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OUR VIEW

# Branching out in marijuana

Pendleton remains the only municipality in the area with legal marijuana sales.

That has been of benefit to the local industry, which has seen steady growth in dispensaries, employees, and sales since the drug became legal in the city. (That translates to growth in local tax receipts, too.)

That industry now has the opportunity to grow in a new direction. The owners of Kind Leaf, Pendleton's first and largest recreational dispensary, is asking the city for conditional use approval to open a two-acre marijuana grow at the former Riverside Nursery, 2612 N.E. Nursery Lane.

Co-owner Brandon Krenzler said they plan to use organic practices to farm marijuana at the location, which would supply the local store with its product.

The benefits of an expanding local business are clear. The old nursery location alongside the Umatilla River and Highway 11 has been vacant for years, a brown eyesore on what could be one of the most beautiful properties in the city. And local production of all kinds is the key to increasing much-needed employment in Pendleton. And furthermore, it fits the locally-made ethos of the moment, something that Travel Pendleton has been promoting about what makes the city

such a great place to visit. Yet there are risks with a marijuana farm, risks even beyond a marijuana storefront. It's not as easy to secure a grow operation — although it is certainly possible — and considering the worth of the product inside, you can bet Kind Leaf will button it up tight if they secure approval.

This all comes at the same time that U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions has threatened to crack down on the marijuana industry from a federal perspective, and state governments are asking the feds to do just the opposite.

It doesn't seem like the opportune time to invest millions in a mega-grow facility, which very well may be the future of the industry. Yet it does seem like the opportune time to try to secure a burgeoning local business, help simplify the supply chain and locate a taxpaying business within city limits.

If the grow operation proves successful, perhaps the supposedly pro-business Umatilla County Commissioners — who decided to ban marijuana businesses rather than giving the option to voters — may revisit their position.

Fertile, secure, remote, already-zoned farmlands are where marijuana grows would have the most benefit to local entrepreneurs.

**Marijuana both grown and sold locally fits the ethos of the moment — and it's something that tourism groups are trying to promote about Pendleton.**

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

## Legalize pot at federal level

The Eugene Register-Guard

Another significant voice has joined the growing chorus asking the federal government to change the way it deals with marijuana.

The National Conference of State Legislatures on Tuesday passed a resolution asking the federal government to change its classification of marijuana from Schedule I — which includes the most dangerous drugs, with no accepted medical use, a high potential for abuse and potentially severe psychological or physical dependence — to Schedule III — drugs with moderate to low potential for physical and psychological dependence.

A bipartisan group of Oregon lawmakers — including Senate Republican Leader Ted Ferrioli of John Day and Eugene Democratic Reps. Phil Barnhart and Julie Fahey — were in the forefront of the effort.

State legislators from across the country also renewed their efforts to help legal cannabis businesses gain access to banking services — now both a problem and a public safety risk — due to federal banking laws.

Under the current administration in Washington, D.C., however, these lawmakers are facing an uphill battle, despite growing national support for their position.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown and the governors of Alaska, Colorado and Washington — states that also have legalized recreational marijuana — earlier this year sent a letter inviting U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin “to engage with us” on the subject. They got a snarky response from Sessions.

In a letter to Brown, Sessions cited an Oregon State Police draft report raising concerns about black market marijuana and surplus marijuana from Oregon being sold out of state. “This report raises serious concerns about the efficacy of marijuana ‘regulatory structures’ in your state,” Sessions said, among other things.

Brown's office hasn't publicly responded to Sessions' letter, but state police told *The (Portland) Oregonian* that the report Sessions cited is preliminary and incomplete.

Marijuana has gradually become more accepted in mainstream America. When a John Day Republican supports removing cannabis from the Schedule I list, it's a strong indication this isn't a liberal, cause anymore.

The patchwork of laws and regulations relating to marijuana that has sprung up around the country makes no sense. But inconsistent laws do make it harder to regulate production and use of marijuana. They also make it difficult to do research on marijuana or raise public funds by taxing the industry.

Want to end the black market in marijuana? Make it legal and regulate it. Concerned about quality and safety? Make it legal and regulate it. Concerned about criminal elements being involved in marijuana? Make it legal and regulate it. Concerned about the impact of marijuana on the human body? Make it legal, clearing the way for research into its effects — including medicinal uses — that is now, with few exceptions, barred.

Continuing to treat marijuana as if it were heroin serves no useful purpose or the public interest.



OTHER VIEWS

## Start aiming for the gut

I was talking the other day to a wise executive friend and he recalled for me something his favorite boss liked to say: When people rise to the top of an organization and get power, they usually do one of two things: “They either swell or they grow.”

Donald Trump has swollen. Every character flaw he had before taking office — from his serial lying to his intellectual laziness to his loyalty just to himself and his needs — has grown only larger and more toxic as he has been president. He seems not to have grown a whit in the job. He has surprised only on the downside — never once challenging his own base with new thinking or appearing to be remotely interested in being president of all the people, not just his base.

What strikes me most about Trump, though, is how easily he still could become more popular — fast — if he just behaved like a normal leader for a month: if he reached out to Democrats on health care, taxes or infrastructure; stopped insulting every newsperson who writes critically about him; stopped lying; stopped tweeting inanities; and actually apologized for some of his most egregious actions and asked for forgiveness. Americans are a forgiving people.

With the Dow at 22,000 and unemployment at 4.3 percent, oh my God, this guy could actually become more popular outside his base without much effort. That's scary. But, as I said, it would require Trump doing something he has shown no ability or willingness to do — to grow in office, not just swell.

Still, Democrats would be wise not to count on Trump swelling forever or on Robert Mueller taking him down. Whatever happens, Democrats need to win the argument with at least some Trump/GOP voters. There are many ways for Democrats to counter any new and improved Trump. I'd start by acknowledging a simple fact: Some things are true even if Donald Trump believes them!

That is, Trump's core base of support — those people who he says would stick by him even if he shot someone “in the middle of Fifth Avenue” — are people who have heard and appreciated all his nativist dog whistles: from his slur that Barack Obama was not born in America to his focus on voter suppression to his restricting transgender people in the military to his reversing affirmative action and imposing immigration restrictions. That white nationalist constituency is beyond the reach — for good reason — of any Democratic candidate.

But Trump did not win, and could not win again, with that group alone. His genius was expanding beyond that nativist core with just enough votes in the right places to get him over the top — by pushing other buttons. These were things that many conservative and centrist voters believe in their guts, even if



THOMAS FRIEDMAN  
Comment

they don't articulate them.

Trump connects with these gut issues and takes them in a destructive direction. It's vital for Democrats to connect with them and take them in a constructive direction.

What issues? Here's my list:

- We can't take in every immigrant who wants to come here; we need, metaphorically speaking, a high wall that assures Americans we can control our border with a big gate that lets as many people in legally as we can effectively absorb as citizens.

- The Muslim world does have a problem with pluralism — gender pluralism, religious pluralism and intellectual pluralism — and suggesting that terrorism has nothing to do with that fact is naive; countering violent extremism means constructively engaging with Muslim leaders on this issue.

- Americans want a president focused on growing the economic pie, not just redistributing it. We do have a trade problem with China, which has reformed and closed instead of reformed and opened. We have an even bigger problem with automation wiping out middle-skilled work, and we need to generate more blue-collar jobs to anchor communities.

- Political correctness on college campuses has run ridiculously riot. Americans want leaders to be comfortable expressing patriotism and love of country when globalization is erasing national identities. America is not perfect, but it is, more often than not, a force for good in the world.

Voters don't listen through their ears. They listen through their stomachs. And when you connect with voters in their guts, they feel respected, and when they feel respected, they will listen to anything — including big issues that are true even if Democrats believe them. Such as the fact that a majority of Americans like Obamacare and want to see it built to last, and a majority of Americans do not like the way Trump is despoiling the environment and bringing back coal.

Indeed, the biggest wind power states in America — Texas, Iowa, Kansas, South Dakota, Oklahoma and North Dakota — are all red states. The Democrats literally have the wind at their backs on health care and clean energy.

But to be heard, they need candidates who can pass a gut check with the more moderate Trump/GOP voters. Just 10 percent of Trump voters would suffice. Trump's core base is solid, but he's clearly losing the soft support around his core. Democrats can grow into the soft support — as long as they're smart and Trump continues to just swell.

Thomas Friedman, a *New York Times* columnist, was awarded two Pulitzer Prizes for international reporting in Beirut and Israel and one for commentary.

**Trump connects with gut issues and takes them in a destructive direction.**



LETTERS POLICY

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