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OUR VIEW

An alternative avenue to nicotine

The state of Oregon has outlawed the indoor smoking of e-cigarettes, also known as vaping.

Opponents of the burgeoning industry are encouraged by the news. They say that vaping causes harm to the user's health, even though the exact nature of the effect is not yet known. And its fruity flavors and hip marketing targets new smokers and teenagers, roping in a new generation of nicotine addicts after a generation of progress in reducing those numbers. Until we know more about the effect on health, as well as the social implications, they argue harsh regulations are needed to restrict vaping from public spaces.

But proponents, a growing number of whom are public health professionals, say that vaping offers a clear way to reduce the harmful effects of smoking. It gets nicotine to the brain of those who have become dependent on it, but without the carcinogens that accompany burning tobacco. That includes "tar," which is the main cause of health problems associated with smoking.

It comes down to a philosophical discussion: Is it worth promoting something unhealthy, when the alternative is likely worse?

It's a debate that doesn't just revolve around e-cigarettes. We've long been arguing about making condoms available in high schools, about providing clean needles to heroin addicts, even giving welfare to the unemployed.

What helps limit damage and

suffering, and what encourages unhealthy behavior?

There is no right answer.

Joe Nocera, an opinion columnist for the *New York Times* whose work we have occasionally run on this page, has described e-cigarettes as a public health opportunity. He has argued they can be a tool used to reduce unnecessary deaths.

"Even though cigarettes result in 480,000 American deaths each year — and even though it is the tobacco, not the nicotine, that kills them — many in the public health community treat e-cigarettes as every bit as evil," he wrote in May.

More research is needed, and much of that research is already underway. We need to know long term health effects. We need to understand who e-cigarette users are. Are they vaping only when they can't smoke cigarettes, or are they vaping to help them quit the real thing?

For now — and until solid scientific evidence tells us otherwise — we should operate under the assumption that e-cigarettes are bad for us. They should be illegal for minors to purchase or use.

But the state should look for ways to make vaping easier and cheaper than smoking the old-fashioned way. Because we already know that e-cigarettes lack the most dangerous ingredients in cigarettes. The more smokers we can convince to change their method of receiving nicotine, the more lives that can be saved.

Is it worth promoting something unhealthy, when the alternative is likely worse?

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

Presidential debates need less entertainment, more substance

The Kansas City Star

Republican presidential candidates are reaping high television ratings for their entertaining but empty-calorie debates.

Meanwhile, Democratic candidates are attracting smaller audiences but holding more substantial interactions on issues that matter to Americans such as health care, foreign policy and the future of the U.S. economy.

Exhibit A: Contrast last Thursday's GOP food fight with Sunday's feisty Democratic event.

The bloated Republican field tussled over who can cling more strongly to guns, whether Ted Cruz is an American citizen and how Donald Trump really, really loves "New York values" (whatever those are).

The candidates seemed eager to get in personal digs as often as possible. Recall Chris Christie's retort when Marco Rubio tried to speak: "You already had your chance, Marco. You blew it." Or Rubio's critique of the Trump-Cruz feud as an "episode of Court TV." How presidential.

Meanwhile, Ben Carson remained a non-entity in the campaign, and John Kasich said something serious that no one remembers.

In a rare adult-in-the-room comment, Jeb Bush properly rebuffed Trump's proposed ban on Muslims entering America. "This policy," he said, "is a policy that makes it impossible to build the coalition necessary to hit ISIS."

Remember that moment? Probably not because Trump quickly shot back, "I want security for this country." Score one for sound bite over public policy.

Three days later, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders took the stage to continue their surprisingly competitive battle for primary votes. (Yes, the well-meaning Martin O'Malley was on the stage, too. Enough said.)

As is usually the case, Clinton No character style: a former secretary of state. No character style: flashed her comprehensive and superior knowledge of foreign policy issues, though she reminded some people of her vulnerabilities in that arena as well. She correctly criticized Sanders for voting "with the gun lobby numerous times" and pointed out that his newly unveiled

single payer health care plan would go absolutely nowhere in Congress.

Sanders did provide clarity between some of his positions and Clinton's. Sanders offered the appealing impression that he'd like to throw greedy big bankers in jail as part of Wall Street reforms, while Clinton has reaped millions of their dollars in speaking fees. Sanders had an effective attack line: "I don't take money from big banks, I don't get personal speaking fees from Goldman Sachs."

Still, as his comments on health care and bankers show, Sanders the democratic socialist doesn't live in this political moment's real world of how U.S. policy can effectively get crafted.

For example, the better approach for a Democratic president working with a likely Republican-controlled Congress would be finding ways to make incremental fixes to the Affordable Care Act so millions more Americans can benefit from decent health care coverage.

That there's even a discussion about health care initiatives among the Democrats is far better than the GOP scum over the issue, which one can boil down to the tired and simplistic "repeal and replace."

Clinton punctuated her performance with some forceful and much-needed outrage over the toxic-water scandal of Flint, Mich., the kind of real-life issue that her small-government, safety-net-averse GOP opponents haven't come close to addressing.

Soon, voters are going to weigh in and make their choices, starting with the Iowa caucuses on Feb. 1. Elections follow in New Hampshire on Feb. 9 and South Carolina on Feb. 20, and then a flood of voters troop to the polls on Super Tuesday, March 1.

By that time, the 2016 presidential race likely will be a lot more settled. Or ... one or both parties could have chaos on their hands and be headed toward a brokered national convention this summer. Americans would benefit greatly if candidates would discuss their real differences on serious issues.

The juvenile posturing among the gaggle of Republican candidates may be great for TV ratings. But it's not a good way to help people select someone who might be the next president of the United States.



OTHER VIEWS

Time for a conspiracy!

Members of the Republican governing class are like cowering freshmen at halftime of a high school football game. Some are part of the Surrender Caucus, sitting sullenly on their stools resigned to the likelihood that their team is going to get crushed. Some are thinking of jumping ship to the Trump campaign with an alacrity that would make rats admire and applaud.

Rarely has a party so passively accepted its own self-destruction. Sure, Donald Trump and Ted Cruz are now riding high in some meaningless head-to-head polls against Hillary Clinton, but the odds are the nomination of either would lead to a party-decimating general election.

The Tea Party, Ted Cruz's natural vehicle, has 17 percent popular support, according to Gallup. The idea that most women, independents or mainstream order-craving suburbanites would back a guy who declares his admiration for Vladimir Putin is a mirage. The idea that the GOP can march into the 21st century intentionally alienating every person of color is borderline insane.

Worse is the prospect that one of them might somehow win. Very few presidents are so terrible that they genuinely endanger their own nation, but Trump and Cruz would go there and beyond. Trump is a solipsistic branding genius whose "policies" have no contact with Planet Earth and who would be incapable of organizing a coalition, domestic or foreign.

Cruz would be as universally off-putting as he has been in all his workplaces. He's always been good at tearing things down but incompetent when it comes to putting things together.

So maybe it's time for governing Republicans to actually do something. Yes, I'm talking to you state legislators, or local committeepersons, or members of Congress and all your networks of donors and supporters. If MoveOn can organize, if the Tea Party can organize, if Justin Bieber can build a gigantic social media movement, why are you incapable of any collective action at all?

What's needed is a grass-roots movement that stands for governing conservatism, built both online and through rallies, and gets behind a single candidate sometime in mid- to late February. In politics, if A (Trump) and B (Cruz) savage each other then the benefits often go to Candidate C. But there has to be a C, not a C, D, E, F and G.

This new movement must come to grips with two realities. First, the electorate has changed. Less-educated voters are in the middle of a tidal wave of trauma. Labor force participation is dropping, wages are sliding, suicide rates are rising, heroin addiction is



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

rising, faith in American institutions is dissolving.

Second, the Republican Party is not as antigovernment as its elites think it is. Its members no longer fit into the same old ideological categories. Trump grabbed his lead with an ideological grab bag of gestures, some of them quite on the left. He is more Huey Long than Calvin Coolidge.

Given the current strains on middle- and working-class families, many Republican voters want a government that will help the little guy; they just don't want one that is incompetent, corrupt or infused with liberal social values.

Governing conservatism has to offer people a secure financial base and a steady hand up.

In addition, younger voters and college-educated voters are more moderate than party leaders. According to one of the smartest conservative analysts, Henry Olsen, somewhere around 35 to 40 percent of the GOP electorate is only "somewhat conservative."

What's needed is a coalition that combines Huey Long, Charles Colson and Theodore Roosevelt:

working-class populism, religious compassion and institutional reform.

Years ago, reform conservatives were proposing a Sam's Club Republicanism, which would actually provide concrete policy ideas to help the working class, like wage subsidies, a higher earned-income tax credit, increased child tax credits, subsidies for people who wanted to move in search of work and exemption of the first \$20,000 in earnings from the Medicaid payroll tax. This would be a conservatism that emphasized social mobility at the bottom, not cutting taxes at the top.

Maybe it's time a center-right movement actually offered that agenda.

And maybe it's time some Republicans took a stand on what is emerging as the central dispute of our time — not between left and right but between open and closed. As the political scientist Matthew MacWilliams has found, the key trait that identifies Trump followers is authoritarianism. His central image is a wall. With their emphasis on anger and shutting people out, Trump and Cruz are more like European conservatives than American ones.

Governing conservatism has to offer people a secure financial base and a steady hand up so they can welcome global capitalism with hope and a sense of opportunity. That's the true American tradition, emphasizing future dynamism not tribal walls. There's a silent majority of hopeful, practical, programmatic Republicans. You know who you are.

Please don't go quietly and pathetically into the night.

David Brooks became a *New York Times* Op-Ed columnist in September 2003.

YOUR VIEWS

Occupation not a legal way to protest government

As Southern Oregon Veterans for Peace, we oppose the inappropriate (and likely illegal) occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and Sanctuary, property of the American people and Native American sacred lands, by this self-proclaimed and misnamed militia, who are armed and threatening our public servants and law enforcement.

If they wish to protest an action by our elected government there are many appropriate and legal ways to express their opinions, and opinion is all their expressions are, as they are not the constitutional scholars that they somehow feel themselves to be.

We fully approve and support the restraint and measured approach by the FBI and local officials in Harney County, Burns and others involved in avoiding bloodshed in the foolhardy gambit by a handful of misguided malcontents. Let's not make them martyrs. They are no doubt not as brave as they think and would no doubt run from it.

We ask that these ragtag lawbreakers be starved out with no power, and arrested as they attempt to depart. We also ask the BLM to revisit their grazing fees and policies for those like the Bundy clan who refuse to pay and graze their cattle freely on our property, while their neighbors pay their fair share

Daniel Davis, President
Southern Oregon Veterans for Peace
Talent, Ore.

Immigrants ruining America, taking over the country

Does anyone remember Rajneeshpuram? When the Rajneeshes were trying to take over Antelope, Oregon, they brought in busloads of people. Most were street people and undesirables. The reason they brought them in was to register to vote to take over Antelope and possibly the county. Remember how frightened the citizens of Antelope, Madras, and The Dalles were?

Well looky here, folks, the gang from Washington, D.C., has done the same thing with letting in any and all illegal folks. Same scenario, only on a grand scale. Oregon will now allow any and all people in. If one wants to lose all liberty, let 'em come.

Take the time to think about what happened and connect the consequences. Ask yourself, could this happen? It could and could not, just deliberate about it.

There have been periods of time in this country where we would not allow emigrants in this United States for years at a time — 1950 through 1962, so that the previous emigrants had a time to assimilate. The people that come in now form their own section of their homeland and don't want to assimilate.

This is not an absolute statement, it is the majority of individuals. We are losing our country one step at a time thanks to the lords and dukes of Washington.

Roesch Kishpaugh
Pendleton