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OUR VIEW

Grocers right to be concerned about tax

Grocers are going on the offensive long before a predicted tax battle begins, and it's probably a good thing.

Last week the The Northwest Grocery Association filed the paperwork to petition for a ballot measure in 2018 to constitutionally bar taxes on food. The initiative would prohibit taxes at every point of food sales, from production, processing, wholesale and retail, with the exception of meals served at restaurants. It would not include alcoholic beverages, marijuana products or tobacco products.

According to the initiative's language, it would go beyond just banning a sales tax — it would prohibit "a gross receipts tax, commercial activity tax, value-added tax, excise tax, privilege tax, and any other similar tax on the sale of groceries."

The association's action comes as public employee unions pursue placing a corporate sales tax on the ballot in 2018, a pared-down version of the ill-conceived Measure 97 gross receipts tax defeated in 2016. Grocers were a major opponent of Measure 97.

Food is a necessity and shouldn't be taxed.

Under the proposed measure, the food industry would continue to pay corporate income tax, and the sales of other household goods and pet food still would be subject

to taxes. The campaign will need to collect 117,578 signatures by July 2018 to win a place on the general election ballot the following November.

Joe Gilliam, the association's president, said the initiative's intent is "just protecting people's access to food and only food for human consumption."

Gilliam is right, food is a necessity and shouldn't be taxed.

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

Misogyny alive in media, Republican opposition

A better headline from your recent editorial entitled "Two men enter, one tax plan leaves" (Page A4, July 12) would have been "Step aside, ladies, and let the men take over."

Whether the unnamed authors realize it or not, your editorial is the perfect example of the kind of misogyny that is still rampant in Oregon politics, despite our state's reputation for having strong women leaders. The not-so-subtle message of your editorial is that the women in leadership — Gov. Kate Brown, House Speaker Tina Kotek, House Majority Leader Jennifer Williamson, Senate Majority Leader Ginny Burdick — should step away quietly and give their seat at the table to a man.

This is sexist belittling, pure and simple. It's not far removed from the head-patting insults delivered by opponents of women's suffrage, who believed that only men were mentally capable of making important decisions at the ballot. It's 2017, and we're still dealing with this nonsense from politicians, pundits, and unfortunately the news media.

We've heard exactly this same thing from Republican leaders in recent days. House Republican Leader Mike McLane announced a list of legislators he thinks should take over revenue reform — and they were all men.

When a reporter from *The Oregonian* called him out for implying that none of the women in the



JILLIAN SCHOENE
Comment

legislature were up to the task, he said he was just looking for people with "big ol' brains." Rep. McLane's unabashed sexism is shameful and beneath the leadership position he holds.

The fact is, strong women leaders in Oregon are responsible for the great strides our state has taken in the past several years. They are some of our best problem solvers, some of our boldest leaders, and role models who I am proud to hold up to Oregon's young people.

To me, this is a call to action: We desperately need greater diversity in Oregon's newsrooms — and in our state Capitol. We need more women, people of color, LGBTQ people, working class people, young people, and other historically silenced and powerless groups to make their voices heard both as news writers and news makers.

Together, we can build a future where sexist comments like the ones made by Rep. McLane and the *East Oregonian* editorial board are fewer and farther between. A future where hard-working women are recognized for their leadership rather than ignored, undermined — and asked to leave the room. A future where the people in positions of power are as diverse as our beautiful, growing state.

Jillian Schoene, of Portland, is executive director of Emerge Oregon, which works to train and encourage Democratic women to run for office.

YOUR VIEWS

GOP must find own ideas about taxes, health care

Once again, as has taken place on so many occasions over the past 70-plus years, our federal Congress and chief executive have managed to spin their wheels madly in the quest to "solve" this country's health care problems — only to end up producing yet another miserable "bust."

Republican Senator Mitch McConnell and President Donald Trump, who appeared fairly confident of their ability to completely annihilate the ACA when Trump assumed office last January, stand revealed now as politicians who in the end could not keep a very important promise. Despite their efforts, "Obamacare" still stands in spite of its imperfections.

While ineptness and legislative clumsiness certainly played a role in foiling the Republicans' anti-Obamacare plans, a much more important reason for McConnell's and Trump's humiliating letdown was simply the immensely unappealing

nature of their alleged "alternative" to the ACA. Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates forecast that the GOP's anti-Obamacare crusade would produce a massive increase in the number of health care paupers.

Conversely, Obamacare remains predicated on the notion that tens of millions of additional patients will stream into the health care system. This naturally has great appeal to doctors, HMOs, pharmaceutical interests and hospitals.

If the health care system can be likened to a store, then Obamacare is akin to a store that's packed with customers while the GOP's rival establishment stands bare of significant numbers of buyers.

Trump and the congressional GOP may have more luck "reforming" the tax system and initiating a meaningful public works program, but this will only occur if the Republicans decide to discipline themselves and truly function as a political party with sophisticated ideas.

Frank W. Goheen
Vancouver, Wash.



OTHER VIEWS

How cool works today

If you grew up in the 20th century, there's a decent chance you wanted to be like Miles Davis, Billie Holiday, Humphrey Bogart, Albert Camus, Audrey Hepburn, James Dean or Jimi Hendrix. In their own ways, these people defined cool.

The cool person is stoical, emotionally controlled, never eager or needy, but instead mysterious, detached and self-possessed. The cool person is gracefully competent at something, but doesn't need the world's applause to know his worth. That's because the cool person has found his or her own unique and authentic way of living with nonchalant intensity.

In his entertaining book "The Origins of Cool in Postwar America," Tulane historian Joel Dinerstein traces the diverse sources of this style — from the West African concept of "itutu," which means mystic coolness, to the British stiff upper lip mentality. Jazz musicians, especially people like Lester Young, brought these influences together into what we now call the cool style. Jazz influenced the film noir directors, and then carried cool over to France, where it was embraced by existentialists like Camus.

Dinerstein shows that cool isn't just a style, it's an "embodied philosophy" that is anchored in a specific generational circumstance. Cool was first of all a form of resistance and rebellion, a rejection of the innocence, optimism and consumer cheeriness that marked the mainstream postwar experience.

It emerged specifically within African-American culture, among people who had to withstand the humiliations of racism without losing their temper, and who didn't see any way to change their political situation. Cool culture in that context said, you can beat me but I am not beaten, you can oppress me but you can't own me.

It became a way of indicting society even if you were powerless, a way of showing your untrammelled dignity. It was then embraced by all those who felt powerless, whether they were dissident intellectuals or random teenagers.

Cool had other social meanings. It was a way of showing you weren't playing the whole Horatio Alger game; you weren't a smarmy career climber. It was a way to assert the value of the individual in response to failed collectivism — to communism and fascism, to organized religion. The cool person is guided by his or her own autonomous values, often on the outskirts of society.

To be cool was to be a moral realist. The cruelties of the wars had exposed the simplistic wholesomeness of good and evil middle-class morality. A character like Rick Blaine in "Casablanca" is trying to live by his own honor code in an absurd moral world.



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

In an interview, I asked Dinerstein if cool was dead. He said that cool may not be dead, but it is rare. You can see cool figures like Kendrick Lamar and Lorde, but it's hard to think of any contemporary cool movie icons in the manner of Bogart and Dean. Perhaps Robert Downey Jr. could have become one, Dinerstein said, but these days Hollywood pushes actors into the blockbuster mainstream.

The big difference, he continued, is technological. Fans viewed Miles Davis from afar. He was mysterious. Today because of social media, everybody is close up, present 24/7, familiar and un-iconic. That makes a huge difference in how public personalities are received.

I started to look around to see if there might be another contemporary ethos that has replaced the cool ethos. You could say the hipster ethos you find in, say, Brooklyn qualifies. But that strikes me as less of a cultural movement and more of a consumer aesthetic.

Cool isn't just a style, it's an "embodied philosophy."

A better candidate is the "woke" ethos. The modern concept of woke began, as far as anybody can tell, with a 2008 song by Erykah Badu. The woke mentality

became prominent in 2012 and 2013 with the Trayvon Martin case and the rise of Black Lives Matter. Embrace it or not, BLM is the most complete social movement in America today, as a communal, intellectual, moral and political force.

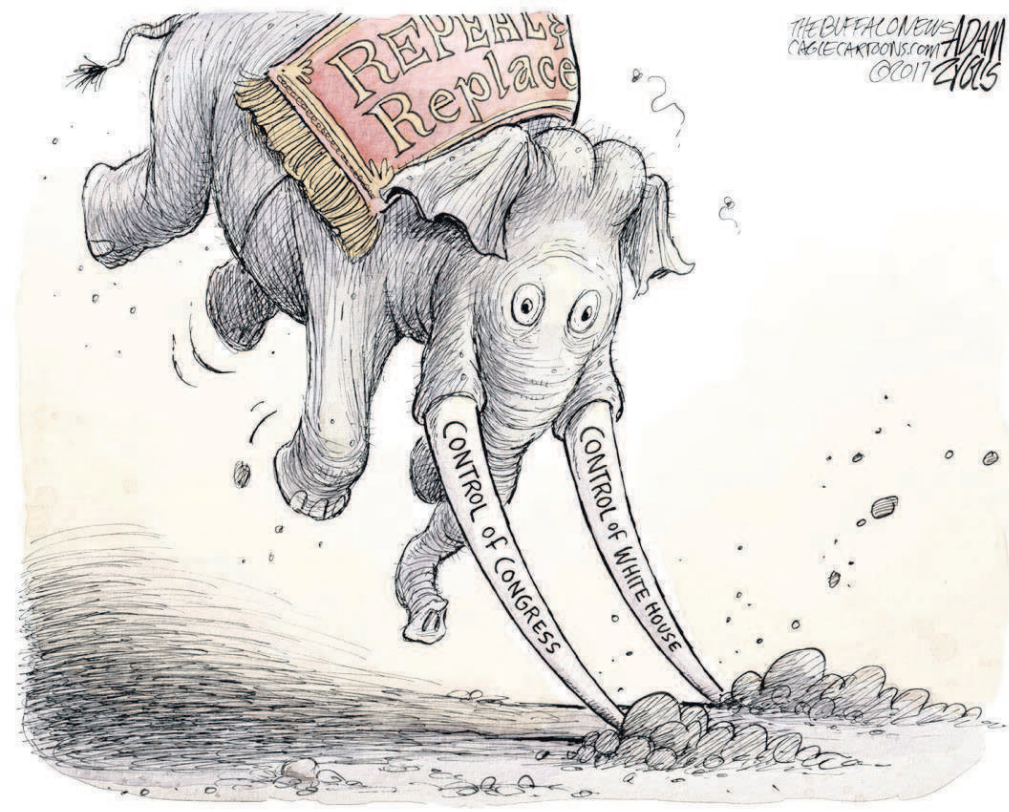
The woke mentality has since been embraced on the populist right, by the conservative "normals" who are disgusted with what they see as the thorough corruption of the Republican and Democratic establishments. See Kurt Schlichter's Townhall essay "We Must Elect Senator Kid Rock" as an example of right-wing wokedness.

To be woke is to be radically aware and justifiably paranoid. It is to be cognizant of the rot pervading the power structures. The woke manner shares cool's rebel posture, but it is the opposite of cool in certain respects.

Cool was politically detached, but being a social activist is required for being woke. Cool was individualistic, but woke is nationalistic and collectivist. Cool was emotionally reserved; woke is angry, passionate and indignant. Cool was morally ambiguous; woke seeks to establish a clear marker for what is unacceptable.

Culture is the collective response to the core problems of the times. Today's general disgust with institutions is producing a new style of collective action. It remains to be seen how substantive, rigorous and effective this new collective action will be.

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



LETTERS POLICY

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