

O EAST OREGONIAN PINION

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Founded October 16, 1875

OUR VIEW

Vaping ban a wise course of action

The fact that the Oregon Liquor Control Commission is moving ahead to formulate plans to execute Gov. Kate Brown’s order that bans vaping products is good news.

A spokesman for the agency said in a story in this newspaper this week that once the commission OKs the ban, its staff could begin inspecting retailers immediately.

As many readers probably already know, Brown issued an executive order last week to ban flavored vaping products for six months. The ban is a reaction to a mysterious vaping illness that has sickened more than 1,000 people across the nation, and two dead in Oregon.

In our conservative part of the county, no one is particularly enamored when government steps in and proclaims the decision is for our “own good.” The Eastern Oregon mantra of live-and-let-live as long as you are not breaking the law remains vibrant. If you want to smoke, that’s your personal decision.

But in this case Brown made the



Gov. Kate Brown used her executive power last week to declare a six-month ban on flavored vaping products.

right move.

That’s because flavored vaping products are extremely popular and right now the product appears to be causing serious illnesses. The reason why people are apparently harmed by using the flavored vaping prod-

ucts is unknown. That makes it a general health hazard. When the health of the greater community — whether in small town Eastern Oregon or other parts of the nation — is at risk, government has a duty to act.

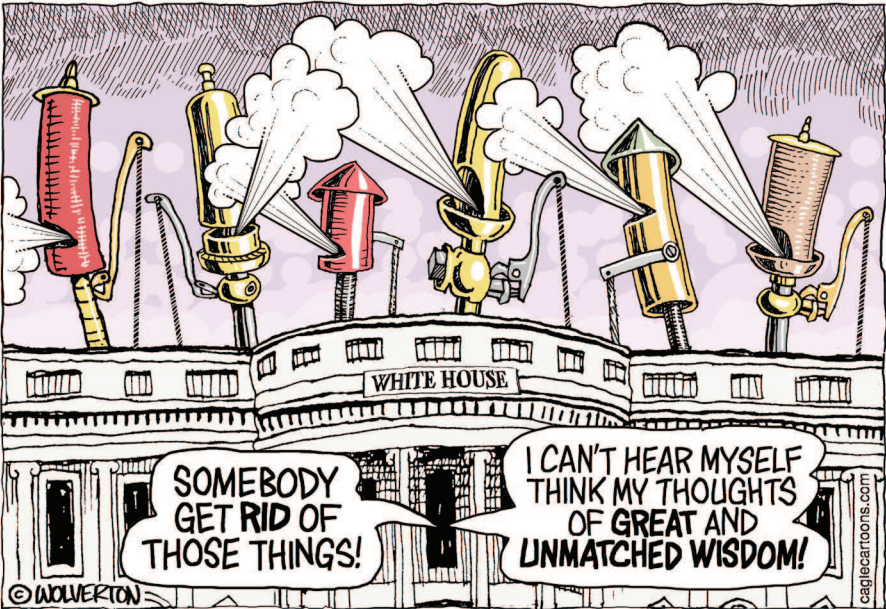
Public health isn’t a once-in-a-

while issue, but one that centers on our very way of life and our collective pursuit of happiness. So, the governor’s decision was a prudent one. A lot remains unknown about what is causing these vaping injuries. What, exactly, is the cause is something the nation’s medical community — spearheaded by the Centers for Disease Control — must discover.

Granted, the ban will impact small businesses that sell the product. No one in our part of the state likes to see small business — or business of any kind, for that matter — suffer an economic hardship. Building a prosperous business anywhere in America is tough, but it is particularly difficult in Eastern Oregon.

But in this case, a prudent course of action is far better than doing nothing and waiting for a medical solution that could take months or years to surface.

Until a definitive answer to the vaping illnesses can be found and proper steps created to deal with it, a ban makes sense. On this one the governor made the right move.



YOUR VIEWS

Hansell must address climate change, House Bill 2020

A recent article on *Oregon Public Broadcasting* detailed Oregon State Sen. Herman Baertschiger Jr.’s position on human-caused climate change. The inaccurate statements he posted on social media seem to be either a deliberate attempt to confuse voters regarding the urgency to act on House Bill 2020 (Oregon’s Clean Energy Jobs Bill) or a measure of his inability to separate his personal bias from settled science on rapid climate change at the expense of his constituents.

HB 2020 will be introduced into the Oregon Legislative short session in 2020 (just a few months away). This bill was the subject of much confusion during the 2019 legislative session and voters would benefit by taking time now to inform themselves on the purpose, need and content of this important bill.

Unfortunately, Sen. Bill Hansell, who represents Eastern Oregon, has expressed almost identical doubts as Sen. Baertschiger Jr.’s regarding the influence of humans on rapid climate change. In light of evidence showing that human actions are currently the main driver of rapid climate change, these doubts should not be part of any debate on HB 2020. In my opinion, these delaying tactics are elements of the Republican party-line position that no significant action is needed on climate change. Across the globe, almost daily, evidence builds in support of immediate action on rapid climate change and a contrary position is untenable and reckless for America and the planet.

The Climate Change Crisis is not a political issue and I expect my representatives to avail themselves of the best available science, then use their individual knowledge and experiences along with critical thinking

skills to assess the needs of all constituents and to work within the legislature to craft appropriate measures.

What Eastern Oregon needs at this time, prior to the 2020 short session, is information and dialogue from and with Hansell. The senator, in the past, has been asked to conduct town hall-style meetings with focus on climate change issues but the request did not receive any response from his office.

Please join me in contacting Oregon State Sen. Bill Hansell’s office and asking for information, in the form of town hall-style meetings, regarding the purpose, need, and content of HB 2020.

Chuck LeBold
Union

Vote Yes for Hermiston school bonds

We are going to be presented with a great opportunity to continue to increase our school capacity while not having our annual property tax payments increase. We are very fortunate that the Hermiston School District has been very aggressive in paying off its bonded debt. This has allowed the proposed new bond to be issued without increasing our annual cost of property taxes. The growth in the assessed value in our school district boundaries will also keep the cost low.

It is not very often in our lives that we can gain two new schools, and additional capacity at our full high school without increasing the property taxpayer’s annual tax bill.

We have over a full grade school in modular (temporary) housing. Our district is growing rapidly and we need to address this issue!

Please join us in supporting the new bond by voting yes to allow our school district to meet the growth occurring in our community.

Dennis and Cathy Barnett
Hermiston

OTHER VIEWS

President Trump is making progress on opioids

Since President Trump’s first day in office, and from my first day as his health secretary, our country’s opioid crisis has been one of our most challenging missions. But there were always sources of inspiration: We heard from the Americans on the front lines of the fight against addiction, and we set about bringing them what they needed to continue the fight.

Today, thanks to President Trump’s leadership and the hard work of so many, there are clear signs that we are beginning to turn the tide. According to provisional data, total drug overdose deaths in the United States dropped 5% from 2017 to 2018 — the first drop in more than two decades.

But we are still far from declaring victory. Deaths from drug overdoses remain at historically high levels, and the Trump Administration will not let up in this fight. That’s why, this month, the Trump Administration announced almost \$3 billion in new grants to state and local governments, academic institutions, and private companies, including \$13,515,000 being sent to Oregon.

The State Opioid Response program, issued by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, provides flexible funding to state governments to support prevention, treatment, and recovery services for opioid use disorder in the ways that meet their needs. We have ensured that this grant program is focused on providing evidence-based treatment, including the gold standard for treating opioid addiction — medication-assisted treatment. We are making real progress in this regard: Administration estimates suggest that approximately 1.27 million Americans are now receiving medication-assisted treatment — up from 921,000 in 2016 — out of about 2 million Americans with opioid use disorder.

The Overdose Data to Action program from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention helps state and local governments track overdose data as closely to real time as possible and supports them in work to prevent overdoses and save lives. This will help advance understanding of opioid overdose epidemic and scale up prevention and response activities.

Finally, the National Institutes of Health has awarded \$945 million in total fiscal year 2019 funding for grants, contracts and cooperative agreements across 41 states

through the Helping to End Addiction Long-term Initiative, or NIH HEAL Initiative. The trans-NIH research effort aims to improve treatments for chronic pain, curb the rates of opioid use disorder (OUD) and overdose, and achieve long-term recovery from opioid addiction. The NIH HEAL Initiative is leveraging expertise from almost every NIH institute and center to approach the crisis from all angles and disciplines.

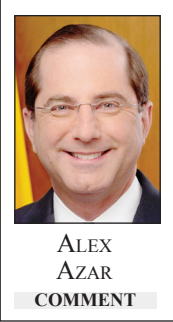
September’s grants come on top of nearly \$400 million in grants issued in August from the Health Resources and Services Agency to community health centers, rural organizations, and academic institutions to help them establish and expand access to substance abuse and mental health services — for opioid addiction and other challenges.

Since the start of the Trump administration, HHS has disbursed almost \$9 billion in grants to states and local communities to help increase access to treatment and prevention services. But defeating addiction takes a lot more than just money. It requires building a health care system that cares for each patient, as a whole person, and works to reduce the stigma surrounding addiction. That’s one of the reasons why the Trump Administration proposed to modernize regulations that can pose significant barriers to caring for Americans struggling with substance use disorders, like opioid addiction, to make sure they get the effective, coordinated care they need.

We have also issued Medicaid waivers to 25 states to expand access to in-patient treatment for substance use disorder. And we have worked to prevent opioid addiction by promoting the responsible prescribing of opioid painkillers, yielding a 31% decrease in the total amount prescribed since President Trump took office.

President Trump’s sustained focus on opioid addiction and substance abuse is yielding real results. But we also know that this crisis developed over several decades, and it will not be solved overnight. As we begin to turn the tide on opioid addiction, the president will remain committed to helping communities across America continue to battle drug addiction, save lives and help everyone struggling with addiction to find the road to recovery.

Alex Azar II is the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services.



ALEX AZAR
COMMENT