

Banned in the USA



OUR OPINION:
The proposal to put a federal ban on advertising distilled beverages both violates freedom of speech and fails to deal with the more influential beer and wine advertisements

Liquor has no business with kids." While few would disagree with this statement that President Clinton made last week, many would disagree with the means by which the President hopes to take to achieve this goal.

In order to ensure that young people are protected from the dangers of alcohol, Clinton is planning to enact a federal ban on hard alcohol companies airing television ads. For 50 years, distillers of hard alcohol imposed a self-regulated ban on television commercials, but recently, after some distillers began airing commercials, the industry voted to lift the ban.

The proposal for a federal ban on hard alcohol raises several problems. First, there is the issue of First Amendment rights and what power the government should have in limiting what can be advertised. Second is the apparent hypocrisy behind banning hard alcohol advertisements while continuing to allow beer and wine companies to spend millions every year on television spots.

The right to free speech is one of the fundamental liberties we, as Americans, value. The First Amendment was created to ensure that all people, no matter how unpopular their message, should be allowed to voice their views. Popular opinions, after all, don't need to be protected by the Constitution.

For better or worse, hard alcohol com-

panies create a product that many people enjoy using. While the government has every right to try and educate people on the dangers of alcohol, they do not have the right to censor those who wish to promote it.

If consumers want to buy hard alcohol products, distillers have the right to get information out about their product. Of course they already are doing that through magazine ads, billboards, T-shirts and other advertisement avenues. Creating television ads would only add to the ad campaigns already being run.

Of course the biggest problem with banning hard alcohol advertisements for the sake of protecting children from alcohol is that it would do nothing to limit the amount of beer and wine ads aired on television.

If Clinton is really concerned with protecting youth from alcohol, why not go af-

ter the alcoholic beverage most abused by youth — beer. Beer advertisements flood the airways every day and probably have more influence on young people than hard alcohol ads ever will. After all, most people don't start off drinking straight vodka. They start with "softer" alcoholic beverages like beer and wine.

Alcohol is alcohol. Whether it comes in the form of a malt or distilled beverages, its effect on the body is the same. So why ban one form of advertising while placing no regulations on the other?

While the government shouldn't place an all-out ban on hard alcohol products, it would be wise, due to the nature of the product, to place regulations on advertisements. Allowing ads to air only at night when most kids are sleeping or placing warnings and disclaimers on advertisements are two ways the government can protect young people without violating the First Amendment.

However, these restrictions, if enacted, should be universal for all alcoholic beverages. That includes beer and wine, which are just as harmful to young people. If Clinton isn't willing to regulate beer advertisements, he has no right to try and regulate hard alcohol ads. After all, all alcohol is essentially equal.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board.

BACKGROUND

In November of 1996, distillers voted to lift a 50-year, self-imposed ban on any radio or television advertisements. The decision was made after Seagram's, a producer of hard alcohol, began airing advertisements in Texas. Since the announced decision, the Federal Communications Commission has remained deadlocked over whether or not to launch an official inquiry.

LETTERS

Open ASUO

I thank the *Emerald* for reporting on the EMU Board meeting that allocated \$50,000 for the proposed amphitheater, but it seems to me that it would be more in line with the interests of students in general if someone either from the ASUO or the *Emerald* could manage to publicize important steps being taken by the Executive to spend our money.

There is a pattern of behavior here, folks. We've got ASUO Vice President Glen Banfield admitting that he decided to just not be around Suite 4 after the basketball seat-denial incident, and now, a flat-out denial of student input in a process creeping forward inexorably toward wasting \$300,000 to pat ASUO and its friends in the administration on the back.

President Matt Scotten and Glen Banfield have managed to work with supporters to gather more money for their pet project without getting any substantial input from students. Let's see how long it takes them to say that the idea was a product of a committee, rather than their own.

The average student does not have the time or the energy to play detective in the ASUO office on a daily basis to find out

what the hell is going on in there. A little more consideration and a little more forthrightness with actions that are less than popular, if the Executive really believes what it's doing is right, is in order.

Selena Brewington
Computer Science

Select quality

It seems to me that the quality of my professors affects me much more than the quality of the University basketball coach. So why did we pay Jerry Green \$250,000 when the average teaching faculty salary is something like \$40,000?

Derek Schutt
Geology

Footnotes perception

I'd like to set the record straight by saying that Footnotes does not support discrimination of any kind, political or otherwise, on this campus. Footnotes is run by students, for the benefit of all students.

The whole Jenna Wasson subscription incident is regrettable, only because it has served to mask the real intention of many EMU Board members — that of booting Footnotes from the EMU. The political

games continue, as the reason Footnotes Board members were not present at the EMU Board meeting on Wednesday was because board members did not find out about it until the day of the meeting.

As an organization, we want only to be treated fairly by the EMU and be allowed adequate space to serve the academic needs of the university. On a personal note, I find it somewhat ironic that the EMU Board can give away \$50,000 of student money for a concrete courtyard, but can't bring themselves to give even third-rate treatment to a non-profit, student-run and academically focused campus organization.

Devon London
Footnotes Board

Earth story

Passing by a copy of "OSPIRG Impact" in the Honors College, I was struck by a headline: "Students organize for the earth's sake." Does anyone ever stop to think about these things before they print them? OSPIRG's statement doesn't make any sense.

What does it mean to act "for the sake of the earth?" Will the Earth notice? Does it care? The Earth is a rock, made of molten nickel, hurtling through space. If your ac-

tions are performed in the name of a rock, then you're an idiot in the most literal sense. You're the picture of the insane man on the street, babbling to a tree, a wall, a cloud, which cannot and does not respond to your pleas.

This kind of thing makes me wonder whether we've ever moved past tribal animism at all. Do we still worship the objects around us, investing them with spiritual characteristics and magical properties? In terms of religion, has our society come full circle? It makes far more sense to organize for our sake, as conscious, sentient beings aware of our actions and capable of response, than to live our lives in relation to the imagined needs or desires of the rock upon which we happen to live.

Modern pantheism is rife with contradictions and difficulties; it's completely irrational, meets no objective criteria and is unsuited for a supposedly educated population. Given this, and the tendency of the University community to disregard organized religion for its supposed deficiencies, one wonders whether the student population ever really thinks at all.

Colby Phillips
Journalism