



January 26, 2021

Dear Yakima Health District Board of Directors:

We are in the middle of a pandemic and our national response has been a disaster. Our local response has also been no less of a failure. As of today, January 25, 2021, 25,000 people in Yakima County have been infected and 362 have died. That is a rate of 1 in 10 infected and 1 in 693 dead. For counties larger than a population of 2,500, we are the worst county in Washington. One small county in Oregon has a worse death rate than us. Here are some statistics gleaned from the NYT COVID

page: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/coronavirus-us-cases.html>

	Infection Rate	Death Rate
King County (Seattle)	1 in 30	1 in 1,845
Spokane County (Spokane)	1 in 16	1 in 1,094
Kittitas (Ellensburg)	1 in 24	1 in 1,598
Clackamas (Portland)	1 in 35	1 in 2,884
Yakima	1 in 10	1 in 693

This is a failure of local leadership. Our county commissioners have failed and they must be held to account. For the last ten months the county leaders have been silent, dithered concerning their role, attacked the governor, not helped with the public health crisis, encouraged people to break quarantine, get out and shop, and not led on masks. For them to change the governing rules of the Board of Health at this time in an attempt to circumvent common-sense public health policy and procedure is an outrage. It is ridiculous that they pushed this change through without giving the board prior notice. All of a sudden Barbara Harrer and Gail Weaver are out, after years of faithful public service. Are term limits applied to the county commissioners or only to those who oppose their agenda?

Since we're on a roll, it's past time that the Board of Health remove the racist mural at the Yakima County Health District, located at 1210 Ahtanum Ridge Dr. In the waiting area, there is a mural with two white farmers standing and admiring their crop and bounty, while a brown, Native-appearing man, kneels before them to work the earth. Imagine being in Atlanta, GA or Jackson, MS and seeing a similar mural with two white men admiring their cotton field while a black man kneels before them to pick cotton. That kind of art might fly in the 1950s, but community outrage would demand its removal today. Consider every brown family that enters the office for birth records or death certificates and they are blasted with the implicit message: "white people are in charge and brown people are the workers."

Respectfully,

*Friends of Toppenish Creek*

3142 Signal Peak Road  
White Swan, WA 98952