

OPINION

“CONGRESS SHALL MAKE NO LAW...
ABRIDGING THE FREEDOM
OF SPEECH, OR OF THE PRESS,”

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution

e-mail: editor@timberjay.com

Editorial

Get your shots

Vaccine refusers are endangering public health and the economy

Minnesotans who refuse to get vaccinated aren't just harming themselves. They're threatening the public health generally, are slowing economic recovery, and are raising the cost of health insurance for everyone.

The average cost of a single routine COVID-19 patient in Minnesota is just under \$45,000. When a patient ends up in intensive care, the average cost is over \$262,000. As hospitals fill to the breaking point with unvaccinated people sick with COVID, insurance companies are increasing their rates for everyone to cover the cost.

The unvaccinated aren't just pushing our insurance rates higher, they're extending this pandemic. If everyone in the U.S. were vaccinated, it would deny the virus the vulnerable host population it needs to spread and mutate. Until or unless we get our vaccination percentage much closer to 100 percent, we're going to be facing wave after wave of new variants of the virus for the foreseeable future, according to epidemiologists. That's going to continue to act as a drag on the economy, as COVID-related supply chain issues hamper businesses and fuel inflation. It's going to continue to disrupt the education of our young people and prevent all of us from getting back to a lifestyle that we used to take for granted.

Those who claim that vaccines are dangerous, ineffective, or untested, are flat out wrong. Billions of COVID vaccines have now been administered with only the usual side effects expected from any vaccine. That's a sample size too large to dispute.

As for effectiveness, the numbers from the Minnesota Department of Health speak for themselves. As of November, among the roughly 30 percent of the state's adult population that remains unvaccinated, more than 1,000 per 100,000, or better than one percent, were being diagnosed with COVID every week. Over five weeks, that's one out of every 20 people.

By contrast, among the 70 percent of Minnesotans who are vaccinated, the rate of new cases is about one-fifth that of those who have not gotten the shot.

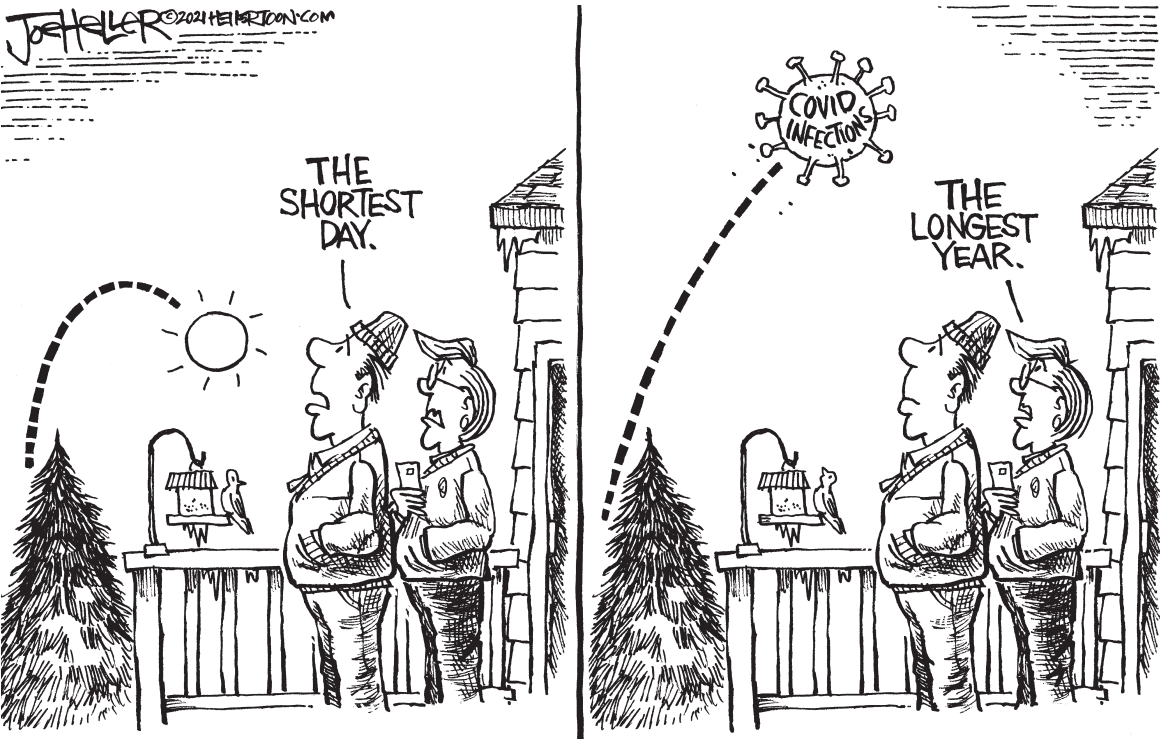
But the rate of new cases isn't the most important measure. Among the vaccinated, hospitalizations are rare. Among those ages 18-64, just one vaccinated Minnesotan is ending up in the hospital for every ten who are unvaccinated. Among those ages 65 and up, vaccinated individuals are 15 times less likely to end up hospitalized than their non-vaccinated neighbor. That's not conjecture or spin. That's based on the actual data here in Minnesota.

If someone tells you that vaccinations don't work, or that your chances of catching COVID or winding up in the hospital are the same whether you're vaccinated or not, that person is completely misinformed. Do them, and all of us, a favor by providing them with the facts.

The other piece of the puzzle right now is getting your booster. While the fully vaccinated are much better off than the unvaccinated, there is no question that the immunity their vaccines provide wanes over time. The data show that getting a booster shot greatly enhances your immunity, so make an appointment today.

In any pandemic, we know there is going to be illness and death, often through no fault on the part of the victims. But now that we have the tools to end the current pandemic, there should be consequences for those who refuse to do their part. Health insurers charge higher rates for smokers, because they are more likely to incur medical expenses. By charging them a higher rate, it means we all don't have to pay for the bad choices others make. Insurers should start applying the same principle to individuals who refuse to get their COVID vaccinations. Why should responsible people have to pay more because others would rather believe a crackpot on Facebook over experts in the field?

It's time for everyone to step up the plate and take some personal responsibility. It's time for the political posers to get real. It's the only way we're ever going to get past this pandemic and get back to a semblance of life as we knew it before COVID-19. Want to really Make America Great Again? Get your shots.



Letters from Readers

Attending school events means a lot to our kids

As the school year is progressing, I am reminded of the time when my granddaughter was in fifth-grade choir at Forest Lake School in Grand Rapids. My family went to her spring concert and sat in the front row so we could see all that was happening. At one point I noticed my granddaughter, Taiya, talking to her friend and I could see her say, "That's my dad, my grandpa, my great-grandpa and great-grandma." She then sat up to sing with the biggest smile on her face. It brought tears to my eyes and a choke to my throat to know OUR presence was that important to her. I recalled then for a moment when "I" was in school band. I searched and searched the auditorium to see where MY folks were sitting. I knew they were there... I just had to CONNECT with them.

Later, at Forest Lake School, we had milk and cookies with the kids. My granddaughter introduced me to her friend. Her friend simply said, "No one from my family came." Need I say how hurt that made me feel? If you are a parent, grandparent, uncle, or aunt, MAKE TIME to go to these events and support your kids. Give them hugs that they deserve. Do it TODAY.

Brian Carlson
Grand Rapids

A universal bill of rights is in keeping with message of Christmas

"In our day, these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We must establish a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all, regardless of station, race, or creed.

"Among these rights are:

- The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries, or shops, or mines of the nation.
- The right to earn enough to provide adequate food, clothing,

and recreation.

- The right of every farmer to raise and sell his earthly yield at a return which will give him and his family a decent living.
- The right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad.
- The right of every family to a decent home.
- The right to good medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health.
- The right to secure protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident and unemployment.
- The right to a good education.

"All these rights spell security.

"After this war is won, we must be prepared to move forward, in the implementation of these rights, the new goals of human happiness and well-being."

These were the words of the second Bill of Rights, of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1944.

This holiday season, let's remember a little child born in the midst of a stable, with simple people, his mother and father, and three travelers, who were led to the stable by a star in the night.

Here was a baby, whose first cradle was a feedbox for animals, who would come to stand among wise men and the learned.

They would be tenderly taught not to be of selfish conscience and to be defined only by their riches, but to explore the unplumbed depths of the human heart, to set aside the arrogance of their learning, their wisdom, and their earthly mammon, so that in the end, after all trial has been made and every expedient tested, they would discover that the simplest way is the best, and humblest means the surest.

It was the babe born inside the crumbling mud walls and the low ceiling of the stable who would come to spark the mind of man, a spark that would kindle the world with the flame of eternal light, the loving spirit of enduring justice and mercy for all mankind.

A universal Bill of Rights.

Tim Duff
Tonka Bay

We all hope for the best medical response possible

I applaud Lee Peterson's recent effort to educate us all on the possibility of improved emergency response to our area. We enjoy service now but can it be improved? Yes!

None of us can predict when a heart attack, stroke, bite from the chain saw or loss of snowmobile control will strike. What we all hope for is that the best medical outcome will take place if an issue strikes us. By organizing and constantly evaluating emergency medical response, the best hopeful medical outcome may be achieved. The medical Golden Hour attempts to focus for us that the best outcome will be greatly influenced by the promptness and type of care we receive.

Emergency medical response should not be controlled by any political body. A political body can help by providing a planning, coordinating, and evaluating mechanism carried out by the professionals involved in emergency medical services. To this end, I urge the Greenwood Board of Supervisors to step forward and provide an atmosphere that will serve all full time and summer residents in our great north country.

Chuck Richards
Greenwood Twp.

We welcome your letters

The *Timberjay* encourages letters to the editor. You can submit letters by mail at PO Box 636, Tower, MN 55790, or email letters to marshall@timberjay.com.

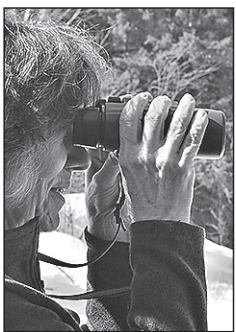
We ask that letters be limited to 300 words.

Letters are subject to editing, primarily for length and clarity.

Letters are a great way to offer your input to the *Timberjay's* editorial page. We want to know what you think!

Reflections following another school shooting...

Since the announcement of another mass shooting, this time at a high school in Oxford, Mich., a sickening feeling persists in the pit of my stomach. Details have slowly come out. We know that a 15-year-old boy has been arrested for the murder of four of his classmates



KATHLEEN MCQUILLAN

and wounding of several others. According to reports, the weapon was purchased just days before the killings by the boy's parents as a "Christmas present" and stored in a drawer. Officials at the school had called the parents that

morning to discuss the alarming messages their son was posting on social media that revealed his intent to commit violence. The posts included his cry for help. Despite these forewarnings, it appears that neither the parents nor school administrators did anything more to thwart his tragic actions.

Of course, this horrific incident is being thoroughly investigated to determine the chain of events leading up to the killings and who should be held account-

able. The facts gathered will mostly serve the purpose of pressing appropriate criminal charges. But other questions as or more important will likely remain unanswered, such as, "What should we have done to prevent this, yet another senseless attack on innocent children? And what should we do now to prevent it from happening again?"

In a recent interview with the BBC, an expert researcher on gun violence stated that mass shootings

like this one are "a uniquely American problem"—both for their frequency and randomness. And yet, he explained, we have done little as a nation to effectively address the issue.

The statistics on gun-related deaths—be they suicide, accidental or intentional homicides—show the numbers just keep rising. Despite our shared shock, and wringing of hands, it begs the question why nothing ever changes. We've documented thousands of individual inci-

dents. We've conducted the research. The information we need to make change is readily available. Perhaps what we don't examine closely enough is the speed at which Americans are able to numb themselves to grief and give up any hope for change.

Immediately following the carnage, we are hungry to track every detail and follow every thread of the story. Who were the victims? What is the history

See **KIDS...**pg. 5