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OUR VIEW: LIQUOR LAWS

Competition not prohibition

Minnesota lawmakers should not be in the business of making it tough for Minnesotans to get their favorite beer. But that's just what's happening with the road blocks put up by Minnesota liquor laws, which are outdated, anti-competitive and unnecessarily restrictive.

Why it matters:

Minnesota liquor laws reduce competition, stifle entrepreneurs.

A bipartisan group of Minnesota lawmakers is likely to introduce a liquor law reform bill next year that will reduce barriers to craft breweries selling growlers and make beer and wine available in grocery stores and convenience stores.

Both changes are long overdue. Minnesota four years ago finally overcame roadblocks to allow the sale of liquor from liquor stores on Sundays. Now it's time to move ahead with other changes.

The House Commerce Committee last month held a four-hour meeting to discuss Minnesota's liquor laws. At the top of the list should be repealing a prohibition on craft brewers that produce more than 20,000 barrels a year selling growlers and crowlers from their taprooms.

The law penalizes craft brewers for being successful. The Minnesota Licensed Beverage Association opposed the proposal saying it somehow gives craft brewers an advantage that liquor stores and other retailers do not. The Minnesota Beer Wholesalers also opposed removing the limit, saying craft breweries have "significant competitive advantage" over wholesalers and retailers.

It's difficult to detect an unfairness here. Competition is competition. Only six craft brewers in the entire country cannot sell to-go growlers and crowlers, and they're all in Minnesota. They include New Ulm-based Schell's; Castle Danger Brewery in Two Harbors; Fulton; Indeed; Surly; and Lift Bridge.

If liquor store owners believe they are at a disadvantage to craft breweries, they should open a craft brewery.

Some Minnesota liquor laws date back to the end of Prohibition where a system of separate producers, distributors and retailers was set up. The beverage dealers and wholesales seem stuck in the old way of doing things as it limits competition and keeps prices artificially high.

House Minority Leader Kurt Daudt, R-Crown, favors allowing grocery and convenience stores being able to sell wine and beer, noting that border towns like Duluth lose out to Wisconsin grocery stores that can sell beer and wine.

House Commerce Committee Zach Stephenson, DFL-Coon Rapids, said he favors a significant liquor law reform bill. Sen. Sandy Pappas, DFL-St. Paul, authored the original bill allowing growlers years ago, and said the opposition may be rooted in some moral imperative.

Perhaps lawmakers opposing these free-market changes still want to pay homage to former Minnesota Congressman Andrew Volstead, the godfather of Prohibition. But it's time let Volstead rest in peace nearly 90 years after Prohibition ended and allow the free market determine where and how alcohol is sold in Minnesota.

OTHER VIEW

Getting the mandate right

New York Daily News

We've been critical of Mayor de Blasio plenty for eight years, but on requiring all city employees to be vaccinated against COVID — the best way to wipe out this killer — he has been a tower of strength. His mandate for 100% vaccination of the workforce of 380,000 has produced a 93% compliance rate. And those numbers are climbing every hour.

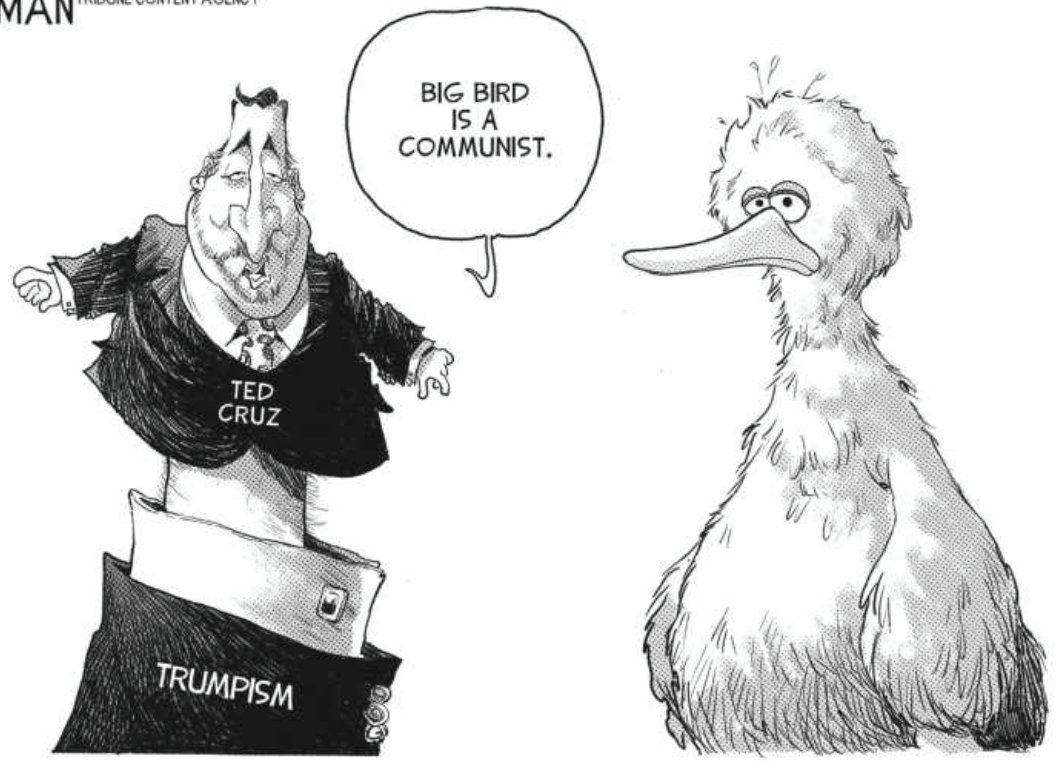
Just a week into the universal requirement, even the very noisy protesters of the uniformed services have fallen in. The NYPD is at 86% protected. Among sanitmen, it's also 86%. EMS is currently at 91% and firefighters are at 82%,

a big jump from their quite low 58% just weeks ago.

Thursday morning, the mayor said that four unions had signed agreements acceding to the vaccination rules and how those rare medical and religious exemptions would be handed. The unions also dropped all legal challenges. By that afternoon, five more unions had come on. By Friday morning, the nine had become 15. Friday afternoon, the tally was 20 locals, which de Blasio announced yesterday morning. But by the end of the day there were another three, bringing it to 23, representing almost 100,000 employees.

The goal is warding off COVID infections, serious illnesses and death.

SHENEMAN TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY



SPOT THE PUPPET

Climate upheavals are coming

A friend of mine recently went into the hospital with a serious bacterial infection. The doctors were concerned that the infection had gone into his heart, so they ordered an echocardiogram. But there was a problem: There were no echocardiogram appointments available. The spots were taken up by unvaccinated people with COVID.

Through the persistent actions of a nurse, my friend was able to be transported to Mayo Clinic in Rochester, where he was put under the care of heart and bacterial infection experts. He received his echocardiogram, which showed that the bacteria had infected his heart, but fortunately, because he was able to get the test, a course of timely antibiotics prevented (hopefully) serious damage.

My message to those who choose not to be vaccinated and not to wear a mask: Your selfishness, your stupidity, jeopardized the health of my friend. And when you go to church on Sunday, please ask yourself: Are my decisions in line with the teachings of my faith: to care for the well-being of others?

Hopefully, COVID 19 will just be a painful memory in a few years. It erupted quickly, catching the world by surprise. And a vaccine solution was found within a year, a very short period of time in the history of human health.

Yet there is another problem that humanity is facing that's been a century and a half in the making and for which there is no vaccine: climate change.

Fossil fuels have brought human-kind unprecedented wealth and well-being. Yet we have become addicted to them, not only for energy but for our entire economy, an addiction that we now know threatens our very way of life.

The science of climate change is far simpler than most people imagine: Human civilization has been around for only about 10,000 years, a "Goldilocks" climate period during which planet temperatures have been not too hot, not too cold, just right.

The reasons why the climate has been so temperate over this period is that carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has been a relatively steady 280 parts per million. The amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is a major contributor to the heating and cooling of the planet.

Too little carbon dioxide, and the

planet becomes a snowball, as it was about 700 million years ago. Too much carbon dioxide, and dinosaurs are roaming Antarctica, as they were 145 to 66 million years ago.

Now, because of humans moving carbon from the earth to the atmosphere through the burning of fossil fuels, the current carbon dioxide level is about 413 parts per million — almost 50% higher than the recent historical record.

The last time there was this much carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was three million years ago when plants were growing in Antarctica, sea levels were 40 to 60 feet higher, and temperatures were an average of 3.6 to 5.4 degrees Fahrenheit warmer.

Since it takes a long time for the climate to react to carbon dioxide changes, we're not experiencing catastrophic changes... yet. But when those changes come, imagine the average June high temperature in Tucson being 108 degrees instead of 103; or Ahvaz, Iran, being 121 instead of 116; or El Azizia, Libya, being 137 instead of 132.

As these temperatures rise, if you think the world has an immigration problem now, just wait.

There will be no quick fix for climate change, unlike COVID. Carbon dioxide does not break down readily. It persists in the atmosphere for a century or more. To repeat: There will be no vaccine to return the atmospheric carbon dioxide level to 280 parts per million.

The wealthy nations of the planet, those that emit the most carbon, will have to make major changes to their economies. But since our world economic system is based on growth, and growth is based on energy, and energy has been based on fossil fuels for the last 150 years, limiting our addiction to fossil fuels will mean a wholesale change to the world economy. And what that change will be is anyone's guess.

Given the lack of progress we've made in stemming the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, even after the most recent climate change conference in Scotland, the reality is that only a series of climate crises will force the world to do what's necessary to reverse the changes humans have brought to the planet.

But unlike the COVID crisis, the

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climate crises will unfold slowly. Repeated heatwaves, droughts, floods, fires, depleted water systems and crop failures will force mass migration.

But since the Earth's 7.9 billion existing humans have taken up nearly all the habitable locations on the planet, populations that must move will only be able to move to where other populations currently exist.

The result will be economic upheaval and, of course, conflict.

Last month on a flight back from Colorado I sat next to a young lady, a lawyer who works for a federal public defender's office in Arizona.

We got on the subject of climate change, and she announced that she was not going to have any children because she couldn't bring any new lives onto this planet given its condition. Then, another young woman sitting in front of her turned around and said, "Me neither."

A friend of mine who teaches environmental science at a prestigious small college surveyed his senior seminar class and learned that a third of the women were not planning to have children based on environmental concerns about the planet.

What does this say about the world we're leaving our children? When arguably many of our best and brightest are not planning to have children themselves because they see such a bleak future?

Political will and technological innovation will eventually stabilize our climate future, but know this: These changes won't come about till after a series of increasingly frequent climate crises. And those crises will make dealing with COVID look like a sunny afternoon at the park.

Leigh Pomeroy is the chair of the Southcentral Minnesota Clean Energy Council, which conducts monthly energy forums on clean energy issues. He lives in Mankato.

An unwise use of qualified immunity

Dallas Morning News

A federal prison chaplain in Fort Worth is claiming qualified immunity as a defense against allegations of discrimination. That's a misuse of the doctrine, and it will only feed efforts to repeal protections that might be legitimately needed for police and other government officials.

The case involves Michael Onuh, a Catholic chaplain at a facility called FMC Carswell, a federal medical center with an adjacent minimum security facility. In a lawsuit and series of complaints to the Equal Employment Opportunity Office, Protestant chaplain Casey Campbell has accused Onuh of discriminating against non-Catholics. Two other chaplains as well as an incarcerated person have also lodged complaints.

Onuh's alleged conduct includes canceling Muslim religious services, refusing cooperation that resulted

in cancellation of worship services for members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ignoring requests for chaplain services, and using derogatory language about Protestant chaplains, according to reporting by the Fort Worth Star-Telegram.

Onuh's alleged conduct, while troubling, is not proven and is not the reason we bring it to readers' attention. What makes this case worth watching is Onuh's defense. He claims that as a federally contracted employee, he is entitled to qualified immunity. But getting a federal paycheck isn't the legal qualification for that defense; otherwise every government office worker, limo driver and defense contractor could claim it.

Qualified immunity shields government officials from harassment and liability. In a 1982 case called *Harlow vs. Fitzgerald*, the U.S. Supreme Court deemed it necessary "to pro-

tect officials who are required to exercise discretion and the related public interest in encouraging the vigorous exercise of official authority."

In other words, this is a doctrine for officials faced with thorny decisions that must be made in real time. That does not describe Onuh's case.

The doctrine has come under fire recently. Its opponents say it protects rogue cops. But those concerns haven't gathered pervasive support. Last month, The Washington Post reported that 35 bills seeking to weaken qualified immunity have died in state legislatures in the past 18 months.

Though a review of qualified immunity might be warranted, we think it's worth preserving some protections for police and other public officials.

But frivolous cases like Onuh's will only add confusion and support for efforts to attack the doctrine.

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