

# Opinion

## Even at Apple, WFH is only a remote possibility



**FROMA HARROP**

The very tech companies that created the ability to do office work from home want their own people back at the ranch. Apple Inc. made headlines last spring when it told employees working remotely from home during the pandemic that they would have to return to the office.

This was rich coming from the company that had just produced an inspirational and very funny video titled, "Escape from the Office." In the video, an authoritarian in a suit barks at four corporate underlings cowering in a parked car. The group then fantasizes about freedom from the office: "Start our own company." "Be our own bosses." "We can get our weekends back." They quit, race out of the parking lot and become amazingly rich with an idea to make a better shopping bag – while being able to sit in on kids' ballet classes and stir big steaming pots in the kitchen at noon.

They make promotional websites on MacBooks. They share colorful business charts, produced on iPads, that show bag sales in the hundreds of thousands and soaring profits. Through an interview conducted on a Mac, they hire a finance director who, no problem, is in Alaska. And you see them checking their Apple watches for something or other.

But here's what was left out. Where did the bags come from? Who engineered the better bag? What factory made them? Did the escapees build a plant, or did they contract with someone else? And if that someone else was in China, how did they get them shipped and to what warehouse? And who trucked them to the customers?

Any of these activities required capital with a Karl Marx "C." And ready money was not something that these lovable former office slaves appeared to have. Nor did they seem the types to impress venture capitalists any more than they awed their tailored overlords in the old office.

Not to entirely rain on this parade, there are tales of individualists with great ideas who quit their cubicles and started great enterprises from the kitchen table. These stories are dangerous, however, because they often leave out details of how many hours these entrepreneurs put in to

get their businesses going. Talk about lost weekends. Such heroic accounts tend not to mention all the promising new enterprises that failed. And face it, the guys who succeeded were often geniuses.

Apple CEO Tim Cook conceded that returning to the office would be an "unsettling change" for many workers. Nonetheless, he wants them back at Apple Park, his \$5 billion "spaceship" headquarters in Cupertino, California – and Apple offices across the globe.

Some workers found the order "insulting," especially in light of the "Escape from the Office" video, according to Bloomberg News. "The underlying message: Apple knows corporate employees – using its products as tools – can capably work from home. So why can't its own staff?"

These disgruntled workers apparently misread the message. The video was not intended to show how former office flunkies can create a great business at home. It was made to sell Apple products.

It's not just Apple wanting the techies back. Office building is booming throughout Silicon Valley as new public transportation facilities come online. Google, for one, is planning a new mixed-use development on 80 acres in San Jose.

Apple's Cook did talk of allowing some work-from-wherever setups but on a very limited basis. As he told workers, "We have an opportunity to combine the best of what we have learned about working remotely with the irreplaceable benefits of in-person collaboration."

Sounds like Apple workers still have a boss. It's back to the spaceship for them.

Follow Froma Harrop on Twitter @Froma-Harrop. She can be reached at fharrop@gmail.com.

©2022 Creators.com



## We can do more to slow the spread of variant BA.5

**BY ERIC J. TOPOL**  
Los Angeles Times

It takes a lot for a COVID-19 variant to become dominant throughout most of the world. It has happened only three previous times (alpha, delta, omicron) and now is occurring with the omicron family subvariant known as BA.5. How did this occur and what are the implications for the pandemic going forward?

In the last weeks BA.5 became the dominant COVID-19 variant in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the cause of nearly 54% of new cases, growing exponentially here since late April. It replaced another omicron family variant (BA.2.12.1), which has not achieved global dominance. But we are seeing BA.5, first appearing in South Africa and Portugal, now progressing to or achieving dominance throughout much of Europe, South America and the Asia Pacific. It has led to new infection surges and an increase in hospitalizations but, fortunately, not a proportionate increase in deaths or admissions to intensive care units.

The reason why BA.5 is a standout is predominantly linked to its property of "immune escape." That is, multiple distinct mutations from prior omicron variants have blunted our immune response to it. The ability of multiple vaccine doses, boosters and infections to guard against it is reduced.

BA.5 doesn't completely evade our defenses — there is some cross-immunity that is enabled by vaccines and prior infections, reflected in sustained protection from the most severe COVID-19 illness. But the jump in reinfections, such as a recent doubling in San Diego County, reflects our vulnerability.

BA.5 may have other "advantages" as well. Researchers in Australia just reported higher infectivity for this variant compared with prior omicron versions, by virtue of its ability to enter cells more efficiently.

The rise of the BA.5 variant is an outgrowth of accelerated evolution of the virus. The transition from omicron BA.1, first picked up spreading in late November 2021, to BA.5 now, with many other omicron subvariants in between, is quite rapid and unlike the first year of the pandemic when there were no substantive new versions of the virus seen. BA.5 puts the nail in the coffin of the myth that the virus will evolve into a milder form and fade away. We could easily see more variants — indeed a whole new family with more extensive immune evasion and growth advantage — in the months ahead.

So what should be done about the current situation and future prospects? More than we're doing now.

The CDC has done too little to warn Americans about the high risk of BA.5 spread, which can be mitigated to a significant extent by use of high-quality masks, physical distancing, ventilation, air filtration and booster vaccines. Only one in three Americans eligible has had a booster, which means the U.S. ranks 67th in the world for being up to date on protections against COVID-19. Among people age 50 and over, for whom a second booster has been shown to reduce mortality and severe disease and is freely available, only 1 in 4 has received it.

These boosters, while using the spike protein mRNA for the original strain of the virus, promote the overall broadening of our immune response and provide an important layer of enhanced protection to all variants. There is no reason for high-risk people to wait for a new vaccine booster, not knowing when that might be available or whether it will be more effective with the strain of the virus circulating at that time.

Beyond these currently available measures, we need to pull out all the stops to get ahead of the virus, for the first time in the pandemic anticipating its next moves and our vulnerabilities.

We need to apply money, pressure and government strength to the creation of a variant-proof vaccine. The scientific foundation for such a vaccine exists, but we must pierce regulatory concerns and get it done.

But even that's not enough.

The "leakiness" of current vaccines and boosters for preventing transmission can be patched up by nasal spray vaccines, for which three candidates are in late-stage randomized clinical trials. Such vaccines achieve mucosal immunity, protecting against the entry of the virus into our upper airway, which shots are incapable of achieving for any durable basis, especially as the virus has evolved. Nasal sprays, like a variant-proof vaccine, deserve an Operation Warp Speed-like program to accelerate their success.

COVID-19 isn't conquered. The unprecedented acceleration, high efficacy and safety of the first vaccines, made available just 10 months from when the virus was first sequenced, is the model for what we should do next. We can't be so foolish as to learn nothing from our pandemic past.

*Eric J. Topol is a professor of molecular medicine at Scripps Research and author of the newsletter Ground Truths. ©2022 Los Angeles Times Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.*

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

#### WE CAN WORK TOGETHER TO END HOMELESSNESS

No one deserves to be homeless. Why do we have homeless individuals in Rochester? Do there need to be higher paying jobs? Cheaper daycare?

No one chooses to be homeless. As a society, how are we failing people? How can we fight for the homeless individuals to get them the help they need? Working together, I think that we can bring an end to homelessness in our community.

If you live in Rochester, it is important you know the options that

are there for people who are homeless. Rochester offers the Rochester Community Warming Center and the Empowering Connections and Housing Outreach (ECHO) Center. These are resources that help homeless individuals with funding for housing and other assistance needs.

As a community, we need to remember that anything can happen to someone, which can cause them not to be able to make ends meet. We need to be there for the families who need the assistance.

It is stated that on any

given night, in Rochester there can be 835 people homeless. Could you imagine not sleeping in the comfort of your bed? We need to reach out, find solutions, and help those in need. One day it could be you that needs the help.

As a soon-to-be social worker graduate, it is my wish to get as many people involved with ending homelessness and having the joy to know I am making a difference in people's lives.

I believe we can help end homelessness as a community.

**Brooke Heim,**  
Rochester

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

#### GIVE FRESH CONSIDERATION TO ROUNDABOUTS

Have you sat in a four-way intersection with traffic lights and no one is moving? Think roundabouts. There are a few of these in Rochester but efforts to expand them here and elsewhere have been thwarted for numerous reasons.

For example, our City Planning Department recommended one for the intersection adjacent to "The Waters on Maywood," (a senior living center) years ago as an alternative to the traditional signalized intersection. They cited the greater safety and significantly less cost to install.

Critics, though, were not convinced of the safety advantage and felt our citizens would have difficulty learning how to use them. Roundabouts are common in many cities and especially so in European cities. They must have smarter drivers there.

On the MN DOT website there are three important facts supporting use of roundabouts: better safety, better traffic flow, and better fuel efficiency and air quality.

There are, however, many myths about roundabouts, such as the concern about safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, a larger number of crashes and more severe ones, and that trucks will have difficulty navigating them. All of these concerns are nicely dispelled with FACTS in an accompanying video at the website dot.state.mn.us/roundabouts.

So, as we sit at a signalized intersection burning precious and now expensive fossil fuels, think about it. In fact, do more — support our traffic engineers, planning department and city council when it is weighting a signalized intersection versus a roundabout. Once you use them, you won't want to go back.

**W. Neath Folger,** Rochester

#### LONGER PRISON SENTENCES WON'T REDUCE CRIME

In response to recent drive-by shootings in Rochester, I share

former Olmsted County Attorney Ray Schmitz's concern about citizens protecting themselves by arming themselves. However, I disagree with his statement that the answer is "tough prosecution, mandatory minimums and significant punishment."

If long prison sentences reduced violent crime, the US would be the safest country in the world. Our prison sentences for violent crimes are on the average eight times longer than other NATO countries. Yet our rate of violent crime is eight to 10 times higher than those same countries. In fact, a growing body of evidence has undermined long-perceived links between public safety and the length of prison sentences. Lengthy incarceration is itself a criminogenic factor. The longer a person is in prison, not only are they more likely to reoffend, but their children are five times more likely to enter the justice system. Mandatory minimum sentences also turn prisons into violent human warehouses instead of places of rehabilitation.

Incarceration in the US involves strip searches, physical restraint, isolation and the threat of violence. We are trying to use violence to teach people to not be violent. You can't solve a problem with the same level of thinking that created it. Lengthy prison sentences have a ripple effect causing more crime, not less. Who would vote for a hospital that made patients sicker?

Incarceration/punishment that relies on facts, force and fear is a less effective deterrent than rehabilitation that relies on relationships, reframed thinking and repetition. Peer reviewed research shows that 18-24 month long empathy building diversion programs, substance use disorder programs and cognitive behavioral rehabilitation programs go hand-in-hand with low crime and recidivism rates.

Politicians sometimes tout being tough on crime. But what gets my vote is being smart on crime.

**Kendall Hughes,** Stewartville  
*The author is a retired chaplain in the federal prison system.*



### CANDIDATE LETTERS

**Editor’s note:** Candidates for Seat 6 on the Rochester School Board were invited to write letters presenting themselves to voters in the Post Bulletin on this date. These are the letters received.

Candidates include the incumbent, Cathy Nathan, and challengers Patrick Farmer and Elena Niehoff.

Next up, we’ll have letters from candidates for Rochester mayor. More information about the candidates in all of the local, state and federal races can be found online at <https://candidates.sos.state.nn.us> and at <https://www.PostBulletin.com/topics/Election-2022>.

#### ADD PARENT’S PERSPECTIVE TO SCHOOL BOARD

**Editor’s note:** A technical error prevented Justin Cook’s letter from arriving in time for its scheduled publication last week.

My name is Justin Cook, and I am running for the board of Rochester Public Schools, position 2.

I am running because I think it’s past time we add a parent’s perspective on our school board. My wife of 17 years and I relocated to Rochester five years ago with our four kids, now in grades K-7.

Dr. Cook is a pathologist completing her fellowship at Mayo and I’m a lawyer for The Nielsen Company, where I serve as associate general counsel for intellectual property.

Like so many of you, my family loves our schools, and we value our children’s teachers, but we are concerned about the future of our school district in the current environment that so



**Cook**

often seeks to inject politics into classrooms and sow divisiveness in our community all to the detriment

of our students. We are troubled by the challenges posed in the district’s financial forecast, and we are concerned by the recent rates of academic proficiency in our district.

My vision is one in which Rochester emerges from this chapter as a true center of excellence in public education. As Rochester continues to grow, the next several years present opportunities to lay the foundation for an even more vibrant, robust economy to come.

I expect our district to lead the nation in ensuring that every third-grade student attains reading proficiency, and I will insist on equipping our schools with a multi-tiered system of supports framework that offers science-based structured literacy. And I am more than ready to witness real progress against the goals to attain educational equity.

Let’s think bigger together! I’m inquisitive, I’ll question long-held assumptions, and I love data. Let me bring my energetic problem-solving approach to bear, and let’s add public education to the list of things Rochester is best at!

**Justin Cook**

#### SCHOOL SECURITY IS A MAIN ISSUE

Dear readers, What has been good in District 535? Well, Century High



**Farmer**

School was designed to be entirely converted into a state prison in the event that Rochester instantly lost half

its population. That’s a good idea. It’s added security in a time of mass shootings and can become a FEMA camp should aliens invade or planet X arrives.

The architects of Dakota Middle School did not design it to be convertible into a prison. All schools should have plans drawn to convert into a maximum security prison.

And why the name Dakota? District 535 is going to be sued by Dakota because it’s a racist name is similar to “Redskins” or Cleveland “Indians.” Worst still is the mascot is a bison slaughtered in the tens of thousands to starve tribal cultures. Just give up! Donald J. Trump Middle School stands a better chance.

Superintendent Dr. Pekel, what will become of Friedell Middle School? Rochester must know at this time. Nine holes of golf are on the line and should be taking its place by now. Bulldoze the war memorial and redevelop half of Soldiers Field, but the fairgrounds gets Friedell with corn tower for nine holes of golf.

School safety is a massive problem I’m running to solve. I want to double the amount of fire extinguishers in each school. A teacher created a dry powder fog with an extinguisher in a recent school shooting for students to escape and

it worked. Maybe that number should be tripled. Much political polarization has reached school districts in these times. From drag queens invited into kindergarten classes to read books like Dr Seuss and Winnie the Pooh, to students walking out during the day to attend anti-gun and anti-police riots.

**Patrick Farmer**

#### LET ME CONTINUE POSITIVE WORK ON THE SCHOOL BOARD

My name is Cathy Nathan, a candidate for Seat 6 on the Rochester School Board. I have seen first hand the power of education, community, and collaboration in Rochester. As the proud parent of two Rochester Public School graduates, I spent a decade as a community volunteer in our schools while also advocating for family engagement and education resources. It has been an honor to serve on the Rochester Public School Board over the last four years and to help our community navigate the complex challenges we have faced together during that time.

I am running for my second term in Seat 6 to continue the work I have diligently dedicated myself to: using my voice to champion the needs of all students, families and educators and using my vote to back up my words with actions and resources for long term student success.

I am passionate about hearing the voices and understanding the needs of our diverse Rochester Public Schools community and transferring those into district decision-making.

I am prepared to use credible information, best



**Nathan**

practices, and data analysis when considering my votes; I am prepared to use and craft

policies and procedures to effectively govern the district’s work.

I am persistent as an advocate for better opportunities and resources and in holding the district accountable. I persist in strategizing how to best support student achievement and a positive learning environment in our Rochester Public Schools.

Success in the classroom begins when all students feel they are safe, welcomed and belong in their school community. It begins when educators and families are respected and supported with resources that meet their students’ needs. I will never stop fighting to make all this possible in our Rochester Public Schools. I would be honored by your vote in the primary on Aug. 9.

**Cathy Nathan**

#### I WANT TO GIVE BACK TO THIS GREAT COUNTRY

My name is Elena Niehoff. I am running for the Rochester Public School Board position #6.

I am a wife, mother, and grandmother who loves family and this beautiful country. In 1998 I immigrated with my family from Ukraine to the United States and became a citizen of this great country. I feel this experience has given me a unique perspective on how great this country really is.

For those people who



**Niehoff**

have never experienced socialism, let me assure you that socialism is not about getting a lot of free stuff

from the government. Instead, it seeks to remove God from society and remove God-given rights from the people.

America gave me the opportunity to realize my dreams. I earned an associate degree in nursing through Rochester Community College and a bachelor’s degree in nursing through Winona State University. I am a certified public health nurse. During my career I worked for several health care organizations, and I volunteered with the Salvation Army and served on their board for one year.

I stand for equal opportunity for all children regardless of race, for preserving children’s innocence, for restoring discipline in classrooms, for restoring academic excellence and for protecting parental rights.

I want to give back to our community and help all students reach their full potential. I am running in a slate of four conservative candidates whose individual knowledge and skills blend very well together in a way that will help our students achieve this goal.

Please vote for me on Aug. 9.

My website: [www.4YourChildren.org](http://www.4YourChildren.org)  
**Elena Niehoff**

## Not a subscriber? There’s plenty here to read for free

If you’re reading this, chances are good that you paid for the privilege. Or, potentially, you’re friends with, or related to, somebody who did.

Maybe you’re a subscriber. Or maybe you paid \$3 at a store to buy a copy of today’s print edition. There’s also a decent chance that you’re reading this column as one of your handful of online freebies for the month. (Watch out for that “Subscribe now” pop-up.)

One way or another, you know (or soon will) that Post Bulletin content comes at a cost. Journalists have to eat, too, and your willingness to financially support our work helps keep everybody in rice and beans for the month. We haven’t lost a reporter to starvation yet. Did you know that the Post Bulletin has required a subscription to read



**JEFF PIETERS**

online for more than a decade?

That said, you might not be aware that there are certain things we offer at the Post Bulletin’s website for free. This is not a trick!

My purpose here today is not to preach to non-subscribers about buying a subscription. It’s to tell you how much of our professionally produced content you can enjoy without one. We plan to come up with a better way of marking those freebies soon, but for now I’ll tell you about a few of the content categories that you can enjoy without dropping even a plugged nickel.

**Crime news from Rochester police briefings.** Several mornings a week, representatives of the Rochester Police Department and Olmsted County Sheriff’s Office hold a media briefing to report to us and our competitors significant crimes and other emergency news from the past 24 hours. From this, we often have essentially the same stories our competitors have — about the break-in, the motorcycle chase or the drug arrest. Their stories are free to read online, so now ours are, too. Maybe you’ll like the quality of ours better. I invite you to take a look.

**Community press releases.** In a very similar way, our competitors receive the same public announcements we do — about a street closure, a blood drive, or a volunteer opportunity.

These and other public announcements of their kind are free for you to read without a subscription.

**Rochester in Color.** Our effort to provide an information resource and local forum for Black and other non-white local voices wouldn’t be positioned to fulfill its mission if we had set it inside our payroll. We want this resource to be available and used by subscribers and non-subscribers alike. Outside sponsorships help underwrite the costs we have to provide it.

**Obituaries.** This one isn’t really secret, as our online data shows us that plenty of people — including lots of non-subscribers — are reading our obituaries. Families pay to place those obits, and by virtue of their expense, we feel obligated to give those life stories the widest potential readership we

can. Thus, they are free.

**Special magazine features.** Rochester Magazine publishes a handful of special features during the year, including the current 100 Days of Summer and Local Table. Those are available to read without a subscription. Likewise, we share Live Well Magazine, a publication for seniors, for free on our site.

**Podcasts.** You can find our daily news summaries and other audio reports at [PostBulletin.com/Podcasts](http://PostBulletin.com/Podcasts). Or you can listen via Spotify, Apple or Google Podcasts. Wherever you find them, they’re free for you to enjoy.

You might be asking yourself why, if we’re in the business of selling subscriptions, we are willing to give away so much for free. Also, why is the editor calling attention to it? (Maybe

I’m trying to lose weight from all those dishes of rice and beans?)

The answer isn’t hard. For one thing, we’re part of this community. At times, the information we share is essential for you to have, such as during the first year of the pandemic when we made our COVID-19 coverage freely available.

Also — at the risk of preaching, something I promised I wouldn’t do — we feel that offering some free content gives you a taste of what we can deliver. If you like the free stuff, imagine how you might enjoy the content we consider valuable enough to charge for. I think it’s worth it.

But that’s just my two cents.

Jeff Pieters is editor of the Post Bulletin. He can be reached by phone, 507-285-7748, or email, [jpieters@postbulletin.com](mailto:jpieters@postbulletin.com).

## They are us and we are them

Get personal with PB personalities.

#### Pat Ruff, Sports Reporter

● **One interview I’ll never forget:** I was interviewing David Robinson after the Timberwolves had played the San Antonio Spurs in a playoff game. Robinson was about as big a deal as there was in the NBA at the time, and was fresh off an MVP season. I was interviewing the 7-foot center by myself most of that time, as another couple of reporters had broken off. Robinson gave me the longest, most thoughtful answers you could imagine. He was going on for so long that I finally had to break it off with him. I had a story to write. I couldn’t believe it, me needing to cut him off, not the other way around. This was the MVP I was talking to. The former Navy standout really was an officer and a gentleman.

● **Local journalism is important. Here’s why:** It’s an opportunity to shed light on people and topics that are completely relatable to the public. They are us and we are them.

● **You won’t get far in the journalism world without:** Wanting, above all, to be a writer.

● **On the fence about subscribing to the PB?** We’ve got you covered and there is nothing like being informed.



**POSTBULLETIN**  
Subscribe at [postbulletin.com/subscribe](http://postbulletin.com/subscribe).