

COMMENTARY

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Editorial

Republicans, Democrats need to compromise to show leadership

So the election is over, and the pundits have been, well, pundit-ing with impunity about what a Republican victory means. It would be nearly impossible to factor in all the reasons for a GOP sweep of Congress, and we won't try. It's more important to look toward future governance.

Be careful, Grand Old Party. Do not assume, as the Newt Gingrich-led caucus did in 1994, that a razor-thin margin of victory against favored Democrats in a few states — in a country remarkably split down the very middle on most public policy issues — means you have a mandate. There is no mandate in a 51-49 vote.

Pundits have been cautioning this same sentiment, but most of them have used "bad strategy" as the rationale. It would be politically unwise, they say, to force an agenda with which half of the country disagrees. Doing so could cause a GOP backlash in 2004.

We have a slightly different take on this counsel. Republicans must not run over the Democrats in enacting ideologically driven policy because, very simply, it would be poor governance to do so. If the populace is to believe GOP acceptance speeches and campaign messages, then it needs to govern from a position of moderate compromise.

Here, then, is a shining opportunity for Republicans to prove they are reasonable, just and enlightened leaders.

As a postscript, we offer similar advice to Democrats, especially in the Oregon and U.S. senates, both of which are split nearly in half. Democrats must not hold up all legislation in parliamentary red tape simply because they can. Politicians look pathetic when they act surly after losing. Be bigger leaders, everyone, and help find compromise for a bitterly divided electorate.

County measures need voter support

Usually, we don't keep writing on measures after their passage or defeat. Yet we feel very strongly about the defeat of three important county measures that could have improved public safety. These measures were not about Republicans or Democrats — they were about the public good.

Measure 20-59, which would have built a new intake center with more beds for the county jail; Measure 20-60, which would have upgraded the sheriff's outdated communication system; and Measure 20-62, which would have built a new building for the county's public health department, were all defeated.

The Register-Guard posited that they were defeated by voters unwilling to pay a little extra property tax to aid the common good. For those voters, we ask: If paying that extra \$28 to \$47 in taxes is an unbearable hardship, then what of 4-year-old Kathryn Peters, who died in a fire in Springfield because the nearest station wasn't funded?

If apathy defeated these measures instead, then we hope these measures are brought before voters again with more focused campaigns. Our guess is that voters will not be apathetic if the county experiences another outbreak of E. coli, or if more violent criminals are "matrized" out of Lane County jails because there were not enough beds to hold them overnight.

County officials should put these measures on the ballot again and run strong campaigns. And county residents need not wait for another young child to die before voting yes.

Editorial policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com.

Smoke-filled logic

As you probably already know, Ballot Measure 20 recently passed with overwhelming support, giving Oregonians a 60-cent tax increase on every pack of cigarettes they buy. This measure assumes that smokers can and should be penalized for choosing to do something that society looks down on.

People who smoke cigarettes do have statistically higher health care costs than the average citizen. So do people who overeat. According to the Surgeon General, obesity is responsible for 300,000 premature deaths every year, compared to the 400,000 attributed to smoking.

Obesity among adults has doubled since 1980. While smoking may be slightly deadlier right now, if current trends continue, there soon will be more fatalities from overeating than from diseases related to smoking.

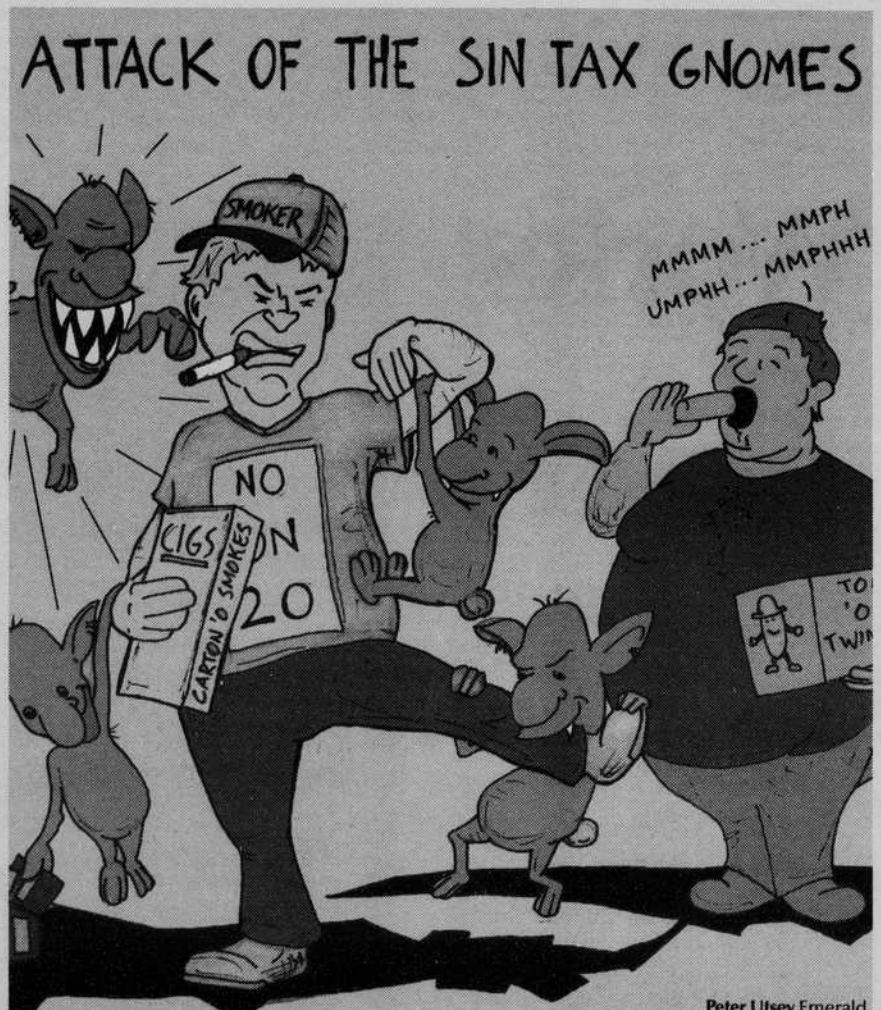
Type 2 Diabetes increases the risk of stroke, blindness and may even result in parts of your body being amputated. This disease used to be referred to as adult-onset diabetes. That term no longer accurately describes Type 2 Diabetes. In 1993, children accounted for 5 percent of the diagnosed cases. Now, nearly half of new cases occur among children, with the national total for all age groups approaching 16 million. Hereditary vulnerability can be a factor, but this disease is primarily caused by overeating and poor diet.

The last time I checked, we lived in a free country. Smoking a cigarette should not make you any more a target for state-sponsored persecution than gorging yourself on Twinkies, or any other way of abusing your body.

Jean Celman passed away at age 122. The Guinness Book of World Records listed Celman as the oldest human to ever live. She also smoked a pack of cigarettes every day for 105 years. A beef rancher who lived in the Himalayan Mountains smoked two packs a day for 120 years and lived to the ripe old age of 141.



M. Reilly
 Cosgrove
 Separate this



Peter Utsey Emerald

Smoking harms your body, but you won't drop dead from it after one puff. In 1914, Popular Mechanics published a report stating that the element selenium, a popular dietary supplement, could prevent or even cure cancer in farm animals. In a recent study done by the University of Arizona, taking selenium resulted in a 48 percent reduction of the risk of contracting lung cancer.

Smokers' inalienable right to the pursuit of happiness shouldn't come with a price tag. Even if you don't smoke, even if you hate the smell of people who do smoke, standing up against policies like this one that infringe on basic rights and attempt to make quality judgments on people benefits you, too. Next time, you might be the object of some overzealous socialist program telling you how to run your life.

Since before the American Revolution, our forefathers have refused to be taxed without representation. If people who smoke cigarettes, or any group of people, are specifically and exclusively targeted by a tax, then they should be given special representation in government.

Will we see a seat in the Oregon House of Representative designated for a smoker to help decide how the money being collected from his constituents will be spent? I don't think so. Just because "sin taxes" like Measure 20 are passed by voters does not make them morally or legally justified. Our state government should not use popularity contests to vilify and exploit any segment of society.

Contact the columnist at michaelcosgrove@dailyemerald.com. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Thanks, Harry

I would like to extend my thanks to Harry Battson — what is an "associate vice president of strategic communications" anyway? Sounds like a Phil Knight stormtrooper to me — for "allowing" student groups to "associate themselves formally with the brand of the University."

Funny, I thought the University was an educational institution, but that doesn't look quite so spiffy on a T-shirt.

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Online poll

Each Monday, the Emerald publishes the previous week's poll results and the coming week's poll question. Visit www.dailyemerald.com to vote.

Last week: Should student-funded programs be forced to use the "O" logo?

Results: 77 total votes

Yes, but at the University's expense — 20.8 percent, or 16 votes

Yes, at their own expense — 13 percent, or 10 votes

No, the student groups should be

free to choose — 58.4 percent, or 45 votes

Don't know — 2.6 percent, or 2 votes

Leave me alone! — 5.2 percent, or 4 votes

This week: Should the DEA seize medical marijuana plants in Oregon?

Choices: No — Legalize marijuana use!; No — The feds should stay out of state searches; Yes — National law supersedes state law; Yes — Drugs ruin lives; Don't know; Leave me alone!