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OUR VIEW

It's about time

Buying contraception from pharmacists is a logical move

Safe and accessible birth control is key to a host of gains in maternal and child well-being, economic advancement for families and nations, and may even lower the crime rate.

Starting early next year, laws signed by Oregon Gov. Kate Brown last week will allow pharmacists to prescribe oral contraceptives and hormonal contraceptive patches for a year at a time. Coming 55 years after "the pill" first became available in the U.S., this step finally normalizes something that should always be a woman's choice: whether to go through the life-altering and sometimes hazardous process of pregnancy and motherhood.

Living in this time in one of the world's most advanced nations, we can scarcely imagine what it was like here before 1960 — and how it still is in many less-developed nations — with women endlessly pregnant, many dying prematurely, and families with far too many mouths to feed. We romanticize childhood and motherhood — in many ways rightly so — but there isn't much that can be said in favor of having eight children and losing several of them to illness and poverty.

Smaller families and an ability for women to integrate pregnancies with their working lives have greatly improved living standards in the U.S. and other advanced nations. The children who are planned are cherished and are more likely to grow up to lead successful lives themselves.

Birth control drugs and devices aren't 100 percent safe and effective. Efforts to relax the degree of physician involvement in managing them have long been fought off because of a sincere belief that direct contact between healthcare providers and patients will help avoid contraception-related problems. In addition, the necessity to visit a provider in order to obtain a prescription is an opportunity to keep tabs on reproductive and general wellness.

> Being able to obtain a year's worth of oral contraceptives from a neighborhood pharmacy without a prescription represents a substantial savings in time, hassle and money.

But on balance, the cost-benefit ratio has clearly shifted in favor of moving this service to pharmacists, who are themselves highly trained professionals capable of counseling women and directing them to specialists if more complicated issues arise. Being able to obtain a year's worth of oral contraceptives from a neighborhood pharmacy without a prescription represents a substantial savings in terms of time, hassle and money. This will reduce the odds of unplanned pregnancies during gaps between prescriptions. (Women will be required to start with a three-month supply to see whether there are any adverse reactions before being able to buy pills for a year.)

California already has a similar but somewhat less comprehensive law. Our Washington neighbors, who are considering doing the same, should certainly follow Oregon's lead.

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

Cost of body cameras too much for Bend-area police

The Bend Bulletin

The Legislature's new law on body cameras has Bend and Prineville police thinking they may have to give them up. It's a reasonable decision.

Bend police don't use body cameras now, though the department has been experimenting with them and considering adding them. Prineville police have been using them.

The new law adds requirements. Police must turn on the cameras when encountering any suspect. The recordings must be stored. When recordings are released to the public, the faces of individuals must be digitally scrambled.

> New laws enacted by the legislature add requirements. Those requirements could be very expensive.

There are arguments to be made for all those requirements. For instance, police should not be able to pick and choose when cameras are turned on. It makes them vulnerable to claims that they were purposefully left off to conceal what happened.

But those new requirements could be expensive for departments to manage. Bend Police Chief Jim Porter told us during the legislative session he was worried about how many hours it would take to redact all the faces involved in a recording. He'd likely have to add a staff member along with the expense of the equipment. He wasn't sure that expense made sense.

Body cameras can provide valuable information about incidents. They may encourage better behavior from suspects and police. And they can show a perspective of an incident that will almost instantly clear up some questions.

But we don't see them as absolutely necessary in Bend, Prineville or elsewhere in Central Oregon. Their value must be weighed against their cost. It would of course be helpful to know how much it would cost taxpayers in Bend or Prineville to have the cameras and comply with the law. We haven't seen estimates of those additional costs.

Does it make sense to add the cameras and the staff person in Bend to blur faces, or would it make sense to add another patrol officer dedicated to the downtown?

If there were incident after incident in Central Oregon in which there were serious questions raised about the behavior of police and suspects, that's a much different decision than law enforcement and the public face now.

Be heard!

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OTHER VIEWS

Haste, hustle and Scott Walker

FRANK BRUNI
Comment

In the formal announcement of his presidential campaign on Monday, Scott Walker mentioned God right away, introduced himself as a preacher's son and invoked religion repeatedly, as he has throughout a perpetual candidacy that stretches back to his college days, when he told the Marquette University yearbook: "I really think there's a reason why God put all these political thoughts in my head."

But what I see in him is the kind of soullessness too common in American politicians and the kind of careerism that makes American politics such a dreary spectacle.

I see an ambition even more pronounced than any ideology. I see an interest in personal advancement that eclipses any investment in personal growth.

These are hardly unusual traits in our halls of government. But they're distilled in Walker, the governor of Wisconsin.

He's styling himself as a political outsider, but that's a fluke of geography, not professional history. While it's true that he hasn't worked in Washington, he's a political lifer, with a résumé and worldview that are almost nothing but politics.

> Walker is a political lifer, with a résumé and worldview that are almost nothing but politics.

He's been on one Wisconsin ballot or another almost every two years over the last quarter-century, and he's only 47. Before the governorship, he was a state assemblyman and then a county executive.

We know from the biographies of him so far that he has been absorbed in those "political thoughts" since at least the start of college, before he could have possibly developed any fully considered, deeply informed set of beliefs or plan for what to do with power.

I suspect that we'll learn, with just a bit more digging, that he was mulling campaign slogans in the womb and ran his first race in the neighborhood wading pool, pledging to ease restrictions on squirt guns and usher in a ban on two-piece bathing suits.

He has drawn barbs for the fact that he left Marquette before graduating and was many credits shy of a degree. But I know plenty of people whose intellectual agility and erudition aren't rooted in the classroom, and his lack of a diploma isn't what's troubling.

The priorities that conspired in it are. He was apparently consumed during his sophomore year by a (failed) bid for student body president. According to a story by David Fahrenthold in *The Washington Post*, he was disengaged from, and cavalier about, the acquisition of knowledge. And he dropped out right around the time he commenced a (failed) candidacy for the Wisconsin state Senate — in his early 20s.

Walker's cart has a way of getting ahead of Walker's horse. Only after several flubbed interviews earlier this year were there reports that he was taking extra time to bone up on world affairs. This was supposed to be a comfort to us, but what would really be reassuring is a candidate who had pursued that mastery already, out of honest curiosity rather than last-minute need.

When allies and opponents talk about his strengths, they seem to focus not on his passion for governing but on his cunning at getting elected. "He's a sneaky-smart campaigner, they say, a polished and levelheaded tactician, a master at reading crowds," wrote Kyle Cheney and Daniel Strauss in Politico. "He learned the value of ignoring uncomfortable questions, rather than answering them."

What an inspiring lesson, and what a window into political success today.

He tailors his persona to the race at hand. To win his second term as governor of Wisconsin and thus be able to crow, as he's doing now, about the triumph of a conservative politician "in a blue state," he played down his opposition to abortion, signaled resignation to same-sex marriage and explicitly supported a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

But with his current focus on the Iowa caucuses, he no longer supports a path to citizenship, flaunts his anti-abortion credentials and has called for a constitutional amendment permitting states to outlaw same-sex marriage. He even has a newfound affection for ethanol.

His advisers, meanwhile, trumpet his authenticity. Authenticity? That's in tragically short supply in the presidential race, a quality that candidates assert less through coherent records, steadfast positions or self-effacing commitments than through what they wear (look, Ma, no jacket or necktie!) and even how they motor around. Walker is scheduled to trundle through Iowa later this week in a Winnebago, and of course Hillary Clinton traveled there from New York in that Scooby van.

"I love America," Walker said in Monday's big speech. That was his opening line and an echo of what so many contenders say.

I trust that they all do love this country. But from the way they pander, shift shapes and scheme, I wonder if they love themselves just a little more.

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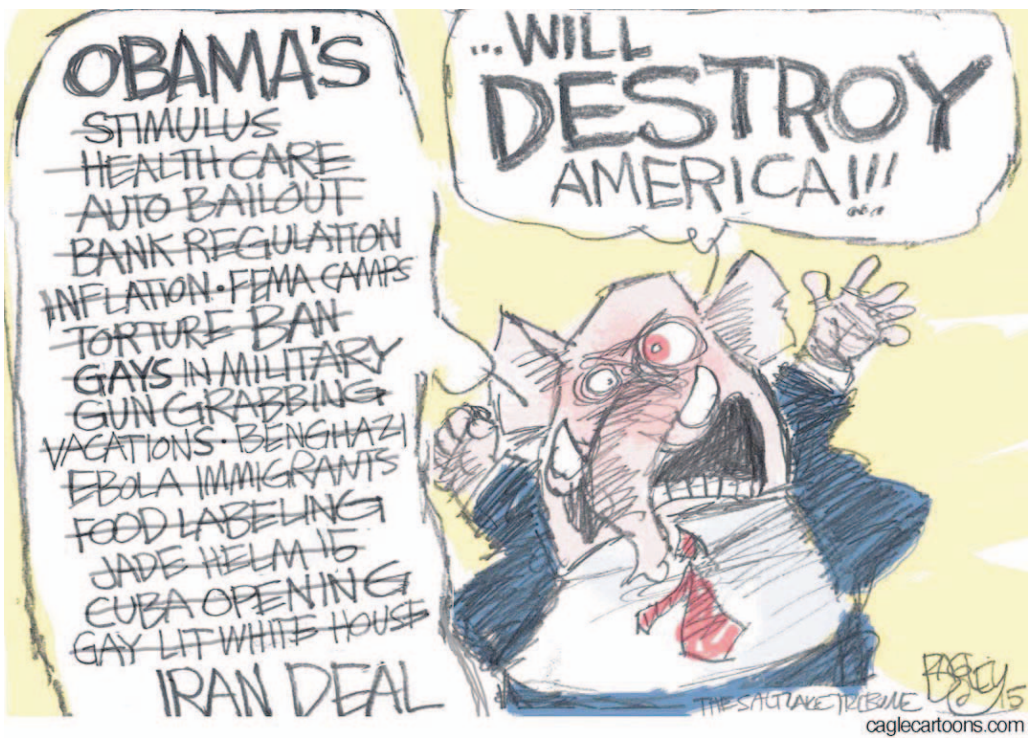
Frank Bruni, an Op-Ed columnist for The New York Times since June 2011, joined the New York Times in 1995. Over his years, he has worn a wide variety of hats, including chief restaurant critic and Rome bureau chief.



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