OPINION

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OUR VIEWS

Every parent should take heed and prevent spread of measles

With two measles cases recently reported in Louisiana, hospitals are gearing up to treat the highly contagious disease that has seen a resurgence as vaccination rates have declined across the country. In neighboring Texas, an outbreak that started in January has seen around 600 confirmed cases and two deaths, both in unvaccinated children.

While the Texas outbreak has spread to the neighboring states of New Mexico, Kansas and Oklahoma, officials say the Louisiana cases so far don't appear to be linked. The first case was discovered in the New Orleans area in an unvaccinated adult who had traveled internationally. When looking at the contacts of that patient, health officials uncovered another case.

Since the cases became known, public health officials have clearly and consistently recommended that children get vaccinated to prevent the spread of measles. We are grateful that despite Surgeon General Ralph Abraham declaring that the Louisiana Department of Health would end mass vaccination efforts earlier this year, it appears that the measles cases have prompted a serious response. The health department has put information about the measles vaccine on its website, and Abraham reaffirmed that the department recommends the vaccine for children.

Fortunately, no pediatric cases have yet been reported in Louisiana, but doctors at area hospitals say it's only a matter of time. We strongly encourage every parent in Louisiana to take steps now to make sure their children get the vaccine and are protected.

We note with sadness that despite the safety and effectiveness of the measles, mumps and rubella — or MMR — vaccine, fewer and fewer children in the state are getting it.

In some parishes, vaccination rates have dipped below the threshold required for "herd immunity," which makes community transmission more likely.

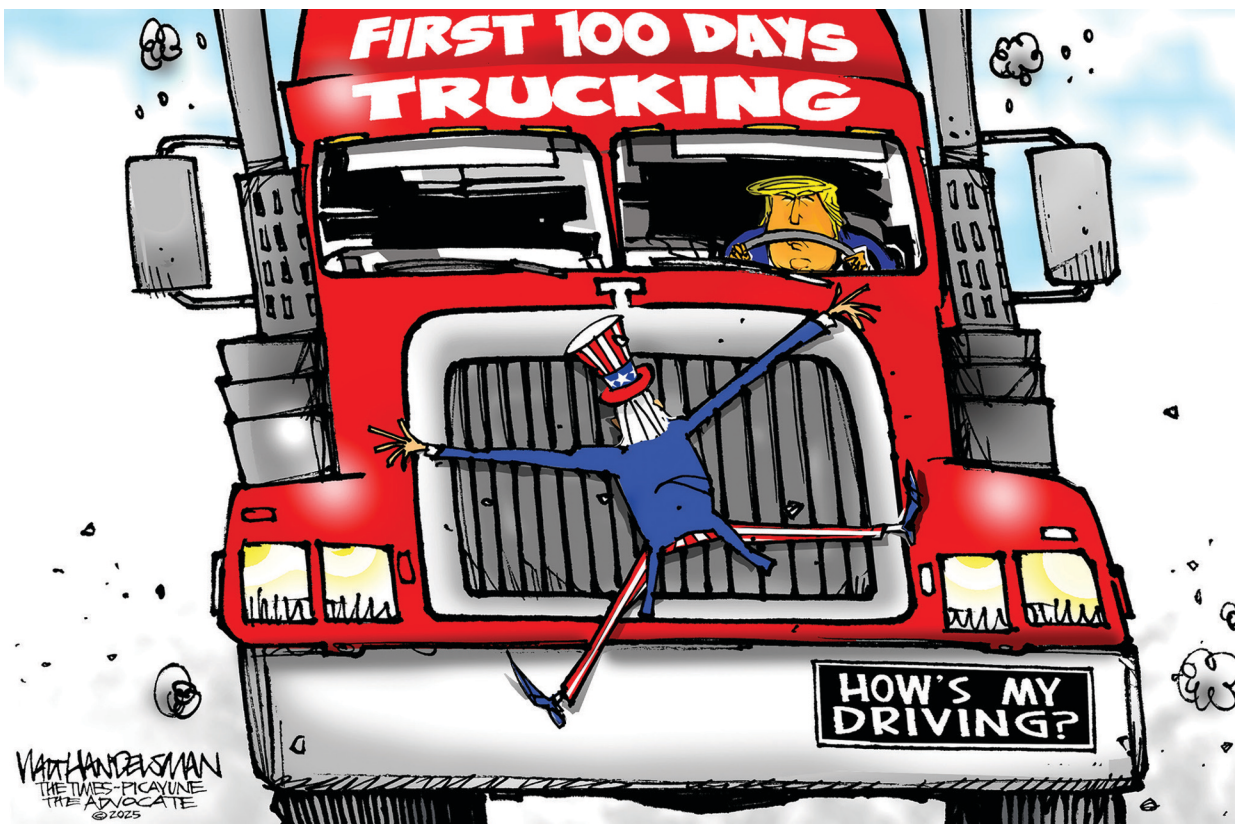
MMR vaccination rates among kindergartners statewide dropped from about 96% in 2020 to 92% in the 2023—2024 school year, according to the CDC. Several parishes, including Livingston, East Baton Rouge, St. Tammany, Acadia, Lafayette, Terrebonne, Union, Ouachita and West Carroll, have rates below 90%. Herd immunity for measles occurs when about 94% of the population of a given area is immune through vaccination or prior infection.

We know there are dedicated doctors and nurses throughout our state who are preparing to treat all patients they encounter, no matter their vaccination status. But measles, once considered eradicated in this country, is a disease that many have not seen before, and there are few good options to treat it once a child is infected.

We recognize that vaccination has become a highly politicized topic in these times. Yet it is one thing to argue when children's lives are not in imminent danger. We hope that as the measles threat increases, everyone will make the health of our children our only priority.

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YOUR VIEWS

Port NOLA pushing project that few residents want

The massive proposed container port project known as the LIT that Port NOLA plans to develop is in Violet, a small community in St. Bernard Parish. This project has recently been exposed to be unviable, and it may never recover all of the costs associated with it, according to a newly released report conducted by the nationally acclaimed shipping authority Martin Associates. This report reveals that there is no demand that warrants such a massive expanded and tremendously costly container terminal in Violet. It further reveals that Port NOLA's container terminal in New Orleans would likely never reach its maximum capacity. This report was commissioned by the newly formed Louisiana Waterways Investment Commission by Gov. Jeff Landry.

The report indicates that in the future, a container port should be built downriver from New Orleans that would in fact, be able to accommodate the next generation of larger and deeper drafting container ships.

Plaquemines Port Commission is in the process of developing exactly that type of container port downriver and, in the spirit of cooperation, has offered 50% of the project to Port NOLA.

This new port would eliminate the competition of two new ports and more importantly, eliminate the wasted and duplicated costs to the state and taxpayers of having to fund two sets of infrastructure to serve two new container ports.

At present, the Port NOLA rejects the Plaquemines Port offer and pushes forward the project in Violet. Why? Because the mighty and greedy Port NOLA wants total control. The vast majority of residents and all elected officials of St. Bernard oppose this project in Violet. Gov. Landry, please cut wasted taxpayer funds and consolidate the container terminal in Plaquemines.

PHILLIP DIFATTA
former commissioner, St. Bernard Port Harbor and Terminal District

Skip eating meat if you want to help planet

I read on Nola.com that People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals staked out Central City BBQ on April 2 to raise awareness of the concerns about consuming meat from animals. It seems if they had waited until that weekend, they could have had a presence at Hogs for the Cause, which had slabs of roasting meat splashed across the Living section in the paper.

Meat consumption is a huge contributor to climate change and world hunger, not to mention a cruel treatment of the animals themselves. As we continue to create more demand for meat, we are forced to burn down the rainforests of South America, displacing Indigenous peoples and reducing the Earth's ability to absorb carbon from the atmosphere. A substantial amount of our arable land is used to grow crops for animal, not human, consumption.

And those precious hogs for some vague cause? Their waste leaches into streams and rivers and creates toxic nightmares on the land on which they are grown. Remember in "Mad Max" when Tina Turner was capturing methane from hogs to power her fortress? Were it that simple. Methane is a noxious gas that stays in the atmosphere much longer than carbon dioxide and is a major contributor to climate change.

So skip the hogs. Plant a tree or compost your table scraps instead. Whatever the cause, our planet is more important because it sustains us all, including the hogs.

KEVIN J. FITZPATRICK
New Orleans

Pause on diversion project wreaking havoc on Barataria

Gordon Dove, board chairman of the Coastal Protection and Restoration Authority, just killed the Barataria diversion project.

He seems to know more than all the experts and scientists who approve it. In just three days of south winds and our roads are covered with water. Barataria Bay has become part of the Gulf of America with just Grand Isle in the way. What is Dove's alternative, make us move?

CHRIS FOURNIER
Barataria

Everyone should keep catch basins free of debris

I recently saw a man on TV who said he was 80 years old and thought citizens should not be responsible for cleaning catch basins; the Sewerage & Water Board should do that. A Sewerage & Water Board official commented that there are more than 70,000 catch basins to be cleaned.

I'm assuming that the 80-year-old is infirm with health problems that would limit his activities. Is it outrageous in a poor city with chronic flooding problems that a citizen would remove leaves from a catch basin near his or her home if able to? From childhood, my family regularly cleared our catch basin and others. We didn't think this was a huge imposition. We thought it helped with flooding. Until we vote more money to a revolutionized Sewerage & Water Board, quit whining and get out your shovels.

JULIE MCCOLLAM
New Orleans

How can anyone approve of cuts to vital parts of our economy?

Like almost all professors across the country, the university I work for is struggling under budget shortfalls that stem from the drastic Trump/Musk cuts to the National Institutes of Health, the National Science Foundation, the Environmental Protection Agency and other agencies that fund university researchers and coordinate the amazing research productivity of our nation.

Are there any people in our country besides President Donald Trump and Elon Musk who think this is a good idea or approve of Trump's handling of the economy? No, this is not a rhetorical question. Anybody? Trump's agenda goes unchallenged by Congress because 75% to 80% of conservatives continue to support him. To my Republican friends and neighbors, is there ever a point at which you decide the negatives outweigh the positives?

DAVID KIRSHNER
Baton Rouge

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