

Speed now--pay later

BRAD ZIMMERMAN
Co-Editor-in-Chief

Law-breakers beware: was your photo taken last week?

Last week Clackamas' campus police obtained a photo-radar machine and had it on campus for the entire week.

"We just want to remind students that there is a speed limit," said Public Safety Sergeant Larry Dexheimer.

Anyone who is found speeding will be issued a ticket, which makes me wonder: what's the point?

The problem with photo-radar, in my opinion, goes to the heart of the matter with how America handles the enforcement of its laws.

I thought that the purpose of law enforcement was to enforce our nation's laws, not just fine people when they break a law.

But just fining people for breaking a law is a lot more profitable than having a bunch of cops on patrol. The cost of a photo-radar machine may be initially expensive but probably pays itself off quickly with tickets. This must be especially true in Oregon,

where speeding fines are high compared to the rest of the region.

A problem with photo-radar is that it doesn't really prevent speeding. On the other hand, if a cop pulls you over for 15 minutes, all upset with his lights flashing, and he is asking you to come up with a decent or believable reason for speeding, well, it's an embarrassment. You probably won't speed for at least an hour after getting pulled over.

A photo-radar, however, basically just says you are doing 65 in a 55 and lets you continue speeding. If a photo radar tells me that I'm doing 65 in a 55, I know I'm going to be fined, so I might as well just continue on my illegal way. I certainly won't slow down at that point.

There's another problem: how soon before the law enforcement starts charging citizens for a wider variety of crimes? Possession of an illegal substance could garner a hefty fine (I suggest \$10,000).

Breaking and entering could be \$50,000. No more jail time--the justice system doesn't make any money off of jail time unless prisoners are used as some sort of slave labor.

The bad news is, this sort of system is already in place, to a degree. When two citizens are involved in a conflict and the resolution is that one citizen has to pay the other citizen a certain amount of money, a payment plan is implemented. Of course, the justice system doesn't care if citizen X pays citizen Y his or her money, because the justice system isn't making any money off of that process.

In the case of a speeding ticket (or something greater, in the future), however, you can be sure that if you don't pay the ticket will go to warrant and eventually a SWAT team will bust you for not paying that \$75 ticket. Hey, they've got to make a living.

Basically, the problem with photo-radar is that it doesn't prevent speeding. In fact, the only thing it does is charge people for going fast. It's no surprise, however, that the law enforcement community is moving towards that sort of model. It's kind of like a toll charge. At the very least, though, the cops that used to just sit around waiting for a speeder to fly by can get around to preventing real crimes from occurring.

Club	Advisor	Ext.
Cheerleading and dance club	Amy Lundy	2250
Snowboarding and ski club	Bob Misley	2376
Racquetball club	Kathie Woods	2418
Baptist student ministries	Amy Lundy	2250
FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes)	Kathie Woods	2418
Writers' Club	Allen Widerburg	2359
Phi Theta Kappa	Dave Arter	2210
Coyote Circle (Native American Club)	Laney Fouse	2813
Horticulture Club	Elizabeth Howley	2389
Circle K Club	Amy Lundy	2250
Spanish Club	Carlota Holley	2381
Speech Club	Kelly Brennan	2726
Campus Crusade for Christ	Amy Lundy	2250

Get educated on the issues or don't vote

MIKE GARCIA
Staff Writer

On November 4, the people of Oregon exercised their American right and retained the assisted suicide law.

Is it just me, or is that whole concept just a little creepy?

I'm speaking of the "American right" phrase, not the newly-affirmed law. I have no right to malign the law. Nor do I wish to endorse it. The pros and cons will probably be rehashed for decades. If I took a side, no doubt a reader or two would remind me that my opinion isn't important. It's not my place to judge, the reader would say, and he or she would be absolutely right. I shouldn't legislate morality.

But wait a minute: isn't that what we just did?

Democracy can be quite an ego-boosting concept. We're allowed to play God, in a sense. The majority has spoken, and now our statutes allow the controversial procedure of assisted suicide to be performed with no legal consequences.

Think about the reasoning behind this. If one person traveled around the state advocating assisted suicide and all of us disagreed with him, we'd probably label him a crackpot, or more pointedly, a moral degenerate. "He's wrong," we'd say without reservation. "Assisted suicide is wrong. Only one guy believes in it. It must be wrong."

But for some reason all we have to do is add a bunch of people to him, and suddenly it's right. Hmm. It's right because we agree? What if we're all a bunch of crackpots and moral degenerates? At what percentage of voters do we cross over from wrong to right? I don't think I've ever seen a 50% consensus clause in the Ten Commandments.

Simply put, I don't think laws in the gray areas of morality should be put to a vote. With all due respect to public intelligence, we're not really in a position to decide these kinds of things.

Naturally, anyone who works in politics would challenge me with the idea of constitutional right. Our forefathers fought long and hard to make us a republic. July fourth is Independence Day. The Star Spangled Banner in triumph doth wave o'er the land of the free and the home of the brave.

It's a cozy, hoary old chestnut, that idea of freedom of choice. It's a part of the American dream and the American spirit. But, unfortunately, it still doesn't have much to do with morality. Anyone who works in politics would probably also admit that his or her workplace is not a haven for the most principled men in the world.

It's been proven, I think, that those who have been well educated in certain areas are best equipped to take them to the next level. Scientists advance the theories of science. Architects perfect architecture. Our system of electing representatives insures that those who have spent years studying law are the ones who make new ones.

When it comes to issues like measure 51, though, who is the expert? One could argue that ministers, who specialize in morality, should guide us. Or maybe we should let our conscience be our guide.

Then again, maybe you'd rather put your trust in the American flag and democracy than in the words of Jiminy Cricket. Maybe there's no such thing as a conscience. In fact, the closest thing to a conscience I can think of is the queasiness I feel when someone says the following words to me:

"I don't know anything about candidate so-and-so, but he looks like a good guy, so I'm voting for him."

He looks like a good guy.

I have heard those exact words before, and they made me ask, "So, if everyone voted like you, would Washington be overrun with ignorant yet photogenic politicians? Would you choose David Schwimmer over Norman

Schwarzkopf?"

Here are a few more scary comments I've picked up: "This measure is about schools and I'm in favor of schools, so I'm voting for it"; "This guy's the Democratic school board candidate and I'm a registered Democrat, so I'm voting for him"; and my favorite, "I like what I saw on TV supporting this ad, so I'm voting for it."

What if that school measure is cutting down on classes to benefit schools monetarily, and you never got around to reading that little detail? What if your Democratic school board candidate moonlights as the owner of a strip club, and you never took the time to read that paragraph of his bio? And—gulp—what if not everything you see on TV is true?

If I sound belittling to anyone, please accept my apology and take some time to consider why campaign financing is such a big issue nowadays.

Often the money spent on a campaign influences the public as much the candidate's personal views. Why? Because enough of the American public is too lazy to do its homework before voting. Enough of the public, perhaps, to throw the vote.

I am not casting the first stone here. I'll admit I'm lazy, too. Sometimes all the details of a property-tax law escape me or go over my head or bore me. Sometimes I don't know the difference between Candidate A and Candidate B. Maybe I can't really conjure up a strong opinion about a certain environmental law. But my civil-rights vote has as much weight as Jesse Jackson's.

That's why I've made the decision not to vote.

I don't see the need to compound my irresponsibility. Despite our patriotic fervor, the importance of the vote is taken for granted. We who haven't taken the time to learn about the issues should either make the time to learn or keep our ignorant ballots out of the box.

Voting is not a game. The results drastically affect our lives. If you're not going to take it seriously, you might be shortchanging all of us. Lazy Americans, do us all a favor: join me in exercising my right not to vote. Let those who know what's at stake make the decisions. It could only change things for the better.

■ For the Thanksgiving Holiday the college will be closed.
Thursday-Sunday
Nov. 27-30.
No evening classes (after 4 p.m.) on
Wed. Nov 26.

■ For the Christmas holiday the college will be closed.
Thursday-Sunday Dec.
25-28.
New Year's Day-Thursday
Jan. 1.

■ For Martin Luther King Jr. Day the college will be closed
Monday Jan. 19.

Dates to remember