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

Marijuana better on a ballot than banned

It took awhile, but both Hermiston and Pendleton city councils did the right thing by allowing their constituents to have the final say on whether marijuana businesses should operate in their town.

Kudos to both councils for doing so. After much hemming and hawing — and after all other avenues turned out to be dead ends — both voted unanimously to put the question to voters in November 2016. Until then, marijuana businesses of all stripes — medical and recreational dispensaries, commercial grow operations and warehouses — will be banned from city limits. If the ban holds up at the ballot box next year, they will remain unwelcome indefinitely.

And with that, an issue that almost everyone is clearly sick of debating can be pushed off for nearly a year.

Except, however, that councils can use these intervening months to craft a workable plan for their respective cities, should residents vote to end the ban in November.

Instead of being reactionary and working frantically under threat of deadline, we hope both councils keep the marijuana issue close to mind. Pendleton's planning commission has already done excellent work creating a variety of rules and regulations for marijuana businesses. It was dismissed by councilors once before, but parts of it are salvageable.

> In Hermiston and Pendleton, marijuana business will be on the ballot in 2016.

Councilors can tweak the rules to their satisfaction, or remake them entirely. Why not do it now, while there is ample time?

There is much to discuss. Perhaps surprisingly, Pendleton Mayor Phillip Houk said if voters decide to ditch the ban, he would consider the possibility that the city would own and operate their own marijuana dispensary. We've got eleven months to decide if that's a good idea or not. Hopefully both councils continue to have those discussions.

It's disappointing that the smaller cities in our area — and both Morrow and Umatilla counties — decided to leave voters out of the discussion.

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.

OUR VIEW

Business tax increase feels good, but effect is bad

The (Bend) Bulletin

Oregon voters might be asked to approve a major increase in business taxes next year. Yet the measure itself is written to tug at heartstrings and hide the fact that it would be bad for Oregon.

The measure would increase the corporate minimum tax on companies with sales of more than $25 million. The change is complicated, but it would include a tax of 2.5 percent on sales of that $25 million and elimination of the tax cap. Moreover, it would send the proceeds, which supporters say will be in the neighborhood of $2.6 billion annually, to schools, health care and senior citizens.

What's not to like? Plenty.

First, the $2.6 billion doesn't rain down like manna from heaven. That would be $2.6 billion out of businesses that wouldn't have that money to pay workers or invest in improving and expanding their companies.

Sales and profits are also two different things. Automobile dealers, for example, make relatively little on each vehicle they sell, and the tax proposed could effectively wipe out most of whatever profit they currently make.

Moreover, their ability to increase their profits is limited — it takes more people than you might think to run a car dealership, for example, and other overhead costs are often not within a local dealer's control.

Then there's this: While Oregon generally rates well where business tax burdens are concerned, it's not because our direct corporate taxes are low. In fact, according to measurements from the nonpartisan Tax Foundation, our corporate tax rate actually is pretty high by comparison with other states.

Our saving grace, the foundation notes, is our lack of sales tax and low property-tax rates. Oregonians have shown little interest in imposing the former, and the property-tax relief movement of the 1990s and subsequent legislation gave us the latter.

Taxes aside, Oregon has other things that make the state unattractive for some businesses, among them a relatively poorly educated workforce (think a pathetic high school graduation rate) and a regulatory structure that can be enough to make a grown executive weep.

Add it all together, and the only conclusion to draw is simple. This state has work to do to make it a great place to do business, and it wouldn't take much to send some businesses elsewhere. The largest ever corporate tax increase could only make that task far more difficult.

OTHER VIEWS

Anyone but Ted Cruz

FRANK BRUNI
Comment

You're evaluating candidates for an open job in your company, and you come across one who makes a big impression.

He's clearly brilliant — maybe smarter than any of the others. He's a whirlwind of energy. And man oh man, can he give a presentation. On any subject, he's informed, inflamed, precise.

But then you talk with people who've worked with him at various stages of his career. They dislike him.

No, scratch that.

They loathe him.

They grant him all of the virtues that you've observed but tell you that he's the antithesis of a team player. His thirst for the spotlight is unquenchable. His arrogance is unalloyed. He actually takes pride in being abrasive, as if a person's tally of detractors measures his fearlessness, not his obnoxiousness.

> Cruz generates antipathy of an entirely different magnitude.

Do you hire this applicant?

No way.

And that's why voters should be wary — very wary — of Ted Cruz.

He's surging. I warned you about this. In a poll of Republicans in Iowa last week, he was in a statistical tie with Donald Trump for the lead.

More and more Republican insiders talk about a battle between Cruz and Marco Rubio for the nomination, or about a three-way, if you will, among Cruz, Rubio and Trump.

And in the voices of these insiders I hear horror, because Trump and Cruz are nasty pieces of work.

Cruz will work overtime in the months ahead to persuade you otherwise. The religious right already adores him, but to go the distance, he needs more support from other, less conservative Republicans, and he knows it. Expect orchestrated glimpses of a high-minded Cruz, less skunk than statesman, his sneer ceding territory to a smile.

You saw this in recent debates. He chided moderators for mean-spirited questions. He bemoaned the pitting of one Republican against another. The audacity of those complaints was awe-inspiring: Cruz rose to national prominence with gratuitous, overwrought tirades against fellow party members and with a complete lack of deference to elders in the Senate, which he entered in January 2013, at age 42.

He likened Senate Republicans who recognized the impossibility of defunding Obamacare to Nazi appeasers. They took note.

"As Cruz gains, GOP senators rally for Rubio" said the headline of a story this week in Politico, which explained: "The idea of Cruz as the nominee is enough to send shudders down the spines of most Senate Republicans." Support for Rubio is the flower of anyone-but-Cruz dread.

Anyone but Cruz: That's the leitmotif of his life, stretching back to college at Princeton. His freshman roommate, Craig Mazin, told Patricia Murphy of The Daily Beast: "I would rather have anybody else be the president of the United States. Anyone. I would rather pick somebody from the phone book."

It's not easy to come across on-the-record quotes like that, and Mazin's words suggest a disdain that transcends ideology. They bear heeding.

So does Cruz's experience in the policy shop of George W. Bush's 2000 presidential campaign. After Bush took office, other full-time advisers got plum jobs in the White House. Cruz was sent packing to the Siberia of the Federal Trade Commission.

Political strategist Matthew Dowd, who worked for Bush back then, tweeted that "if truth serum was given to the staff of the 2000 Bush campaign," an enormous percentage of them "would vote for Trump over Cruz."

Another Bush 2000 alumnus said to me: "Why do people take such an instant dislike to Ted Cruz? It just saves time."

His three signature moments in the Senate have been a florid smearing of Chuck Hagel with no achievable purpose other than attention for Ted Cruz, a flamboyant rebellion against Obamacare with no achievable purpose other than attention for Ted Cruz, and a fiery protest of federal funding for Planned Parenthood with no achievable purpose other than attention for Ted Cruz. Notice any pattern?

Asked about Cruz at a fundraiser last spring, John Boehner responded by raising a lone finger — the middle one.

More recently, Senate Republicans denied Cruz a procedural courtesy that's typically pro forma.

"That is different than anything I've ever seen in my years here," Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., told *The Washington Post*.

Many politicians rankle peers. Many have detractors. Cruz generates antipathy of an entirely different magnitude. It's so pronounced and so pervasive that he's been forced to acknowledge it, and he spins it as the price invariably paid by an outsider who challenges the status quo, clings to principle and never backs down.

No, it's the fruit of a combative style and consuming solipsism that would make him an insufferable, unendurable president. And if there's any sense left in this election and mercy in this world, it will undo him soon enough.

■

Frank Bruni has been an Op-Ed columnist for The New York Times since June 2011.

YOUR VIEWS

Will be hard to vet 45,000 Syrian refugees

In the wake of the November attacks in Paris, there is elevated concern that terrorists connected with ISIS will use the mass movement of refugees and economic migrants in the world to gain access to the United States. A recent ABC News Poll taken Nov. 16-18, says 54 percent of Americans oppose taking in refugees even after they have been screened by security.

President Obama is expanding an overly generous admission program up to 10,000 Syrian refugees with 45,000 worldwide refugees over the next two years. Oregon Governor Kate Brown says the state will take in Syrian refugees.

Once settled, refugees are given expedited access to legal permanent residency and are put on a fast track to citizenship, which they can seek after four years.

Difficult vetting procedures: It is especially difficult to vet refugees from war-torn areas where there has been a complete breakdown of government control and authority. Problems often begin with name identification, which is necessary to establish past history and whether they have been imprisoned or affiliated with an insurgency. Due to this lack of documentation and inability to conduct name identification, FBI director James Comey noted in his testimony before the House Committee on Homeland Security, "if someone has never made a ripple in the pond in Syria in a way that would get their identity or their interest reflected in our database, we can query our database until the cows come home, but there will be nothing show up because we have no record of them."

Radicalization: In addition to the threat of radicals slipping through gaps in the system, there is also a threat of radicalization once refugees are present in the United States. According to a November 2014 report by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, 13 percent of Syrian refugees have a view of ISIS that is at least "positive to some extent," with 4 percent having a "positive" view. Given ISIS' history of effective propagandizing via social media, it is likely that they will be able to capitalize on some of these predilections.

Congressional action: Congress should move forward a policy with a thorough and transparent vetting process. The Dec. 11 appropriations deadline provides an opportunity for Congress to use a legislative rider defunding the president's expansion, after which Congress will work with security experts to pass legislation establishing a screening process and mechanism for lawmakers to affirm the administration is implementing the new process correctly.

Donald Crawford
Klamath Falls

Former *East Oregonian* editor will be missed

Richard Hensley died this week.

I got to know Richard when he was managing editor of the *East Oregonian*.

When he moved for another opportunity, we kept in touch via Facebook and I got to know him a little better.

Richard worked in a mine in Wyoming before going to community college and then becoming a journalist. This blue collar background endeared me to him even further. I could see how his life experiences tempered his editorial skills.

He was honest, balanced, and well-reasoned. He spoke from a position of experiential authority.

He knew what he was talking about because he had done something with his life before he began to write. He had what C.S. Lewis called (paraphrasing) a "formative" period of his life and an "informative" period. He learned and then he shared.

Richard was a comfortable person. When I think of him, I think of polls he would take on Facebook. He would ask questions about favorite sandwiches, favorite songs, funniest jokes or stories. He was hopeful, witty, entertaining, and edifying in a world of despair, ignorance, indiscretion and turmoil.

Some journalists, lacking life experience, attempt to go about their craft, selling newspapers by being unduly critical of others, being divisive, and seeking conflict and controversy where none is to be found. There are those who go about maligning the character or efforts of others. This is cheap and lazy. Some journalists report the news with courage, objectivity and wisdom. They get their facts straight and realize the power of the printed word. Richard Hensley was the latter.

I will miss him.

Kim B. Puzey
Hermiston

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.