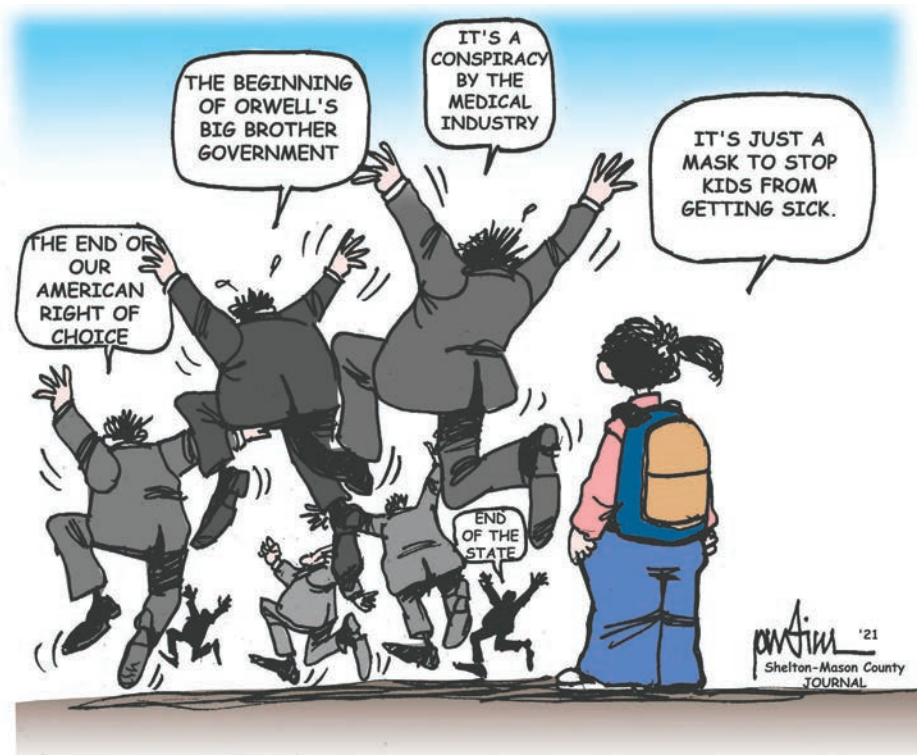
only a bit. He reminds me of the opening of Plato's allegory of the cave, where a prisoner, chained to a wall near a fire, would see only shadows — representing his reality — flicker before him.

Bill laughs a great deal. He thought it was uproariously funny — I'm not kidding here — that a political enemy and fellow American should be executed. Like Kamala Harris, he might sadly suffer from what the medical profession calls PDA, or the Pseudobulbar affect, defined as "a condition characterized by episodes of uncontrollable or inappropriate laughing or crying." (It's reported that the Batman villain The Joker suffered from PDA.)

I tire of this, but Mr. Pfender does symbolize a major tactic of diversion. Like a National Public Radio piece, his letters are entertaining, well-crafted and wrong about virtually everything. Oh yes, he does believe the Paris Climate Accords are actually worth the paper they're written on. Now we can all laugh.

Despite all this, we must for now keep a close eye on Afghanistan. We live in historic times. Perhaps soon I will provide a list of great American losers. Guess who will be on it?

Robert E. Graham  
Union



## Pride and hate

Editor, the Journal,

Mr. Price did not like my letter of two weeks ago. He entirely missed my point; it was not political; it was moral. It is insane to get one's moral code from a political party and it is shockingly awful to wish death upon those you disagree with. It is also evil to proudly proclaim one's hate for another; pride and hate are both sins. If you aren't religious, call them character flaws. They help no one.

Bruce Finlay  
Shelton

# Times: Whatever is left of our patience is thinning

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## 'What gives you hope?'

Apart from the death, disease, anger over vaccine mandates, jammed hospitals and stressed hospital workers, COVID is taking a separate toll on us. Whatever is left of our national cache of patience is thinning, especially with vaccinated people's feelings about people who won't get vaccinated.

Matthew Welander has been the fire chief for West Mason Fire since 2016, and we met for the first time Friday morning. We spoke at the Ridge Motorsports Park, just north of Shelton, where he and another person were

staffing an ambulance, just in case one of the race cars went cattywampus on the track.

Chief Welander, a Shelton grad who also is an assistant football coach at Shelton High, seems like the kind of person whose reactions are finely calibrated to whatever the circumstance demands, a valuable skill in the emergency response world. He doesn't give off nervous energy. He speaks in complete sentences and paragraphs, often taking a moment to stare into the distance before answering a question.

We spoke about how some people's reactions to the coronavirus were weighing hard on him. After 25 minutes spent talking mainly about the negative effects the coronavirus was having on his fire

district, the public, and some friends and acquaintances, we had the following exchange:

**Question:** "What gives you hope?"

**Answer** (after a 15-second pause, which included two exhales): "In this particular arena (the U.S. COVID response), I don't have much hope. I have a lot of hope in a lot of other areas. I'm very hopeful and proud of our football team and I think we're going to do well this year. I'm amazed at the progress that our little fire district has made in the four or five years that I've been here. I couldn't be more proud of the people. But when it comes to our country dealing with COVID-19 and being able to be vaccinated at a meaningful rate so that the virus can't mutate again ... in

today's age, I don't have a lot of hope."

**Q:** "Are you generally an optimistic person?"

**A:** "I think so."

**Q:** "Have you ever wondered why you're an optimistic person?"

**A:** "Until this one thing, I've always known that eventually the good guys would win. It didn't matter what it was, a superhero fantasy or whatever, the good guys always eventually win. I don't see that here (with the pandemic). I see this dragging out until it mutates again. I see it inundating our health care system. I see continued fighting, ending friendships, breaking up families, killing people. It's not going to get better until people really wake up and believe the science. Science

itself makes itself unbelievable because science changes all the time. We get what this (COVID-19) is now but we didn't at first. I'll admit freely, when it first came out I was like, 'Let everyone get it and we'll have chicken pox parties like we had in the '70s and '80s.' I was one of those kids. And then we started hearing about the long-term effects and that this does hang out in your lungs as far as we know. That changed it for me. You get this (COVID-19) long term, we don't know what it's going to do to you. You think there's a bed shortage now?"

Please.  
Take your shot.

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