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# COMMENTARY

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Tuesday, October 30, 2001

## Editorial

### Let ethics regulate decisions

How are a tuxedo rental, plane tickets to the Aloha Bowl and a car insurance deductible classified as appropriate "work-related expenses"? We're still wondering the same thing. However, a state ethics panel last week dismissed complaints filed earlier this year against seven University employees, voting that the University Foundation money they received was legitimately spent.

The panel went on to note that the expenses may have been unusual, but they weren't illegal, driving home the old adage that following the letter of the law may not indicate the most ethical behavior. Illegal or not, we still think the spending was unnecessary and unethical.

It seems wrong somehow that it is OK for the University to foot the bill for luxuries such as catering for office parties, while students at the University are forced to pay for the most basic items, such as Scantrons and even class schedules. It just doesn't add up.

At a University where countless courses teach us that ethical behavior and acting within the boundaries of the law aren't always one and the same, and at a University that tries to instill a secular sense of ethical behavior, it is disheartening, if not surprising, that the case was dismissed.

Choices should be based on what is right, regardless of whether the law deems it legitimate.

### Editorial Policy

These editorials represent the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailymerald.com.

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Please include contact information. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

## WELCOME TO THE DEPARTMENT OF INEBRIATE LICENSING

A journalism class research project on the first American drug epidemic got me thinking about how to solve the drug problem while maintaining an individual's right to get blitzed. Here's what I came up with. It's a bit impractical given our current political/cultural climate, so I will call this column "If I Ruled the World."



Aaron Rorick  
 Columnist

If I ruled the world, I would commission a panel of doctors, chemists, textbook writers and hard-core drug users to create authoritative manuals on each and every drug that is used recreationally. Each manual would contain everything there is to know about the given substance, and I don't mean the D.A.R.E., scare-you-straight propaganda they feed us in school. These manuals would contain facts; facts on positive and negative side effects, facts on addictive properties, facts on the correct dosages for different desired effects with body weight factored in, and so on and so forth. Upon completion, I would sell the manuals to bookstores where they could be purchased, for a modest price, by any curious individual over the age of 18.

I would also repeal drug regulations and allow the major pharmaceutical companies, with the correct licensing, to traffic in "street drugs" once again. Because Bayer, Lilly and Pfizer can pay marijuana, coca and opium producers much more than drug cartels and crooked governments do now, the black market for these drugs would disappear and many third-world countries would get a major boost to their economies at the same time. Amphetamines, Ecstasy and LSD would still be cheap enough to make locally, but I can't see many people buying a sack of crank made in Bubba Ray's bathtub when legal, better quality stuff is available at Walgreens.

I would then set up offices for the newly



Steve Baggs Emerald

created Department of Inebriate Licensing, or DIL for short, in every county, province and district. In the United States, I figure the easiest way to go would be to wall off a section of the DMV, which already has offices in every county in the nation. Anyone who wants to use a narcotic for non-medical purposes and has thoroughly studied the corresponding manual would then go to the local DIL office and take a test. The test would be long and difficult, but if a person is able to pass it, he or she would be declared an expert on the substance in question and be issued a license to purchase and consume that substance in any way they see fit.

To pay for all this, I would tax the hell out of everyone, every step of the way. Any narcotic purchased with a DIL card (as opposed to a prescription) would be considered a luxury item and taxed as such. The profits from the manuals and

licenses, when combined with the taxes paid by the pharmaceutical companies, the pharmacists and finally John Q. Junkie himself, would be more than enough to pay for the entire project.

Eventually I would regulate all drugs this way, from alcohol to angel dust, earning my government untold amounts of money. Or maybe people would be turned off by the manuals and the warning labels and the stigma surrounding drug use for pleasure, and the number of drug users would decline. Either way the problem is solved. No more crime and violence surrounding the drug trade. No more people overdosing on meth cut with Ajax, or on Ecstasy that's not really Ecstasy. I know it will never happen, but "If I ruled the world ..."

Aaron Rorick is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald. His views do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald. He can be reached at aaronrorick@dailymerald.com.

## Letters to the editor

### Vote 'No' on Measure 20-54

Some politicians say, "The money is there," for the West Eugene Parkway, but show us the money!

Although TransPlan includes \$17 million for the first phase of the Parkway, it doesn't include the \$71 million needed for the other three phases, as is clear from the text of Measure 20-54.

Because funds for roads are severely limited, we must set priorities. After 10 years of planning and public involvement, the conclusion of TransPlan is that making our existing roads safer is more important than building new roads.

TransPlan directs funding to higher priority projects, such as needed safety improvements at the Beltline/I-5 and Beltline/Delta interchanges. TransPlan doesn't fund lower priority projects, such as the other three phases of the Parkway.

Because these phases ranked 15th, 20th and dead last out of 28 major projects, they failed to make the funding cut.

So why do some politicians say we can have our cake and eat it, too? Are they willing to forgo needed safety improvements to build the Parkway? If voters approve the Parkway, will they then ask for higher taxes to pay for it?

I don't know, but if the money was there for the Parkway, it would be in TransPlan. The money is not there! Join me in voting "No" on Measure 20-54, and hold on to your wallet!

Robert Zako  
 Eugene

### Statistics show marijuana is not a highway risk

I want to call to your attention an error in Tara Debenham's column ("There's no hope with dope," ODE, 10/15). She wrote, "I've heard the

drug hinders short term memory and makes coordination difficult, increasing car accidents."

Marijuana intoxication's effect on the rate of auto accidents has been studied by professional highway safety statisticians for the last 15 years. At least five studies have been published in different countries that reached the same conclusion: The adjusted statistical risk index for drivers on marijuana is roughly the same as drivers who are sober. Drivers on pot seem to cause accidents at the same adjusted rate as sober drivers. Marijuana doesn't increase the risk of accidents.

A study in America a few years ago showed while marijuana intoxication does cause a small impairment in reflexes and tracking, it also causes users to perceive the impairment and drive conservatively.

Drivers on marijuana were less likely than sober drivers to engage in aggressive, risky driving, such as

passing other cars, excessive lane changing and tailgating.

The effects cancel each other out, leaving the average driver on pot as statistically safe on the road as the average driver not stoned on anything.

This explains why auto safety statisticians in four countries found marijuana is not an identifiable highway safety risk in their statistics.

The error needs to be corrected, because highway safety involves life and death. We need to pay attention to facts, even when they seem to go against our social and political instincts.

Patricia Schwarz  
 Pasadena, Calif.

### Students should question 'shady energy fee'

During the presidential campaign of 2000, many of us were introduced to the term "fuzzy math." Time for another lesson. This one

is "shady" math.

Last summer, the Oregon University System instituted an energy surcharge in order to compensate for rising energy costs. Over the next two years students will shell out \$30 per term towards what the Associated Students of the University of Oregon have termed the "Shady Energy Fee."

While OUS has estimated the escalation in energy costs at about \$7 million to \$12 million, statewide the fee is expected to rake in \$24 million. The coming 6.6 percent tuition increase will surely be too great for some students to keep up with.

Most aggravating about the new fee is that it was imposed during the summer, keeping the student voice out of debate. Fortunately, fall has arrived, and it is time for students to act.

Adam Petkun  
 freshman  
 ASUO Intern