

EAST OREGONIAN
Founded October 16, 1875

KATHRYN B. BROWN
Publisher

DANIEL WATTENBURGER
Managing Editor

JENNINE PERKINSON
Advertising Director

TIM TRAINOR
Opinion Page Editor

OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A kick in the pants to the city of Hermiston and its onerous regulation of taxi drivers.

A current ordinance forbids people with certain types of criminal charges from working for taxi companies operating in the city. It has forced unnecessarily embarrassing public pleas, including one 58-year-old woman convicted of theft 32 years ago who had to tearfully stand before councilors and confess her youthful sins. Thankfully councilors judged her morally upstanding enough to keep her job, but others weren't so lucky.

No disrespect intended, but driving cab is a line of employment often chosen by people who have had nontraditional career paths. Sometimes those paths involve run-ins with the law.

Yet Hermiston taxi drivers face more stringent regulations than, say, a home health caregiver or a housekeeper — other people who often work with vulnerable populations.

Certainly, in more rural environs, driving cab is a different kind of job than in a big city. Customers are not businessmen rushing to get to meetings, but often elderly, disabled and poor residents who need to get to appointments and the grocery store.

Council is right to realize there are dangers there. But council is wrong to think that the way to reduce those dangers is by banning people with past mistakes. The city should relax the regulations. They should not give in to competitors trying to cause problems for each other.

They should also let law enforcement work, and if a taxi driver breaks the law, make sure they are punished. But those who have paid for their crime should be free to try to earn a living.



A tip of the hat to the Hermiston volunteers who helped run the state Little League tournament this week in Hermiston.

It's a long and thankless job, eating into work hours with lots of time raking dirt under a hot afternoon sun. But the little ballplayers appreciate it, and many will remember their summer travel tournament and the good memories that come — win or lose — with team sports.

In addition, we would be remiss not to tip that hat to the Pilot Rock Little League softball volunteers who did the same thing



just a few weeks prior.

Both hosts did right by fans and players alike, and their hard work is appreciated.

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

Employers not yet on board with letting their employees smoke pot

The (Albany) Democrat-Herald

One of the bigger questions surrounding the legalization of marijuana in Oregon was how employers would react to the possibility that workers would, you know, actually smoke the stuff now that it was legal.

Well, it's fair to say that there's still plenty of confusion surrounding the issue, which is why three sessions recently sponsored by The Corvallis Clinic regarding marijuana in the workplace drew standing-room-only crowds.

It's also fair to say that employers with strong anti-drug policies aren't showing much inclination to waver.

Which potentially is a problem for employees curious about legal marijuana, especially considering that tetrahydrocannabinol (you know it better as THC, the active ingredient in pot), can linger in the body for weeks. In that regard, it's not like alcohol, which the body metabolizes in a matter of hours.

So consider the case of Cyd Maurer, the former weekend news anchor at Eugene's KEZI television station, who got herself fired after testing positive for marijuana.

Maurer said she got into a minor accident while on assignment for KEZI on May 22 and was ordered to undergo a drug test, as required by corporate policy. She says she had consumed cannabis within a week of the accident, but was not under the influence when she went to work. (There's no reason to doubt her on this point; remember that, even though a marijuana test will detect if someone has used pot in the recent past, it won't offer any indications as to

whether someone is impaired.)

The test came back positive. That violated the company's anti-drug policy. She was fired. End of story.

The case involving Maurer took place in May, before the July 1 date when recreational use of marijuana in Oregon became legal. But here's how that story would have played out if it had occurred after July 1:

The test came back positive. That violated the company's anti-drug policy. She was fired. End of story.

Well, except for the hundreds of times a similar story will play out in Oregon over the next couple of years.

Here's the takeaway for employees in Oregon: You have

the legal right to consume marijuana. But, if marijuana use is banned by your company, the company can fire you if you test positive. That means if you work for one of those companies, you're going to want to check to see exactly what your company's drug policy says. (If you're an employer, this would be a good time to review your drug policy.)

Don't expect the courts to drive much change in this area: Judges in a number of states consistently have sided with employers.

Granted, this all could change, especially if efforts to legalize pot at the federal level ever gain much ground. (That seems inevitable, but not in the immediate future.) So for now at least, the early lines drawn by businesses toward marijuana use seem clear.

In the meantime, Maurer says she's interested in pursuing a career as a marijuana activist. That seems like it might work out: After all, the signs suggest that marijuana in Oregon is a growth industry.

For now at least, the early lines drawn by businesses toward marijuana use seem clear.

STAR TRIBUNE EagleCartoons.com



OTHER VIEWS

Why the naysayers are wrong about the Iran deal

Mike Huckabee says President Barack Obama is using his nuclear deal to "take the Israelis and march them to the door of the oven." Mitt Romney describes it as a "generational calamity." And while polls diverge, one recently taken by CNN suggests the public wants Congress to reject the agreement by a 52 percent to 44 percent majority.

This is one of the pivotal foreign policy decisions of the decade, so let's examine the arguments:

— Obama didn't deliver what he promised. For example, we wanted "anywhere, anytime" inspections, but we caved and got a complex system that allows Iran to delay inspections. And in the later years of the agreement, Iran won a significant easing of controls. As Jeb Bush put it: "These negotiations began, by President Obama's own admission, as an effort to deny Iran nuclear capabilities, but instead will only legitimize those activities."

The U.S. didn't get all it wanted (and neither did Iran) in an imperfect compromise. True, we didn't achieve anywhere, anytime inspections, yet the required inspections program is still among the most intrusive ever. Remember too that this deal isn't just about centrifuges but also about the possibility that Iran will come out of the cold and emerge from its failed 36-year experiment with extremism. That's why Iran's hard-liners are so opposed to the deal; they have been sustained by the narrative of the Great Satan as the endless enemy, and conciliation endangers them.

— You doves think that a nuclear deal will empower reformers in Iran and turn it once more into the pro-American and pro-Israeli power it was under the shah. But sanctions relief may just give this regime a new lease on life.

Iran's people are perhaps the most pro-American and secular of those of any country I've been to in the Middle East. (On my last trip to Iran, I took two of my kids along, and Iranians bought them meals and ice cream, and served them illegal mojitos.) The public weariness with the regime's corruption, oppression and economic failings is manifest. I would guess that after the supreme leader dies, Iran will begin a process of change like that in China after Mao died.

— That's speculative. The real impact of the deal is that it will unlock tens of billions of dollars in frozen assets and new oil revenues, giving Iranian hard-liners more resources to invest in nuclear skulduggery and in extremist groups.

True, but that will happen anyway. Remember that this agreement includes Europe, Russia and China as parties. Even if Congress rejects the agreement, sanctions will erode and Iran will get an infusion of cash.

— This agreement is a betrayal of Israel.



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

Once Iran gets its hands on WMDs, it will commit genocide.

Iran is widely believed to have developed biological and chemical weapons back in the 1980s, and it hasn't used those weapons of mass destruction against Israel. And what American officials find awkward to point out is that Israel is already a significant nuclear power with a huge military edge, which is why it has deterred Iran so far. If I lived in Tel Aviv, would I be nervous? Sure.

But I'd be even more nervous without this deal, which reduces the chance that Iran will acquire a nuclear weapon in the next decade. That's why five former U.S. ambassadors to Israel endorsed the accord. (It's also notable that American Jews are more in favor of the agreement than the American public as a whole.)

— Obama pretends that the alternative to this deal is war. No, the alternative is increased economic pressure until Iran yelps for surrender. As Marco Rubio puts it, "Give Iran a very clear choice: You can have an economy or you can have a weapons program."

So we apply the same economic pressure that caused the collapse of the Castro regime in Cuba in 1964? The same isolation that overthrew the North Korean regime in 1993? The same sanctions that led Saddam Hussein to give up power peacefully in Iraq in 2000? Oh, wait. ...

— Look, even you admit that this is a flawed deal. So why risk it? As Rick Perry says, "No deal is better and safer than a bad deal."

If the U.S. rejects this landmark deal, then we get the worst of both worlds: an erosion of sanctions and also an immediate revival of the Iran nuclear program.

We have a glimpse of what might happen. In 2003, Iran seemingly offered a comprehensive "grand bargain" to resolve relations with the United States, but George W. Bush's administration dismissed it. Since then, Iran has gone from a tiny number of centrifuges to 19,000, getting within two months of "breakout" to a nuclear weapon. The point: Fulmination is not a substitute for policy, and a multilateral international agreement achieves far more protection than finger-wagging.

Diplomacy is rarely about optimal outcomes; it is about muddling along in the dark, dodging bullets, struggling to defer war and catastrophe for the time being, nurturing opportunities for a better tomorrow. By that standard, the Iran deal succeeds. Sure, it is flawed, and yes, it makes us safer.

Nicholas Kristof grew up on a sheep and cherry farm in Yamhill. Kristof, a columnist for The New York Times since 2001, won the Pulitzer Prize two times, in 1990 and 2006.

YOUR VIEWS

Nonpartisan primaries a way to beat the two-party system

Last week I listened in on a national conference call with Representative John Delaney of Maryland who discussed the Open Our Democracy Act, HR 2655, which he recently introduced.

The call was convened and hosted by Jackie Salit, president of IndependentVoting.org, the largest association of independent voters in the country of which I'm a part. On the call, we got the inside scoop on this important legislation.

The bill does three things: enacts Top Two nonpartisan primaries for all Congressional elections in the United States, makes Election Day a national holiday, and creates a road map whereby the practice of gerrymandering could be replaced with an independent redistricting process.

In other words, it's a gridlock-fighting package of reform designed to empower voters and give our country some much

needed breathing room from the partisanship that now over-determines every step of the political process.

Delaney said, "Politicians always make the mistake of underestimating the American people. 300 million smart Americans are not going to let some 500 members of Congress stand in their way forever." I couldn't agree more.

Given the vested interests of politicians in the status quo of the two-party system, it's going to take a grassroots movement of voters to build the pressure to make these kinds of reform happen.

I've written to my representative, Peter DeFazio, and asked him to let all voters be heard in the election process. Keeping everyone included is the only way to have a government by the people and for the people. Please join me in writing your representatives. They need to hear from you.

Kemberly Todd
Independent Voters of Oregon (IVOO)
Roseburg

LETTERS POLICY

The East Oregonian welcomes original letters of 400 words or less on public issues and public policies for publication in the newspaper and on our website. The newspaper reserves the right to withhold letters that address concerns about individual services and products or letters that infringe on the rights of private citizens. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. The phone number will not be published. Unsigned letters will not be published. Send letters to Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, 211 S.E. Byers Ave. Pendleton, OR 97801 or email editor@eastoregonian.com.