

■ Their View

Biden stymied by Congress on climate

Over the summer, as the world reeled from record-breaking heat waves, flooding and wildfires, the United Nations issued a climate change report that connected the dots with terrifying clarity. The world has moved too slowly to stop global warming and the increase in extreme and deadly weather events. But with radical action to cut carbon emissions over the next decade, we can still prevent the worst devastation.

Next week will test if world leaders are ready to act with the urgency this moment requires. Government officials, business leaders and environmentalists will gather in Glasgow, Scotland, for a two-week summit to hammer out new commitments to slash planet-warming emissions.

The COP26 conference is expected to be the most important climate event since 2015, when global leaders met in Paris and promised to cut their greenhouse gas emissions enough to stop the planet from warming more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times. But nations haven't done nearly enough to meet the Paris accord target, so at this follow-up conference in Glasgow, world leaders will be expected to present concrete plans for how they intend to fulfill the promise.

As of now, the Biden administration is going to Scotland with a weak plan that mostly relies on incentives to encourage emissions reductions but without the mandates or penalties to ensure the reductions actually happen — all because obstructionists and fossil fuel loyalists in Congress gutted President Joe Biden's most aggressive climate change programs. That's a disappointment because all eyes will be on the United States. Biden has laid out an ambitious climate change agenda, including a goal to cut the nation's greenhouse gas emissions 50% from 2005 levels by 2030. But the U.S. will never meet that target on pledges alone. It will take aggressive policies to reduce the nation's reliance on fossil fuels to keep the lights on, power vehicles and heat homes.

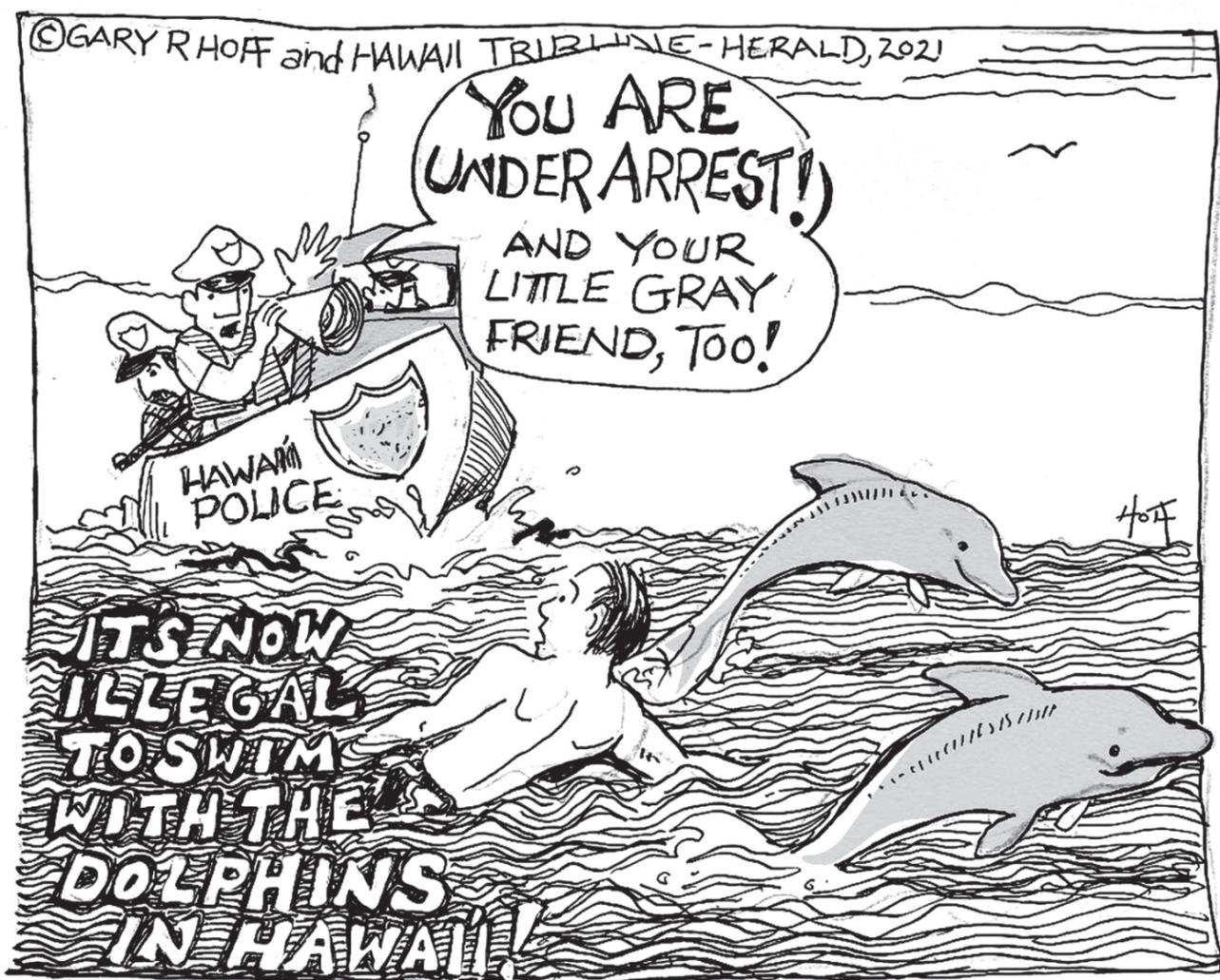
It's deeply frustrating that one of the most important pieces of Biden's climate agenda — a plan to reward utility companies that use clean energy sources and penalize those that don't — was yanked from the "Build Back Better" bill to coax a "yes" vote from Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin III from the coal-producing state of West Virginia. (Not a single Republican is expected to vote for the spending package, so Manchin's support is essential. So much for the Conservative Climate Caucus.)

Instead, Biden's "Build Back Better" plan now relies on \$555 billion in tax credits and incentives to encourage companies and consumers to invest in clean energy. That will still be a huge help. If passed, it would be the largest single federal investment in climate change in history. Biden said all that spending could get the U.S. to hit its climate targets.

While Congress is inching closer to approving the Build Back Better plan's tax credits and temporary spending, the nation really needs laws and programs that require utilities and energy companies to rapidly phase out fossil fuels. We've seen what happens when Congress refuses to be more aggressive. President Barack Obama had to rely on incentives, executive orders and slow-moving regulatory processes to tackle climate change.

This is the moment when the world's industrialized nations need to step up with real policies and programs that make real reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The U.S. is doing a lot, but if the world is going to avoid greater devastation, we need to be doing much more, much faster.

— Los Angeles Times



■ Your Views

Not good enough

I was a little surprised to see that only 84% of Hilo Medical Center, our only hospital, is vaccinated.

Kudos to the laundry department for getting to 100%, but they would never touch me if I was in the hospital. What about all those hands-on nurses, docs, attendants, etc.?

What happened to the importance of public health? Why would someone's freedom or religious beliefs rule over the overall policy of keeping our population safe from a deadly disease ... in a hospital, where you have no choice to go or not?

I really don't get it. Is the hospital so desperate for employees that they can't maintain a safe policy of 100% vaccinations for public health?

The vaccines have been available for almost a year now. I would say 84% just isn't good enough. I pray I don't get into an accident or need any hospital care. I will pray for those who do. God bless.

Joan Hildal
Hakalau

Misleading column

I found the Kathleen Parker opinion piece (Tribune-Herald, Oct. 28) totally misleading, as she called the tragic killing of an innocent person by a firearm an "accidental lethal shooting."

No firing of a firearm is accidental. It is either purposeful or negligent.

She also wrote that an accidental death was 2% of all firearm deaths compared to suicides and homicides. This killing is clearly a homicide. The definition of homicide is the killing of one person by another. It doesn't matter if it was legal or not.

The sheriff's department has not ruled this incident an "accident" and has said publicly that it is being criminally investigated at this point. No one has been charged, but charges have not been ruled out.

Not sure why the Tribune-Herald allows this opinion piece to be printed when the authorities have not completed their investigation yet, and the family of this talented young lady is hurting deeply.

Also, Parker's leap to a dubious political connection

is not helpful to anyone, including an understandably devastated Alec Baldwin.

Don Rudny
Pepeekeo

America gone mad?

The Wall Street Journal has just published an article on Oct. 28 stating President Biden's administration wants to offer immigrant families separated during the Trump administration \$450,000 per person in compensation to resolve lawsuits filed on behalf of parents and children who say the government detained them and subjected them to psychological trauma.

Why is Biden taking our hard-earned money to foolishly pay illegal aliens who broke the U.S. immigration laws to illegally occupy the United States? It is analogous to paying a burglar who broke into your house, ate your food, and you need to pay them for detaining them before the police arrested them and they were later sentenced to jail by the court system.

What about all our friends and neighbors who had to follow the immigration laws

and wait for years to have our families immigrate to Hawaii legally? There is a fair immigration process that has been established and should be followed. Is that fair to let people cut in line and grant them entry into our country before all of those who follow the rules and wait for their turn?

Why should the government increase the taxes on U.S. citizens to frivolously spend on things that do not benefit us? Has the nation gone mad?

Are we going to acquiesce or stand up to protect ourselves and our future generations? Contact your elected officials and let them know how you feel. The elected officials should work for the constituents and are not kings dictating to the subjects.

Louis Pau
Hilo

The Tribune-Herald welcomes letters from readers. Letters can be emailed to letters@hawaii-tribune-herald.com, or mailed to Your Views, c/o Hawaii Tribune-Herald, P.O. Box 767, Hilo, HI 96721. Letters must include your name, phone number (which won't be published), and your town. Letters should be no longer than 300 words; shorter, emailed letters are preferred. Letters may be edited for grammar, length, clarity and taste.

Get your children vaccinated

By DARRETT W.Y. CHOY

COVID-19. SARS-CoV2 virus. MIS-C. In the early part of the pandemic, we watched as a new virus swept through the world. We did not know how to stop it or how to help people that were stricken with this new virus. In December 2020, we received a new way to protect ourselves and our loved ones: vaccines.

Should I vaccinate my kids? That is a frequent question I hear in my office. My answer is an emphatic yes! I am joined in this by your Big Island Doc physicians, pediatricians, pediatric infectious disease specialists, and family medicine physicians.

Currently, vaccines are emergency-approved for people 12 years and older. And on Friday, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration gave emergency authorization for the Pfizer vaccine to be given to children ages 5-11

We know vaccinations are not perfect. You can still catch SARS-CoV2/COVID-19, but

the risk of hospitalization and death are significantly lowered. We can decrease the spread to our family and friends and to those of us who are medically vulnerable or unable to get vaccinated.

Is the vaccine safe? Yes. People are worried at the speed that the vaccine was developed. While this coronavirus is new in humans, we have studied similar coronaviruses for years.

Governments and individuals invested time and money in a global effort that is quite unprecedented. The vaccine has gone through all the normal tests and evaluations, and the Pfizer vaccine is currently fully FDA approved for people 16 and older. It has been shown to be remarkably safe with mild side effects mild that resolve quickly.

With the recent surge in Hawaii, more of our children were affected. We have had 605 children in the United States die from the virus (as of Oct. 13 from CDC data). Thousands more have been hospitalized. Children and

adolescents with obesity, diabetes, asthma, chronic lung disease, and immunosuppression are at higher risk of severe illness.

Children can develop something called MIS-C two to six weeks after getting infected with SARS-CoV2/COVID-19. Although rare, MIS-C can have devastating effects on the brain, heart and lungs. The good news is we recently reached a significant milestone in Hawaii: 70% of our population have completed their vaccine doses!

When I talk to my patients, they tell me that their children truly missed school. There are important social interactions that provide emotional support for our children. They like interacting with their teachers in person. They feel that they learn better. And let's face it, most parents are not teachers and often struggled with helping children with their schoolwork.

I am beyond excited that my younger patients will soon be afforded the chance

to be vaccinated against SARS-CoV2/COVID-19. Sometimes we do not realize what our children hear and see, but I have some 5- and 6-year-olds ready to get their shot and do their part to protect our island home.

A big mahalo to Hawaii's parents, teenagers and children as you make these important decisions for your loved ones, Hawaii, and the world!

If you have further questions, please contact your child's medical provider, the Hawaii State Department of Health or log into the CDC website (CDC.gov), or (HawaiiCOVID19.com). Vaccinations are available in retail pharmacies, hospitals, clinics, and special school programs.

Darrett W.Y. Choy is a pediatrician who is a member of Big Island Docs.

Community First serves as a neutral forum for the community to come together and as a catalyst for solutions to improve health and lower medical costs on Hawaii Island.