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OUR VIEW

It is time to take another look at drug charges

It's a notable and important development that Oregon sheriffs and police chiefs are recommending simple drug-possession charges be treated as misdemeanors instead of felonies in certain circumstances. It's also crucial that such a step — if taken — doesn't lead to an anything-goes attitude to illicit drugs.

As denoted by our state's enthusiastic legalization of recreational marijuana, Oregon is inclined to be a leader when it comes to re-examining legal and social strategies for dealing with drugs. Along with Washington, Colorado, Alaska and a growing rank of other states that have abandoned a losing struggle against a substance many regard as less harmful than alcohol, Oregon police now are ready to scrap the century-old orthodoxy that punishment is the best way to discourage possession and use of other drugs.

The law enforcement groups note that felony convictions "include unintended and collateral consequences including barriers

to housing and employment and a disparate impact on minority communities." In essence, conviction on a drug-possession charge can condemn a person to circumstances that make life permanently more difficult. This can have the contradictory result

Convicted users should be given individualized, mandated treatment.

of paving the way for future drug use by hopeless and marginalized citizens.

Convicted users should instead be given individualized, mandated treatment. Such a consequence isn't a slap on the wrist, carrying with it the likelihood of financial cost, loss of personal time and the embarrassment that accompanies being required to get help. But the cost to offenders and to taxpayers would be far less than prosecuting a felony case, imprisonment and years of follow-up.

Legislators must weigh the options carefully before any change is made. It seems likely, however, in a time of severely strained law enforcement and criminal justice budgets that some degree of experimentation is both desirable and inevitable.

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.

YOUR VIEWS

Bond not getting it right the first time

A logical step in a public safety program would grow facilities as the city grows, and follow a pattern that was successful in the past. That would be to at least attempt to collocate the police, fire, and city management in a single central location such as we had at one time in the old city hall, and relocate if necessary, in the direction of growth. Our city planners, on the other hand, have relocated the police department at the airport in an apparent effort to accelerate wear and tear on police cars and give officers much needed training in high-speed pursuits as they race into town on Westgate and down Dorion.

Now comes the decision to locate the new fire station at the opposite end of town and away from growth. It will, however, include a small satellite police operation at an added expense to compensate for the distance between the two facilities. Perhaps this is meant to justify the added lieutenant's position at the police department.

At a recent city council meeting, I learned a new term which I was previously unfamiliar with: "Contingency Fund." In the latest proposal for the nearly \$10 million bond proposal, presented by the fire chief, it was noted that the request for the new fire trucks was dropped to keep the bond under \$10 million, as that was deemed the maximum amount acceptable to voters. Remember when it was around \$6 million? It was later explained to me that the "Contingency Fund" included in the bond request would be ample to cover the cost of the new engines. I guess it is true, there is more than one way to skin a cat.

So where does that leave us? Have we not learned anything from past mistakes? Will we build the new fire station in the wrong place and not plan for collocating the police in the same central location sometime in the future? Since they have decided not to include the demolition of the old fire station, will the city end up with another empty building that does not fit their vision of the "River Walk" plan?

Tune in again in November to hear the next episode of the continuing saga of "Decision 2016 and Beyond, The Future of the Pendleton Public Safety Program," and at election time, let the city planners know this bond is not getting it right the first time.

Rick Rohde
Pendleton

We can protect ourselves from climate change

The landmark Paris Agreement on climate change will go into effect November 1 by a coalition of the world's largest polluters and small island nations threatened by rising seas. Citizens of these nations and all of us need to pay closer attention to the issues that concern us.

We, the people, need to keep an eye open as trackers. What is really going on in our universe?

A lot. Let's take global warming. It reflects partisan division throughout the universe but within our nation, a democracy that still leads the world. Lawmakers fuss and discuss but there has never been a definitively majority opinion. Environmental protection is mandatory.

The Environmental Protection Agency has warned us to combat climate change; whether you raise livestock, drive a car, own a factory, grow grapes or cut trees, almost everything a person does affects our environment. We need to be more careful.

It has been almost ten months since world leaders met in Paris and formed an agreement on climate change. It's the largest step the world has ever taken toward combating global climate change. The leaders agreed we need to reduce global carbon emissions and commit to a low carbon future.

America (the United States) was a leader at the Paris accords, and the agreement sets the framework of less carbon pollution that threatens our planet, employment and economic growth driven by low carbon investment.

The United States Global Change Research program is a government-wide effort to help us understand what's happening now so we can better protect the future. We have skeptics, but our warmest year was 2015. We have seen more dangerous wildfires and devastating droughts. In Alaska and as far south as Miami, coastal towns are being lost to high tides and the seas.

We, the people, can protect ourselves from climate change and we have been the global leaders by setting new environmental standards. We need to enforce these standards for future generations.

This is one of the most significant missions we have on earth. We must pursue measures that implement our state's goals.

Dorys Grover
Pendleton



OTHER VIEWS

Hillary's spoiled prize

Perhaps something extraordinary will happen in the third debate. Maybe there's some other surprise in the offing. Barring that, it really does look and feel as if Hillary Clinton is wrapping this thing up. I expect that on Nov. 9, the morning after the vote, we'll be talking about the election of the first female president of the world's most powerful nation.

And we'll be breathing an epic sigh of relief: that Donald Trump isn't bound for the White House; that the ugliness of the campaign is at last behind us.

But, oh, the ugliness still ahead. Trump isn't going anywhere, nor are his provocations. It was the birther conspiracy yesterday; it will be something else tomorrow. And Clinton isn't trading war for peace. Her presidency, should it indeed happen, will be a battle royal. The circumstances surrounding it are as politically daunting and inhospitable to accomplishment as those facing any of her predecessors over the last half-century.

Let's start with Congress, which can play partner or spoiler in a president's legislative agenda. As much of a drag as Trump may be on some House Republicans seeking a new term, the GOP is still predicted to retain its majority in the House, because that majority is its largest in more than eight decades.

"Democrats are likely to gain seats, just not the 30 they need for the majority," said Nathan Gonzales, the editor and publisher of the Rothenberg & Gonzales Political Report, a nonpartisan newsletter that tracks congressional races, among others.

And nearly all of the seats that Republicans are projected to lose, he said, are those of relatively moderate lawmakers. It's not the hyper-conservative members of the Freedom Caucus who are on the run. They're from safely Republican districts. They're fine. They'll be back — and, proportionally, they'll be a bigger, more forceful presence among the Republicans remaining in the House.

But wouldn't they be cowed by their party's shrunken majority and failure to win the White House? Mightn't they sand down their edges in an effort to repair the party's image, improve its fortunes and make certain that it didn't lose yet more seats in 2018?

Gonzales chuckled. "The short answer is no," he told me when we spoke late last week. "What's often missed about the Freedom Caucus is that the majority is less of a priority for them than having a pure ideology."

Comity isn't their thing. Already, some House conservatives have called for hearings about Clinton's emails after any Clinton inauguration; one of them has already raised the specter of impeachment. At this stage, it's in the very DNA of the relationship between Clintons and Republicans for there to be dire threats, special investigations, public grilling. It's a reflex, a tic. Not even a landslide on Nov. 8 would change that.

If a Clinton administration and a Senate with a Democratic majority drafted legislation with genuinely bipartisan appeal, it's always possible that Paul Ryan or some other House speaker could pass it over the truculent objections of the most conservative House members, with a combination of less strident Republicans and Democrats.

But there would be enormous political peril in that for the speaker, and that assumes a mindset in the Senate that may not exist. Let's say the Democrats get a very narrow Senate majority, which is my best guess. It would include a progressive wing emboldened by how well the Bernie Sanders insurgency did and how large Elizabeth Warren has come to loom.



FRANK BRUNI
Comment

It would also be encouraged by the promises that Clinton has made. She has not tempered her primary-season proposals and moved to the center in the way that sometimes happens during the general election; her contest with Trump hasn't been a typical one with the usual fault lines and pressures.

"I noticed, during the primary season, that the progressives in the Senate were getting quite bold, pushing their issues harder," said Jennifer Duffy, a senior editor who analyzes Senate races for the nonpartisan Cook Political Report.

They could be a voting bloc of 14, by Duffy's estimate, and she told me, "They're not so much into compromise." At the

Many of the votes (Clinton) gets on Nov. 8 will come from people more committed to suppressing Trump than to elevating her.

same time, many of the Democratic senators who are up for re-election in 2018 are from states — Missouri, North Dakota, West Virginia, Indiana, Montana, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Florida — in which too liberal a voting record could be a liability. That's a recipe for significant tension among Senate Democrats.

Clinton wouldn't have it easy with Congress. Would she have it any easier with the American public? Many of the votes she gets

on Nov. 8 will come from people more committed to suppressing Trump than to elevating her; in a Gallup poll following her strong performance in the first debate, the percentage of voters who viewed her unfavorably (54 percent) was still 12 points higher than the percentage who viewed her favorably (42 percent).

That spread was 15 points in a CNN poll over the same period. No president in modern history has taken office after such sustained unpopularity in the runup to the election.

And no president in my lifetime has confronted what Clinton surely will: an opponent who is vanquished but not remotely humbled. Trump can no more surrender the spotlight than an aardvark can swear off ants. And at no point in this campaign — or in his life, for that matter — has he demonstrated an interest in the public good that approaches his interest in his own celebrity.

Mitt Romney, John McCain, John Kerry, Al Gore: All of them lowered their voices and ceded the stage to the men who got the trophy they sought. Trump has made clear that he won't extend the same courtesy to the woman poised to beat him.

He has been wailing without shame or cause about a "rigged" election, and after saying in the first debate that he would accept Americans' verdict if they chose Clinton, he suggested in an interview with *The Times*' Patrick Healy and Maggie Haberman that he wouldn't. Better to undermine and try to delegitimize her administration. It'll keep the television cameras around.

If Election Day saves us from a Trump presidency, it won't rescue us from the forces that have given him such currency: crippling partisanship, intense polarization, aversion to compromise. Disaster will be averted; dysfunction will carry on.

And after as much toil and turbulence as just about anyone en route to the presidency has weathered, Clinton will clutch her prize and turn to an ambitious agenda, some of which shouldn't be all that divisive. (Infrastructure, anyone?) But to enact much of it, she'll need more than brains, skill and tenacity.

The way things look now, it's going to take a miracle.

Frank Bruni, an Op-Ed columnist for *The New York Times* since June 2011, joined the newspaper in 1995.

LETTERS POLICY

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