

Drunken driving bills inadequate

The Oregon Legislature wants to crack down on drinking and driving.

Congratulations, Salem. No one wants drivers on the road and any effort to save lives is good. But the dozen or so bills introduced at this legislative session miss the point.

Expensive bills that swing on the verge of constitutionality won't solve the problem. Focus on preventative efforts instead.

One of the bills recently introduced would require urine samples for drivers suspected of drunken driving. The "urine bill" would allow an officer to request a urine sample. If the driver were to refuse, his license could be suspended.

This bill seems impractical and will no doubt be challenged as a violation of civil liberties. Would the driver be required to pee in a cup in the middle of the street, or would the state have to use up its already diminishing police resources to bring every suspected drunken driver to police headquarters?

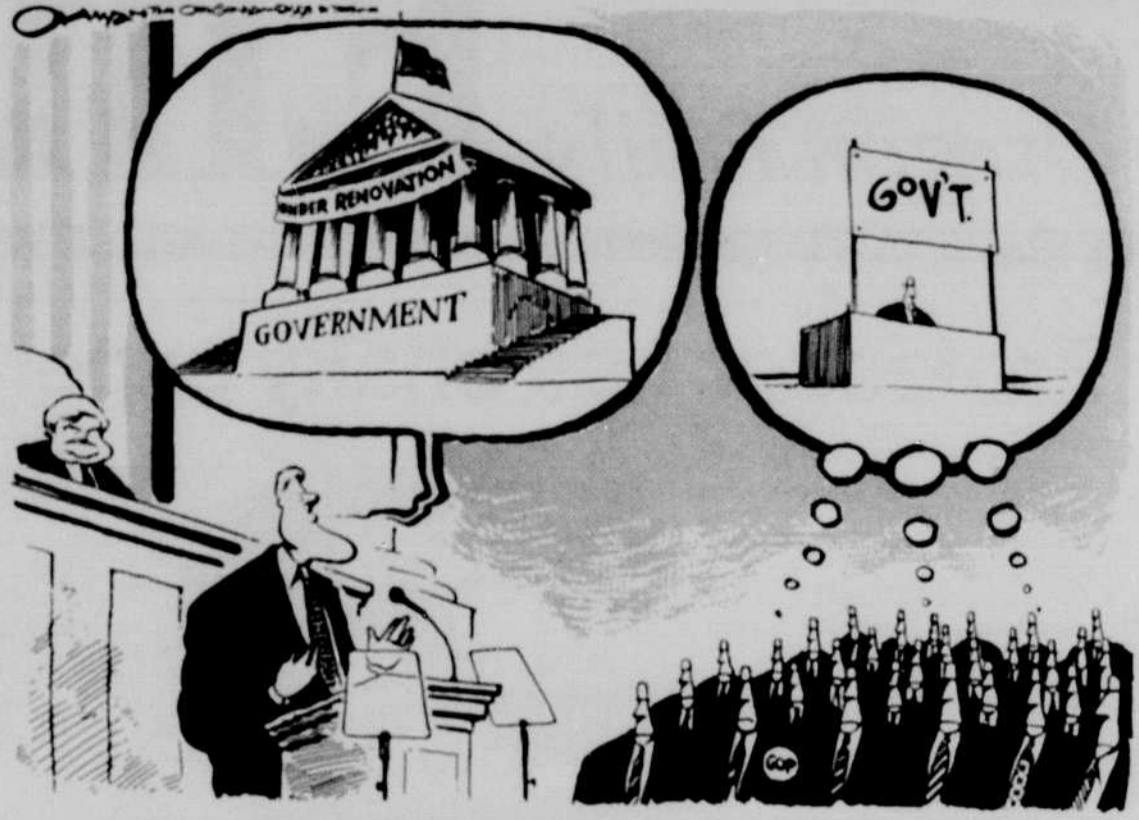
Another bill would allow vehicle forfeitures for repeat offenders. Authorities statewide would have the opportunity to seize vehicles. A state automobile junkyard isn't the best deterrent for drivers, especially for repeat offenders who are already unfazed by stiff penalties and will probably find a way around the law. Also, what happens if the repeat offender is driving someone else's vehicle? Where will the lines be drawn?

Other bills proposed would require emergency room workers to report drivers with high blood-alcohol levels after they are injured in accidents and would increase penalties for drunken drivers who have children or handicapped people as passengers. These two bills seem more practical than urine samples and auto junkyards. Any drunk driver caught with children should definitely receive the stiffest penalties possible. However, the Legislature needs a more preventative approach.

The problem with most of the bills introduced is that they only deal with drivers after they have been on the road — after they have endangered millions of lives. What about spending money to stop drivers from getting behind the wheel?

Police officers could patrol parking lots of bars, parties or other areas, where people are likely to drink, to stop people before they open a car door. Someone offering a ride home would be cheaper and easier than forced urine tests. Imagine the lives that would be saved.

Police also need to educate drivers, especially young drivers. At one high school where a number of teens had been killed from drinking and driving accidents, police showed students videos of the accident scenes where their peers died. It's time to remember that the number one goal is saving lives, not abusing police power.



COMMENTARY

49ers best team in football history



PRIMO A. J. FONTANA

This week, I'm going to write about something more important than any of the political garbage I usually discuss.

Of course, that would have to be the San Francisco 49ers.

I'm not going to mention scores, broken records, stats or any of the numbers over which we have poured since the Super Bowl. It suffices to say that for one hour, it was unquestionably the finest team in the world's greatest sport (that's right soccer fans, football is the greatest; all of the ephemeral World Cup hype of this summer was as empty as a flat tire).

Sports is the last bastion of American life in which only the best are rewarded. Unlike the arts, politics or any other facet of our culture, athletics (boxing and college football excluded) is the only one in which one team or person can prove they are truly the best of the best.

This is what San Francisco did with such authority on Sunday, retaking its rightful throne atop the NFL.

Steve Young, bless him, finally broke the curse of Montana. As a native San Franciscan, I can attest to the fact that no matter what he had accomplished before Sunday, the city always reminded Young that he could never replace Joe.

In any other city in the country, including Dallas and Miami, Young would be the unquestioned starter and civic hero. But in the city by the bay, he was just a replacement for the fallen deity of Super Bowls past.

In a way, this was understandable. Everybody knows that in his day, Joe was the greatest, period. No questions, no doubts, no Marino, no Bradshaw, no nothing. It has always

been and forever shall be Joe Montana as the pinnacle of greatness in the world of football.

Joe knows it, Young knows it, you know it, I know it. Heck, people in Madagascar probably know it.

But now, with the ring on his finger, Young is his own quarterback, no longer a stand-in for Montana or a footnote in the annals of 49er history.

Coach George Seifert has also finally earned himself some respect. Even though he has had the best winning percentage of any coach (okay, there's one fact, sue me), many have questioned his coaching ability, saying the NFL Championship that he won during his first season was simply the result of the careful planning during the Walsh years that preceded his tenure.

This time, it was different. This 49er squad may have had some familiar faces from the Walsh era, but this was a team built from Seifert's organization, a victory that was his and his alone, finally standing outside of the long shadow of the mighty Walsh, the greatest coach in professional football history.

Jerry Rice suited up and played on Sunday. Need I say more?

Ricky Watters and the other offensive skill players proved to be among the greatest assembled, providing Young with more weapons than an NRA convention in Oklahoma.

The defense, thanks to hot rookies and some great acquisitions during the off-season, continued, as through the regular season, to be one of the NFL's elite squads.

However, all of the previously mentioned players of this drama needed one final spark to assure their victory. During the past few years, everything has seemingly been in place on paper, but the team simply lacked an undefinable something.

This year, a few of games into the season, that missing element arrived and made an impact that could never be measured in

numbers or stats.

As you've probably guessed, I'm talking about this year's Defensive Player of the Year, Deion "Prime Time" Sanders.

Sanders gave San Francisco a heart, an identity, a flash of brilliance and originality to compliment the team's stringent work ethic.

His flash, pizzazz and in-your-face attitude spread like a virus around the team. The usually conservative Young started to spike the ball after touchdowns and get into the faces of his opponents, former meat-and-potatoes players like linebacker Gary Plummer learned how to dance on the field and celebrate their accomplishments, the whole team seemed to shave a few years off their lives.

Basically, the Niners started to have fun. All of this thanks to the "do rag" (as he calls the red bandana he wears on his head) and gold jewelry-wearing two-sport star from Florida State.

Prime Time was the last necessary step to greatness, and when he took his place, boy were they great.

We all saw what this demolition crew did to its unworthy opponents. The sheer brutality was so epic it made Quentin Tarantino's festivals of gore look like Disney cartoons, simply because its talents were so pronounced in comparison to those of the sacrificial lambs that were placed upon the altar.

The 49ers have shown that proper structure and organization, team spirit, talent, hard work, soul and a little good luck can go quite a long way.

Our generation especially should take note of what was accomplished. Being a whiny "slacker," although trendy, is idiotic.

Winning those victories in the competitions that we face every day of our lives, and even more importantly enjoying and appreciating the hard work that gaining them takes, is what life is all about.

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