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OTHER VIEWS

Medical marijuana needs accountability

The Oregonian

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission last week told the Legislature what it needed in order to craft regulations for an accountable retail recreational marijuana market. The list is huge and includes requests as mundane as requiring sales clerks at marijuana shops to carry permits, much as any bartender would. But one request is key and poses complication: The OLCC wants lawmakers to decide whether Oregon’s flourishing but unregulated medical marijuana program will be tracked from seed to sale so that all pot moving through the retail system is accounted for and priced competitively.

Estimates by the OLCC call for recreational pot to initially capture just 20 percent of marijuana sales in Oregon. In a letter to lawmakers, OLCC Chairman Rob Patridge states: “The recreational system will have to prove its superiority in terms of security, quality, convenience and price to overcome the illegal market ... and a medical system largely free of regulations and associated costs that will be present in the recreational system.” More challenging still: “Federal guideline compliance will be diminished if Oregon Medical Marijuana Program licensees or growers are allowed to produce or sell product through the recreational system.” Most challenging of all: “Because plants and product are not tracked in the Oregon Medical Marijuana Program, the program cannot provide assurance there is no diversion to the black market.”

Patridge’s comments are significant in that they are a blunt claim by a top official that medical marijuana needs reining in if a recreational market is to flourish and achieve Measure 91’s aim of decriminalizing the drug by driving out the black market. Put another way, the OLCC, in following federal guidelines to implement a regulated recreational market, would run a fool’s errand to implement Measure 91 if the medical marijuana program were to continue untethered and place some of its products alongside those in the highly regulated recreational market.

Medical marijuana could continue in its own orbit, of course, however weird and unfair. It is true that many medical marijuana growers have built solid, creditable relationships with their clients, whose sometimes highly specific needs are met. But medical marijuana could not, in the absence of tracking technology that should begin at all marijuana grow sites and extend to all retail cash registers, rationally find itself under the same roof as recreational marijuana. And that’s where legal marijuana belongs in an open market in Oregon: under one roof.

Practical considerations associated

with implementation of a recreational market creep in. Oregon communities must soon find the room within their zoning maps to site new pot sales shops, which will face location limits and, minimally, the requirement to be situated a still-debated distance from schools. Portland, for example, already has dozens of medical dispensaries. Where, then, is the room for recreational-only pot shops? In Kirkland, Washington, voters robustly supported a statewide measure to legalize recreational marijuana but still struggle to site two stores as a not-in-my-backyard drama plays out.

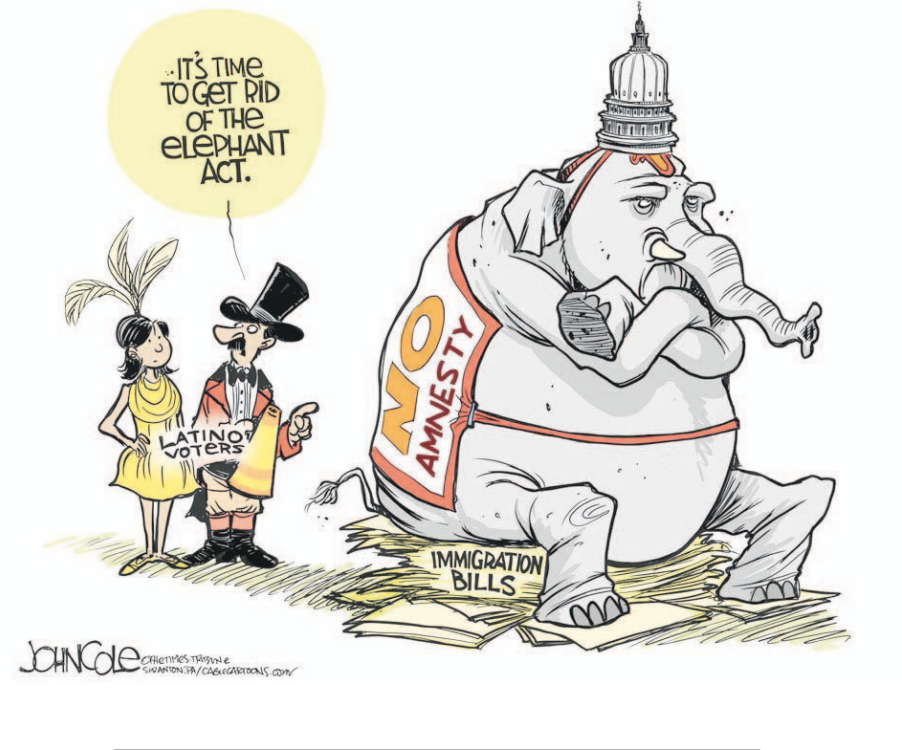
Patridge is right: The Legislature should require that Oregon’s medical marijuana program, under the aegis of the Oregon Health Authority, embrace the discipline of accountability if it is to find so-called “co-location” with recreational pot sales. It’s high time that leakage of so-called excess marijuana from some medical marijuana producers be contained. While Measure 91 applies only to recreational pot, its goal of making the drug recreationally available and cheap enough to work against the black market cannot be achieved unless regulation extends to all forms of the drug.

Separately, lawmakers last week considered legislation that would change the terms of Measure 91. Senate Bill 542 would allow towns and cities to choose whether to collect retail sales taxes on recreational marijuana. Members of the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Implementing Measure 91 heard Association of Oregon Counties attorney Rob Bovett deride limits upon cities and counties whose likely court challenges could snag the attention of the federal government — which, he noted, still prohibits marijuana. “Our entire licensing scheme is at risk,” Bovett told committee members, adding, “this would be a high-stakes game of legal chicken.” It was unclear whether Bovett found traction from committee members, but his legal arguments will be reviewed by legislative counsel.

Still, the larger issue demands debate soon by lawmakers: More than 70 cities, towns and counties in Oregon have staked a claim to tax retail recreational marijuana at the point of sale — this beyond Measure 91’s stipulation that they should not and that a simple state tax at the producers’ level would suffice. It may or may not, yet the claims by cities of how onerous Measure 91’s implementation would be are at this point speculative.

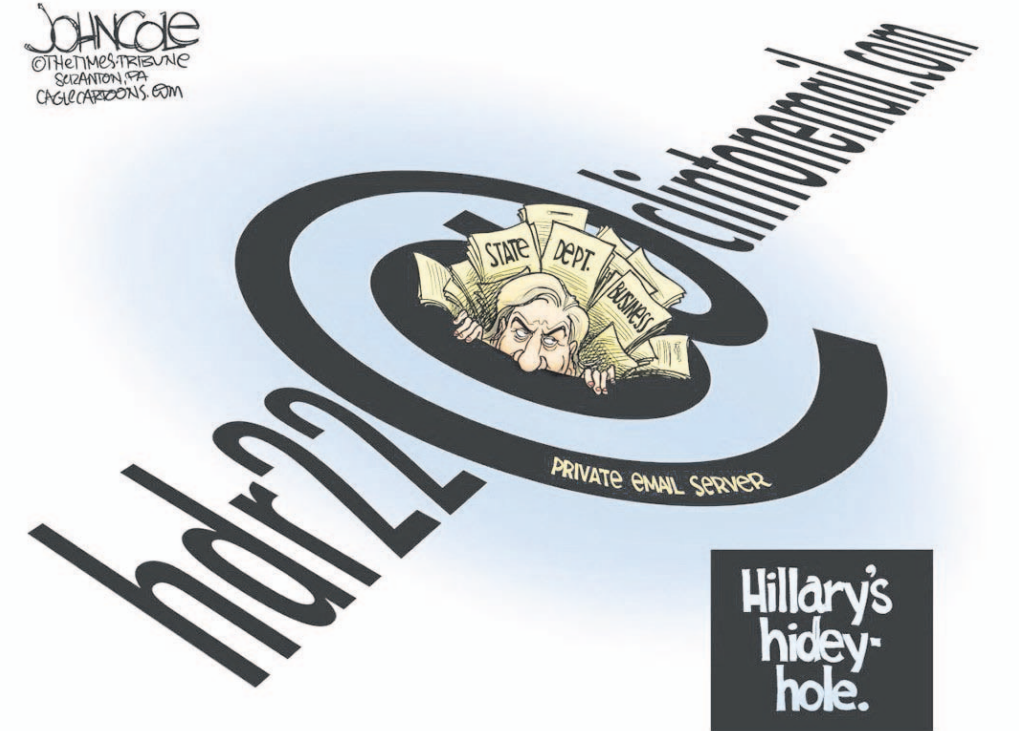
Unknown is what the revenues will be once recreational weed is available, and hence the tax yield from it. Better that the Legislature at this point insist upon parallel regulation of medical marijuana and allow, at least in the first few years, a single state tax upon the sale of recreational marijuana to work.

It’s high time that leakage of so-called excess marijuana from some medical marijuana producers be contained.



Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.

OTHER VIEWS



Only the shadow knows

WASHINGTON — Somewhere in Smithsonian storage sits a portrait of Bill Clinton with two odd features: He is standing next to a shadow meant to conjure Monica Lewinsky’s blue dress, and he is not wearing his gold wedding ring.

As we have been reminded by a recent wild cascade of stories, everything about the Clintons is convoluted. Nothing is simple, even a celebratory portrait.

Nelson Shanks, picked by Clinton to do his portrait for the National Portrait Gallery, revealed to the *Philadelphia Daily News* that he had used a blue dress on a mannequin to evoke the shadow of the Lewinsky scandal in the portrait.

I called the 77-year-old artist to ask about his devilish punking.

MAUREEN DOWD

Comment

Given the paranoid/legalese perspective that permeates Clintonland, this made sense: It’s hard to request emails from an account you don’t know exists. And your own server can shield you from subpoenas and other requests. If you want records from the Clinton server, you have to fight for them. Clinton Inc. can tough it out and even make stuff disappear. Instead of warning the secretary that she could be violating regulations, her aides fetishized her clintonemail.com account as a status symbol. Chelsea took on the pseudonym Diane Reynolds.

Near midnight on Wednesday, Hillary tweeted that she had asked the State Department to release the emails she had coughed up when pressed, noting: “I want the public to see my email.”

Less true words were never spoken. Schmidt’s scoop followed *The Wall Street Journal* revelation that at least 60 companies that lobbied the State Department when Hillary was in charge had funneled more than \$26 million to the Clinton Foundation.

Certainly, Hillary wants a lot of control. She has spent a lifetime cleaning up messes sparked by her overweening desire for control and her often out-of-control mate. She always feared that her emails could become fodder for critics, and now they have.

The Clintons don’t sparkle with honesty and openness.

“It’s an extra little kick going on in the painting,” he said. “It was a bit humorous, but there was also a sort of authenticity to it. To do a Pollyanna, basically meaningless, symbolically neutral painting of somebody that has had a powerful influence on society is really copping out.” He said that Clinton’s lack of a wedding band has no ulterior meaning, noting: “I just forgot the ring.” But Clinton aides weren’t buying it.

He said when the omission first made news after the portrait was unveiled in 2006, Hillary Clinton sent him “a lovely little note saying don’t worry about it, this is just a tempest in a teapot.”

In a blog post last week, Eugénie Bisulco, a Clinton administration staffer who led the search team for a White House portrait artist, said it wasn’t Shanks’ attempt to put in “a moral compass” that grated. (The Clintons didn’t even know about that.) Bisulco said it was that the portrait made Clinton look like “a disheveled Ted Koppel.”

Other Clintonistas dismissed the allegorical shadow as “put-a-bunny-in-the-pot crazy.”

Shanks said it was “like an ice pick going through my back” when he learned that his portrait was “exiled to the dark recesses” in 2009. On a visit to the museum a year and a half ago, he heard a docent telling a tour group that the Clintons put the kibosh on the painting.

He asked Kim Sajet, now director of the National Portrait Gallery, and she confirmed his darkest fears in an email, saying that they took it down because the Clintons disliked it. But, in response to a query, Sajet admitted that she was “repeating unfounded gossip,” according to a spokeswoman, and insisted that the painting is merely in rotation.

Shortly after the art imbroglio broke, an email imbroglio broke. *The Times’* Michael Schmidt reported that, as secretary of state, Hillary did not preserve her official correspondence on a government server and exclusively used a private email account. She used a private server linked to her Chappaqua home, only turning over cherry-picked messages in December at the State Department’s request.

Everyone is looking for signs in how Hillary approaches 2016 to see whether she’s learned lessons from past trouble. But the minute this story broke, she went back to the bunker, even though she had known for months that the Republicans knew about the account. The usual hatchets — Philippe Reines, David Brock, Lanny Davis and Sidney Blumenthal — got busy.

The Clintons don’t sparkle with honesty and openness. Between his lordly appetites and her queenly prerogatives, you always feel as if there’s something afoot. Everything needs to be a secret, from the Rose Law Firm records that popped up in a White House closet two years after they were subpoenaed to the formulation of her health care plan.

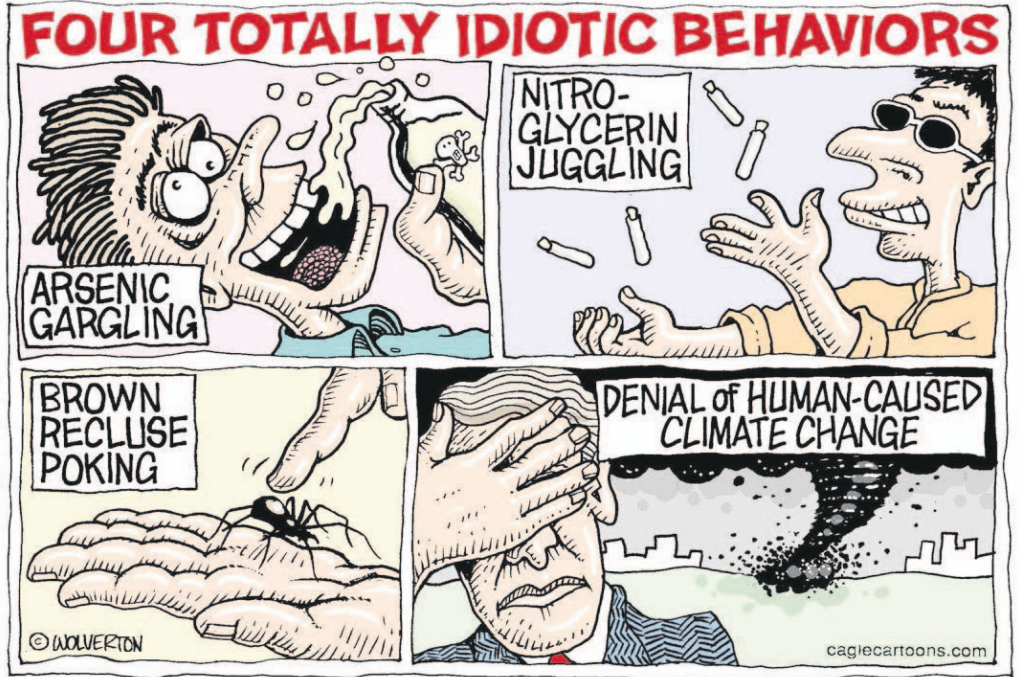
Yet the Clintons always act as though it’s bad form when you bring up their rule-bending. They want us to compartmentalize, just as they do, to connect the dots that form a pretty picture and leave the other dots alone.

If you’re aspiring to be the second president in the family, why is it so hard to be straight and direct and stand for something? Why can’t you just be upright and steady and good?

Given all the mistakes they’ve made, why do they keep making them? Why do they somehow never do anything that doesn’t involve shadows?

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Maureen Dowd, winner of the 1999 Pulitzer Prize for distinguished commentary, became a columnist on *The New York Times Op-Ed* page in 1995. She has covered four presidential campaigns and served as White House correspondent.



LETTERS POLICY

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