

Healthy U News:

by Nicole Rensenbrink

It’s election time again, time to exercise that important right we have to express our views through voting. In honor of that, I thought I’d do a little Wikipedia search of party definitions to help those who might want to better understand their professed differences. Here’s what I found:

The Republican Party is commonly referred to as the GOP (Grand Old Party). It was founded in 1854 and dominated politics nationally and in the majority of northern States for most of the period between 1860 and 1932. Its platform supports free market capitalism, free enterprise, business, a strong national defense, deregulation, restrictions on labor unions, socially conservative policies (particularly opposition to abortion and same sex marriage), and traditional values. The party’s core support comes from the southern and western Mountain States, as well as conservative evangelical Christians and conservative Catholics.

The Democratic Party traces its heritage back to Thomas Jefferson’s time. The modern-day version was founded around 1828, making it the world’s oldest active party. The party’s philosophy advocates social and economic equality enforced by government intervention when needed. These interventions include social programs, support for labor unions, movement toward universal health care, equal opportunity, consumer protection and environmental protection, forming the core of the party’s economic policy. The modern liberal philosophy strongly endorses government spending on programs such as education, health care and welfare. Social issues include addressing inequality, voting rights for minorities, reproductive and women’s rights, support for same sex marriage and immigration reform.

Although many citizens are independent voters, they should not be confused with membership in America’s Independent Party. This party is best known for nominating George Wallace as its presidential candidate in the 1960s. This is a far-right political group,

espousing values that focus on tradition. They support social hierarchy.

The Green Party aims to create an ecologically sustainable society rooted in environmentalism, nonviolence, social justice and grassroots democracy. Greens believe that these issues are related to one another and form a foundation for world peace. Green party platforms typically embrace social-democratic economic policies. Green parties exist in nearly 90 countries around the world and many are members of the Global Greens.

The Libertarian Party promotes personal guarantees and freedoms that the government cannot abridge without due process, free markets, avoiding alliances with other nations but still retaining diplomacy, avoiding wars unless related to direct self-defense, and a hands-off approach by government toward business. Their current policy positions include lowering taxes, allowing people to opt out of Social Security, ending welfare, ending the prohibition of illegal drugs, support for same-sex marriage rights and gun ownership rights.

Socialists reportedly oppose all forms of oppression, specifically capitalism and authoritarian forms of communism. Socialists advocate the creation of a “radical democracy that places people’s lives under their own control—a non-racist, classless, feminist socialist society [...] where working people own and control the means of production and distribution through democratically-controlled public agencies, cooperatives or other collective groups; where full employment is realized for everyone who wants to work; where workers have the right to form unions freely, and to strike and engage in other forms of job actions; and where the production of society is used for the benefit of all humanity, not for the private profit of a few.”

Whatever ideology floats your boat, be sure to express your fundamental right as an American citizen and vote.

The staff and volunteers of Healthy U present this column as part of their mission to promote health in the Illinois Valley.

Scientific basis for laws on marijuana, driving questioned

Joan Lowy
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Motorists are being convicted of driving under the influence of marijuana based on arbitrary state standards that have no connection to whether the driver was actually impaired, says a study by the nation’s largest auto club.

The problem is only growing as more states contemplate legalizing the drug. At least three, and possibly as many as 11 states, will vote this fall on ballot measures to legalize marijuana for medicinal or recreational use, or both. Legislation to legalize the drug has also been introduced in a half dozen states.

Currently, six states — Colorado, Montana, Nevada, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Washington — have set specific limits for THC, the chemical in marijuana that makes people high, in drivers’ blood. Marijuana use is legal in those states for either recreational or medicinal purposes, with the exception of Ohio. The laws presume a driver whose THC level exceeds the threshold is impaired. But the study by AAA’s safety foundation says the limits have no scientific basis and can result in innocent drivers being convicted, and in guilty drivers being released.

“There is understandably a strong desire by both lawmakers and the public to create legal limits for marijuana impairment in the same manner we do alcohol,” said Marshall Doney, AAA’s president and CEO. “In the case of marijuana, this approach is flawed and not supported by scientific research.”

Another nine states, including some that have legalized marijuana for medical use, have zero-

tolerance laws for driving and marijuana that make not only any presence of THC in a driver’s blood illegal, but also the presence of its metabolites, which can linger in a driver’s bloodstream for weeks after any impairment has dissipated.

That makes no sense, said Mark A. R. Kleiman, a New York University professor specializing in issues involving drugs and criminal policy. “A law against driving with THC in your bloodstream is not a law you can know you are obeying except by never smoking marijuana or never driving,” he said.

The problem is that determining whether someone is impaired by marijuana, as opposed to having merely used the drug, is far more complex than the simple and reliable tests that have been developed for alcohol impairment.

The degree to which a driver is impaired by marijuana use depends a lot on the individual, the foundation said. Drivers with relatively high levels of THC in their systems might not be impaired, especially if they are regular users, while others with relatively low levels may be unsafe behind the wheel.

Some drivers may be impaired when they are stopped by police, but by the time their blood is tested they have fallen below the legal threshold because active THC dissipates rapidly. The average time to collect blood from a suspected driver is often more than two hours because taking a blood sample typically requires a warrant and transport to a police station or hospital, the foundation said.

In addition, frequent marijuana users can exhibit persistent levels of the drug long after use, while THC levels can decline more rapidly among occasional users.

Colorado’s 5-nanogram limit for THC in blood “was picked out of thin air by politicians,” said Robert Corry, a Denver criminal defense attorney. “Innocent people are convicted of DUI because of this.”

Melanie Brinegar, who uses marijuana every day to control back pain, was stopped by police two years ago for having an expired license plate. The officer smelled marijuana and Brinegar acknowledged she had used the drug earlier in the day. Her blood test showed a level of 19 nanograms, well over the state limit. She was arrested and charged with driving while impaired.

Brinegar, 30, who lives in Denver, said she spent the next 13 months working 80 to 90 hours a week to pay for a lawyer to help her fight the charge and eventually was acquitted. People like herself will always test positive for THC whether they are high or not because of their frequent use, she said.

“It took a good amount of my time and my life,” she said. “There is still that worry if I get pulled over (again).”

Studies show that using marijuana and driving roughly doubles the risk of a crash, Kleiman said. By comparison, talking on a hands-free cellphone while driving — legal in all states — quadruples crash risk, he said. A blood alcohol content of .12, which is about the median amount in drunken driving cases, increases crash risk by about 15 times, he said.

Driving with “a noisy child in the back of the car” is about as dangerous as using marijuana and driving, Kleiman said.

The exception is when a driver has both been using marijuana and drinking alcohol because the two substances together greatly heighten impairment, he said.

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It’s election time at the Senior Center, I am running for President. I would have preferred sending a campaign letter to our members but that is not allowed.

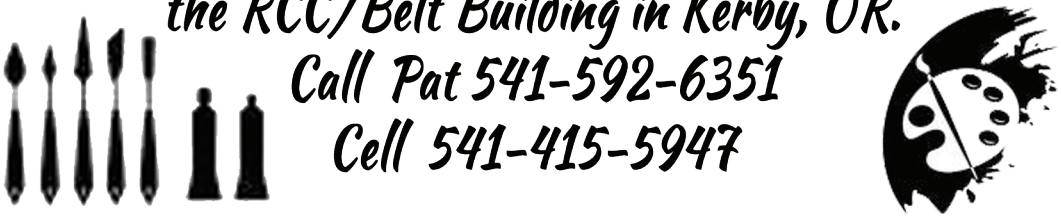
There is much work to be done one of my concerns is a year has gone by without any effort to raise money for a new building for the Thrift Store. When I joined the Senior Center in July 2004 Don Fulk was the president and the Center was in the beginning stages of building an addition to the Center. Don Fulk was laser focused on fundraising to make that a reality. Another priority would be serving a reasonably priced healthy lunch at the Center. This would help promote socializing and make it convenient for those who spend most of the day at the Center. If you are a member of the Senior Center I am asking for your vote I understand the needs of the Center and would do my best to address those needs. I’m supporting Vickie Haynie and Jack Clark for the board I think both of them would do a great job. Your vote is important so don’t forget to drop off or mail your ballot to the Senior Center and please don’t forget to sign the privacy envelope just signing the outside envelope is not enough .

Cathy

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