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OUR VIEW

Tip of the hat; kick in the pants

A kick in the pants to Umatilla County Commissioners for continuing their ban on medical and recreational marijuana in the county.

It was clear from the beginning that their marijuana committee was created in bad faith, originally comprised of members who had all been outspoken in their opposition to the drug. (It was only after public pressure that a pro-marijuana committee member was named, though no one representing a marijuana business or even a medical marijuana patient was party to the discussion and the board remained far from balanced.)

So the stacked committee told commissioners what they wanted to hear. And commissioners were glad to institute their recommendation.

The only thing that recommendation will do, however, is force Umatilla County to miss out on tax revenue — possibly north of \$100,000 this fiscal year, according to estimates from the state.

TopShelf, a nationwide marijuana delivery service, is already operating openly in Pendleton, giving away pot for a \$25 “donation.” And you can bet they aren’t checking IDs like a state-sanctioned store would. And they sure as heck aren’t paying any taxes. The black market is alive and well in Umatilla County thanks to head-in-the-sand county leadership.

Commissioner George Murdock even wrote out an argument for continuing the ban, derisively labeling marijuana as “weird” and not in line with Eastern Oregon values.

It’s disappointing that none of the people who use medical marijuana to lighten their heavy medical ailments stood before commissioners and told their story. Although with the attitude of the three men, it’s understandable why those people were unwilling to come forward.

The lack of compassion the commissioners have for those who benefit from marijuana is something we just can’t comprehend. What is gained from banning medical dispensaries?

Still, we don’t think the ban will last long. Everything else the prohibitionists have said about marijuana has failed to come to fruition so far, and we imagine this one will soon be overturned too. Until then, it will cost the county dearly, as we fall behind on a growing industry while others forge ahead. But then again, that’s nothing new around here.

A tip of the hat to Peggy Anderson, who is overseeing her last Umatilla County Fair. Anderson has done good work to make the fair a better product, and she has the additional dollars and visitors to show for it — and this year is shaping up to be another great party.

The fair, though, is at a precipice. It is the last year it will take place at its current location, where it has lived for 80 years, and it will now move over to EOTEC in 2016 without its longtime director. Or any full-time director, for that matter.

The board will stay in place, though its job may need to shift to fill in some of the gaps left by Anderson.

We hope all those changes don’t change the culture and charm of our beloved county celebration. We also wish Anderson the best of luck down in Southern Oregon, remaking another county fair.

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

UO fundraising campaign a tall order for school used to raising money

The (Eugene) Register-Guard

The \$2 billion goal for the University of Oregon’s fundraising campaign is as ambitious today as it was when it was announced last October. Donations from alumni and other supporters will have to increase from their current near-record amounts if the target is to be reached before the end of the decade. But there are encouraging signs of momentum that, if it can be sustained, would bring the target within reach.

During the fiscal year that ended July 30, the UO raised \$214 million in donations. That record is eclipsed only by the \$277 million raised in 2008, when Phil Knight established the \$100 million UO Athletic Legacy Fund that helped finance construction of the Matt Knight Arena.

Last year’s total was an 86 percent increase over the amount raised the year before, and while it included several donations of substantial size — \$50 million from UO Trustee Connie Ballmer and her husband, former Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer, and \$10 million from Don and Willie Tykeson of Eugene — the money came from relatively diverse sources. The UO is showing that it can depend on more than one big donor.

The UO is also showing that its academic programs can match and exceed its athletic program in fundraising firepower. More than \$163 million of last year’s donations are for academics, a 127 percent increase from the year before.

Donations to athletics rose as well, to nearly \$51 million, an 18 percent increase. About half of the money, \$96 million, will go into the UO Foundation’s endowment, where it will generate earnings for scholarships

and professorships in perpetuity. Other funds, such as the Tykesons’ donation, will draw state matching funds to finance construction.

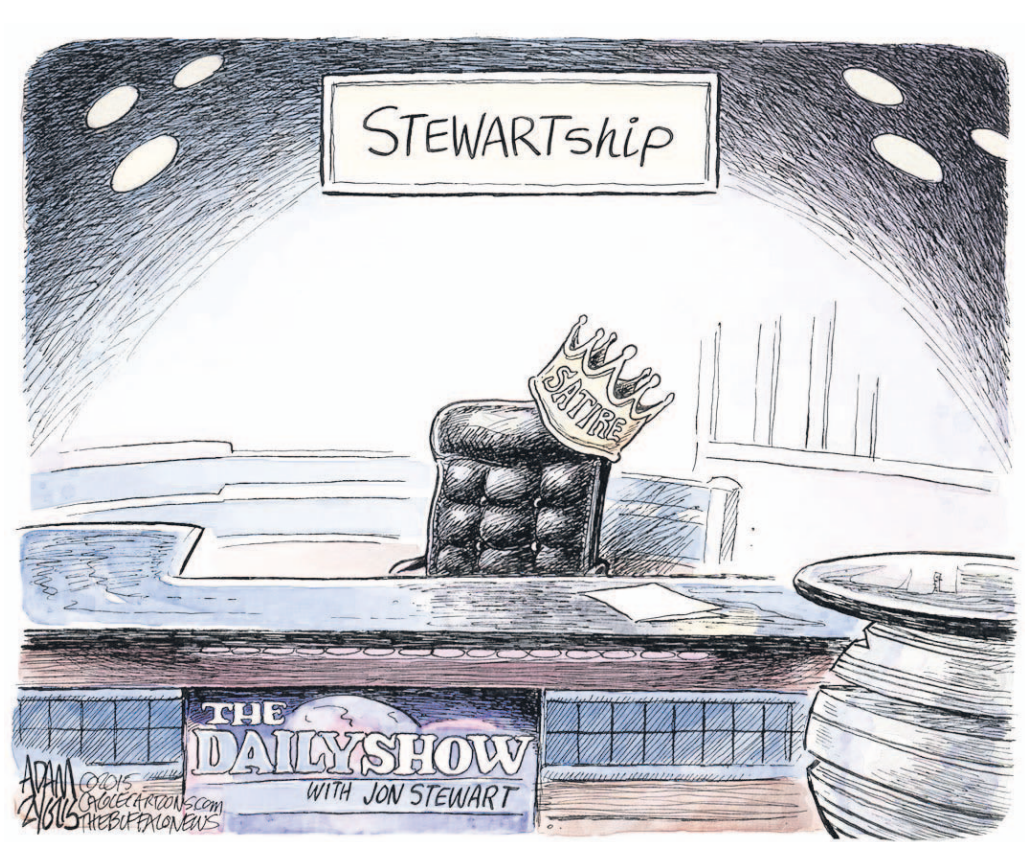
The best indication of future success may lie in a 10 percent increase in the number of donors — including a 19 percent increase in first-time donors. One of the best predictors of a positive response to a fundraising plea is whether the person being asked for a donation has given before. As the UO list of past donors grows longer, its pool of future donors becomes deeper.

All this happened during a time of turmoil at the UO — the university was being led by an interim president, a new board of trustees had recently been given control, and financial support from the state ranked near the bottom nationally.

But President Michael Schill moved into the president’s office on July 1, the trustees are finding their footing after completing their first big hire, and the Oregon Legislature gave higher education one of its biggest general-fund budget increases in decades, including an 18 percent boost in operating funds for the UO. Donors who might have been hanging back to see whether the UO could enter a period of stability in its leadership, and whether the state would make a financial commitment parallel to their own, should be hearing an all-clear signal.

The \$2 billion goal was announced last October, but quietly began in 2010. A little more than 40 percent of the target amount has been raised. Though the UO has set itself no deadline, it hopes to finish the campaign by 2018 — which would mean the pace of donations would have to double again.

That’s a tall order, but for now the numbers are moving in the right direction.



OTHER VIEWS

Making life harder for pimps

In the long struggle against sex trafficking, we finally have a breakthrough!

It didn’t come from Congress, or the White House, from the courts or the police. Rather, it came from credit card companies: Pimps can no longer easily use American Express, Visa or MasterCard to pay for prostitution ads in which they sell 15-year-old girls as if they were pizzas.

That upended the business model of sex trafficking. Pimps all over the country are reduced to figuring out how to pay to promote their ads with, yes, bitcoin!

Human trafficking is one of the most insidious human rights abuses in the United States — some 100,000 minors are trafficked into the sex trade each year in the U.S. So let me explain how we came to enjoy a triumph over traffickers.

A website called Backpage.com has for years dominated the sex trade advertising business. In April alone it published more than 1.4 million ads in its adult services section in the United States. Almost every time a girl is rescued from traffickers, it turns out that she was peddled on Backpage.

Last year I wrote about a missing 15-year-old Boston girl whose parents were beside themselves with worry. In their living room, I pulled out my laptop, opened up Backpage and quickly found sem nude advertisements for the girl, who turned out to be in a hotel room with an armed pimp.

Backpage is allowed to operate because of a loophole in the Communications Decency Act. Attorneys general from 48 states have pleaded with Backpage to stop this exploitation, to no effect. Girls who have been sold on Backpage when they were as young as 13 have sued the company, but haven’t succeeded because of the loophole.

Then suddenly this summer, the miracle of the market intervened.

Sheriff Tom Dart of Cook County, Illinois, wrote tough letters to Visa and MasterCard, calling on them to stop allowing their cards to pay for sex ads on Backpage. Both companies effectively agreed. To its great credit, American Express in April stopped working with Backpage for adult ads, so as of the beginning of July pimps had no easy way to pay for advertisements.

Flummoxed, Backpage responded by making its basic sex ads free, but, even with a fee to promote a free ad, that’s not a business model that can sustain it. Backpage is suing Dart, but my sense is that pimps won’t be using their credit cards again on the site any time soon.

“If it’s down for six months, that’s six months of children who aren’t raped,” says



NICHOLAS KRISTOF
Comment

Yiota Souras of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

So bravo to American Express, MasterCard and Visa — and to Dart — for getting results where Congress failed.

There will still be human trafficking, of course, and pimps will find other ways to peddle kids. But it may not be quite so easy for traffickers as it was.

“When on Backpage, I was advertised in the same way as a car or a phone, but with even less value than a bike,” one girl told me late last year. She said she was advertised at the age of 15 and 16 and raped 1,000 times as a result.

My guess is that a majority of sex ads on Backpage are for consenting adults. But a significant minority are for sex with children

or with women who are coerced — representing some of the largest and most mistreated classes of human rights victims in America. We don’t have the moral authority to tell other countries to end modern forms of slavery when we don’t clean up our own act.

There has also been progress in other areas. The police in the United States

are going after pimps more, and sometimes johns, as well (that still needs to happen more).

The Nordic model to combat trafficking and exploitation, pioneered in Sweden, has been gaining ground, too. It provides for the arrest of johns while offering help rebuilding the lives of women who were selling sex. Nothing works all that well in curbing sex trafficking, but this model has succeeded better than other approaches.

Yet in some quarters, there’s still a myopia about the degree to which this is a human rights issue. Amnesty International will consider a proposal in the coming days that would call for full decriminalization of the sex trade, including for johns, on the theory that this would benefit sex workers. Nice theory, but a failed one. It has been tried repeatedly and it invariably benefited johns while exacerbating abuse of women and girls: A parallel underground market emerges for underage girls.

Let’s hope Amnesty comes to its senses and, as Swanee Hunt of Harvard put it, avoids “endorsing one of the most exploitative human rights abuses of our time.” Then we can go back to celebrating the struggles of America’s sex traffickers as their business model is upended.

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.



LETTERS POLICY

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