

## forum

COMMENTARY | LYNN LORENZ

# Reopening O.C. without Newsom's OK could worsen the public health crisis

I knew it was only a matter of time before the businessmen (excuse me, two women, 33 men) in Orange County joined together to try to push the Board of Supervisors to come up with a plan to reopen Orange County's economy more quickly than other counties ("Mailbag: It's time for the Orange County Board of Supervisors to cautiously restart the local economy," April 22).

I notice in their manifesto that they are not suggesting going through the proper channels by communicating with the governor because at this point they know he would turn them down. In fact, in their document, they



Gavin Newsom

is seen as the head of a small group of heroes who were the first to issue social distancing and stay-at-home orders.

He is the one who saved thousands of lives in California by creating successful measures that were used as guidelines in other

states. Most people know at least, to give credit where credit is due.

This group of 35 professionals, as far as I can ascertain, consists of only one doctor from Newport Beach.

They are appealing to the Board of Supervisors to be the sole decision makers as to when the county can declare an end to quarantine.

They say it will be done carefully. Seemingly, they are attempting subversion of the six-stage plan developed by Newsom with the help of healthcare leaders and specialists. There is no mention of it in their letter.

Newsom has promised to work

with local leaders as they follow the process for coming slowly out of quarantine.

He will be using the six criteria developed by health leaders and epidemiologists. Not one of these criterion has been met yet by Orange County.

One of the rationale this group uses is that the pandemic did not turn out as badly as predicted. Ironically, that is only because of Newsom's leadership and quick action, which saved thousand of lives in California and elsewhere.

So we are supposed to turn our fate over to a gaggle of businessmen who have no background in epidemiology and whose experi-

ence in handling epidemics is zero and turn our back on the governor who has saved thousands of lives by his skilled leadership?

We are just supposed to trust these men and the county supervisors to step in and take over without ours or the governor's blessing?

Having lots of money does not qualify us. We can bring the economy back but not the friends and family members we could lose by trying to end the quarantine too early.

LYNN LORENZ lives in Newport Beach.

COMMENTARY | ERIK SKINDRUD

## Surfers need to step up, shed irresponsibility during pandemic

On April 10, Huntington Beach-based *Surfline.com* recommended that surfers "shred at home."

Their guidelines told their readers to follow shelter-in-place orders, and if surfing is allowed, to stay local and be as careful as possible.

"We all need to act in the most socially responsible manner possible to bring an end to this once-in-a-generation pandemic," read *Surfline.com*'s official statement on surfing and the coronavirus.

"Surfing is no longer ethically or morally defensible," surf historian Matt Warshaw and author of "Encyclopedia of Surfing" opined in his newsletter earlier this month. "In non-pandemic times, I will defend to the death your right to be a selfish prick of a surfer... but not now."

Dozens of communities

around the world, in Australia, Spain and Portugal, Manhattan Beach, Trestles, Laguna Beach and elsewhere, have acted, instituting bans on beach and water access that remove all ambiguity from the question.

But one Southern California community bucks the trend: "HUNTINGTON BEACH... SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LAST BASTION OF SURF FREEDOM!" *BeachGrit.com* all-capped as its headline April 8.

Newport Beach continues to allow surfing, as do multiple other locations in Southern California and around the globe.

The problem with surfing now is the same as with all other kinds of compulsive, escape-the-coop activities. It allows the virus to slowly percolate and set the stage

for a second wave of outbreak.

"Second waves are inevitable in pandemics when you don't have a vaccine," public health expert Carlos del Rio told the Wall Street Journal this month. "Any disease when you have an epidemic, when you loosen up prevention, you'll have a second wave."

Del Rio heads the global health department at Emory University and was part of an advisory panel that advised the U.S. National Collegiate Athletic Association to halt sports seasons this spring.

Visit Huntington Beach on a good-surf day. You'll be astounded by the volume of surfers. There may be no other place in California where an outdoor activity is being pursued by similar crowds.

Photos taken on April 15

posted here show groupings of surfers reminiscent of ants converging on spilled food at Huntington Beach. Instead of charming, the images are scary and alarming.

More than 110 surfers are in the water in one April 15 image. Spanning approximately 1,500 feet of water, these surfers theoretically enjoy six feet of separation — but only if they don't paddle for the same wave, or narrowly miss each other while surfing, which frequently occurs.

Using epidemiological or science-based evidence to call out surfing risks — or absence thereof — does not yield definitive conclusions. Multiple debates have taken place, some rancorous, like one outlined April 11 in The Los Angeles Times, "A beach coronavirus warning meets a tidal wave of controversy,



A LETTER to the editor from Erik Skindrud argues that now is not the time to be surfing.

The San Diego Union-Tribune

and the test of science."

With evidence growing on the role "silent spreaders" play, experts almost universally urge caution before relaxing distance restrictions. Not doing so could spark second waves that claim hundreds or even thousands of lives in Southern California — including in higher-income beach communities.

One point we can make about surfers is they are

among the more noncompliant of social groups. It's no mistake that Australian sociologist and historian Mark Stranger points to "hedonistic" and "hooligan" elements in his landmark study, "Surfing Life."

Closing beach, water and boardwalk, as other communities have done, today falls outside Huntington Beach's action plan. Geogra-

See *Surfers*, page A6

# Finding peace in the storm

There's no need to fear for I'm your God.  
I'll give you strength. I'll help you.  
I'll hold you steady, keep a firm grip on you.

Isaiah 41:10, The Message Bible

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## Have a Say In Laguna's Future

Laguna Beach is one of the last original towns in Southern California, beloved for its dramatic coastline, art festivals and a tree-lined downtown filled with unique shops in charming buildings.



Recent proposals and projects could mean:

- Increased traffic and gridlock
- Reduced parking requirements, fewer spaces and neighborhood encroachment
- Removal of mature, healthy trees
- Increased view-blocking building heights
- Oversized, block-long projects
- Demolition of historic buildings

Laguna Residents First is an advocacy group working to get an initiative on the ballot that will give the Laguna voters the right to approve or deny any new major commercial development that exceeds established standards.

If you're registered to vote and are a resident of Laguna Beach, you can pre-register **now** to give Laguna voters the right to approve or deny major commercial projects.

This initiative will not change current commercial zoning but it will give the majority of voters the right to approve or deny any major commercial project.

To pre-register, donate or volunteer, please visit:  
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Laguna Residents First

LRF, P.O. Box 285, Laguna Beach, CA 92652

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