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TOBACCO @ 21

WHY MAINE SHOULD FOLLOW PORTLAND'S LEAD

Portland city councilors on Monday unanimously agreed to raise the city's tobacco purchase age to 21. This is a smart move that should prompt state lawmakers to take similar action.

The new rules, which go into effect in a month, will raise the legal age for tobacco and e-cigarette purchases in the city from 18 to 21. However, those over the age of 18 are allowed to smoke in the city.

Portland joins more than 100 cities, including Boston, New York, Chicago, Cleveland and Kansas City (in both Missouri and Kansas), that already have raised the age to 21. On Jan. 1, Hawaii became the first state to require tobacco purchasers to be at least 21.

Every day, 3,200 youth under the age of 18 smoke their first cigarette, according to figures from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. About 2,100 of them will begin the habit of smoking every day.

The Institute of Medicine projects that tobacco use would drop by 12 percent with the legal age set at 21. Although it would take years for the full health effects to be known, the institute's modeling shows the result would be 223,000 fewer premature deaths and 50,000 fewer lung cancer deaths among those born between 2000 and 2019. Collectively, this group also would see a reduction of 4.2 million years of life lost because of smoking-related health problems.

According to a March 2015 report by the institute, about 90 percent of smokers say they began before age 19. Raising the age to 21 would have a significant effect on high school-age smokers and potential smokers because their 18- to 20-year-old peers no longer would be able to legally purchase tobacco for them.

This isn't just a theory. A decade ago, Needham, Massachusetts, became the first U.S.

community to raise its tobacco purchase age to 21. The adult smoking rate in Needham is now half that of Massachusetts as a whole. The mortality rates from lung cancer in the community are significantly lower than in Massachusetts generally. Most important, a survey by the MetroWest Health Foundation found that the smoking rate among high school students in Needham was significantly lower than in surrounding communities, where the tobacco purchase age remained 18. This result undermines arguments from opponents of raising the smoking age who say teens will simply buy cigarettes in other communities or ask older friends to buy them smokes.

Maine's adult smoking rate — 19.3 percent in 2014 — is above the national average of 16.8 percent. Adult smokers have higher rates of asthma and worse dental health than nonsmokers. Life expectancy among smokers is 10 years shorter.

It is important that the Portland ordinance extends beyond cigarettes to other tobacco products and e-cigarettes. According to data from the Food and Drug administration, e-cigarette use among high school students has skyrocketed, from 1.5 percent in 2011 to 16 percent in 2015. A 2015 Maine survey found that 18 percent of high school students here had used e-cigarettes in the previous month. The health consequences of e-cigarettes, which can be helpful in smoking cessation, are not fully known.

Raising the tobacco purchase age to 21 can be an important step in reducing smoking rates and improving the health of people in Portland. And if such a move is replicated statewide — like Portland's 1998 ban on smoking in restaurants was — the benefits would spread across Maine.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Reject the TPP

The New Balance shoe company, with manufacturing facilities in Maine, should be lauded for breaking its silence over the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a proposed trade deal between the U.S. and 11 Pacific Rim nations. This marked a change in New Balance's public stance, which had been to warn that eliminating tariffs under the trade deal could lead to job losses in U.S. factories.

But New Balance recently has held its tongue about the trade deal when the company was promised a Department of Defense contract for athletic shoes for military personnel. A spokesman for New Balance said that "we swallowed the poison pill that is TPP so we could have a chance to bid on these contracts" and in exchange would "remain silent" on the trade deal. Now that the deal for New Balance may not materialize, the company is no longer being silent.

The "bitter pill" of TPP involves much more than trade. The trade deal has been described as a budding European Union in the Pacific that creates a self-governing and self-perpetuating commission with detrimental implications for American workers, immigration law and sovereignty. Hopefully, New Balance will stick with its latest position. Congress, for its part, should vote it down.

Burnell Bailey
South Berwick

newed calls for gun control. The shooter had a firearm, therefore firearms are bad. You do not judge all who are Muslim because the shooter was Muslim, likewise, you cannot judge all firearms owners by his or her actions.

The overwhelming majority of Muslims are wonderful people, as are the overwhelming majority of firearms owners. The only Muslim who should be responsible for the shooter's actions is the shooter. Likewise, the only firearm owner who should be responsible for the shooter's actions is the shooter.

Don't penalize all Muslims or all firearms owners. Neither group deserves to pay for the crimes of some other person, even if they are a member of the group. Don't touch my religion or my guns.

Robert Greenlaw
Greenbush

WRITE TO US

Letters must be 250 words or fewer and include a full name, town of residence and daytime phone number. OpEds may be 700 words. Letters may be edited or rejected for clarity, taste, libel and space. If a letter or OpEd is published, submissions by the same writer will not be considered for 60 days.

Letters may be sent to letters@bangordailynews.com. OpEds may be sent to OpEd@bangordailynews.com or P.O. Box 1329, Bangor, ME 04402-1329.

Silence on monument

Kudos to Sen. Angus King for bringing National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis to Maine for a statewide discussion about the proposed North Woods national monument. The two men set a good tone for their meeting in May at the Collins Center for the Arts.

While he took a good step in creating the meeting and space to discuss the proposal, King has been silent since. This is surprising. We attended the meeting and saw for ourselves, as did King and Jarvis, the massive support on display that evening. I would guess more than 1,200 people stood up to cheer and applaud when Jarvis walked on stage, causing the few dozen opponents to disappear in a sea of T-shirts, stickers and positive enthusiasm.

Maine's distinguished political legacy includes those who served at both local and national government levels — including Percival Baxter, Margaret Chase Smith, John Lund, Ed Muskie, Bill Cohen, George Mitchell and others.

They were willing to take bold steps to bring about change that ultimately benefited both Maine and the nation.

King and other members of our congressional delegation should join the ranks of these esteemed leaders by publicly supporting a monument designation as a first step to a national park and national recreation area; the same path Acadia National Park took to become a reality. It's the right thing to do for the environment, recreation and to bring new, sustainable economic growth to rural Maine.

Sam Horine
Skowhegan

Care for cancer patients

As a young adult who was diagnosed with cancer at age 24, I've experienced firsthand how the mental, emotional and physical side-effects of cancer treatment can severely affect the quality of life. Suddenly my focus on personal goals, such as finishing college and starting a career, turned toward saving my life.

Often, the pain, nausea, shortness of breath and anxiety are not managed as well as they could or should be. That's where palliative care comes in. I see the benefit of having a physician who specializes in the care and comfort of a patient while undergoing cancer treatment. It's a growing field of specialized medical care that improves the quality of life for patients and their families by focusing on the symptoms of treatment for a serious disease. Because of the increasing demand, it has highlighted a serious shortage of specialized palliative care physicians within in our country. Elected officials have the power to improve the lives of cancer patients by supporting legislation to increase access to palliative care.

As a cancer survivor and volunteer for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, I am grateful for Sen. Susan Collins' leadership in co-sponsoring the Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act of 2016. With her contribution and efforts it gives cancer patients more hope and control over their care. By giving cancer patients a voice, it provides better relationships and coordination with their doctors and benefits overall care and treatment. Cancer is never an easy disease to have, but with the support of palliative care, problems and concerns are more easily faced, and the quality of life and hope increase.

Marianne Calcara Marshall
Machias

OTHER VOICES

US MISSING FROM REFUGEE SOLUTIONS

A United Nations Global Trends survey released Monday reported that the world reached in 2015 an all-new high in refugees and internally displaced persons, a total of 65 million, with another 19 million forced to move by natural disasters.

Half of the refugees are children; 100,000 of those children have fled alone, presenting unique problems. Few of them are receiving schooling. The financial costs of dealing with those fleeing, internally or outside their countries of origin, have far surpassed the willingness and ability of donor countries to cope with the problem they present.

The problem is also political. Migration into Europe, from both the east through Turkey and Greece and south across the Mediterranean, is testing severely the willingness of European populations to absorb refugees. Governments led by people such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel may wish to keep their countries' doors open, but not necessarily at the price of losing their own jobs at the polls to xenophobic, resistant opponents.

An aspect of the refugee problem that is frequently overlooked can be identified by looking at the countries of origin of the refugees and the internally displaced. They are

mostly coming from countries where long-standing wars rage — Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. The big powers, such as the United States, have failed abysmally to end the wars and to bring peace to these countries, the necessary ingredient to ending the flight of people from them.

It's worse than that. The United States is and has been an active participant in the wars in these countries, in effect playing a role in precipitating the flight of refugees from them. The burden for not bringing these wars to an end does not land, in any case, on the United States. America is being very slow to bring in even the 10,000 Syrians the administration of President Barack Obama agreed to take. Most of the refugees have ended up, for the time being anyway, in nearby poor and middle-income countries such as Ethiopia, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. Turkey alone has 3.5 million.

The matter will be addressed once more at the U.N. General Assembly in September. Obama could do worse than use whatever punch he still retains to end a war or two, in the process relieving the misery of the refugees and pressure they are causing.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (June 21)

Mislaid blame on guns

When the recent shooting in Orlando, Florida, hit the news, it was almost too predictable what the overwhelming responses from both sides of the political spectrum would sound like. "Gun control," "tolerance," "immigration," "hate," "fear" and a myriad of other terms began to multiply.

As a person who does not want to lose any of my rights, including religion and possession of firearms, I have only one line of questioning for our politicians. The alleged shooter was a Muslim, but the immediate shout was "don't judge all Muslims by the actions of one." I completely agree with that. We should judge each person on his or her own merits, not as belonging to a particular religion.

The politicians got that one right. But one has to realize that this is the exact same argument most of the liberal-leaning people use. In response to this shooting, liberal-leaning people have re-

DOONESBURY

