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Deep Freeze

EDITORIALS

Eilers united

EILERS RESIDENTS have the right idea: Keep united in demanding that a Superfund cleanup, which seems inevitable at this point, be thorough and be completed as soon as possible — at no cost to the neighborhood.

Pam Kocman, president of the Eilers Heights Neighborhood Association, drove the message home at a meeting of about 40 residents Tuesday night. Her husband, Joe Kocman, remains unconvinced the Eilers area has serious lead contamination problems, but he said city and county officials have made that decision already.

“Now we have to put forward a united front and keep their feet to the fire,” he said of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and state and local health officials pushing for a Superfund project.

The neighborhood’s demands include requiring all lead contamination be

cleaned up in yards, exterior paints and inside houses as quickly as possible. Residents are concerned that prolonged Superfund listing would cripple Eilers real estate values and cause the area to become a “slum” of untended rental properties.

Adding to their worries is information that no Federal Housing Administration loans will be made in a Superfund area, a restriction that could extend up to a half-mile in all directions of the neighborhood.

For all those reasons, we fully support the residents’ quest for unity to find the fastest way to get Eilers on and off the federal Superfund list. May they find strength in common purpose.

And we’d hope that the elected officials who have helped to steamroll the Superfund listing will actively support the residents, too.

State of the State

DURING HIS annual State of the State address Thursday morning, Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper borrowed inspiration from all the right sources.

He invoked the success of the Denver Broncos, the Colorado State University football team’s dramatic bowl victory, and the servant heart of slain Department of Corrections Executive Director Tom Clements to encourage all Coloradans to work together to accomplish great things.

For several years running, Gov. Hickenlooper noted, Colorado has endured a string of tragedies that could have brought the state to its collective knees, but the state’s residents have instead persevered and become stronger as a result.

“Inexplicable, senseless violence. Fires. Floods. No, that is not our story,” he told the crowd at the capitol. “Our story is about how we came together and have been getting it done. Our story is that we have learned that we are at our best — that Colorado is at her best — when we are connected to one another, working together.”

That cooperative spirit bodes well for Colorado in 2014, Gov. Hickenlooper said, and we would agree.

We echo Gov. Hickenlooper’s reflections on recent successes in Colorado, including expanded job opportunities, improved government efficiency and constrained state spending.

We also support a number of possible new initiatives that Gov. Hickenlooper unveiled during his speech, including

increasing the state reserve funds, improving Department of Motor Vehicle customer service, reforming the state’s public education system and expanding broadband Internet service to rural areas of the state.

But the key issue for 2014, as Gov. Hickenlooper states, is the same as it was last year. Making Colorado a great place to do business, or to start a new enterprise, will do the most to ensure a bright future for all residents of the state.

With a robust business climate, jobs are created and people buy more homes and cars. With more people working, state and local governments collect more taxes. As tax revenues rise, more public services can be offered.

The Colorado Blueprint, which Gov. Hickenlooper outlined three years ago, and its six core objectives are still important goals:

- 1) Build a business friendly environment.
- 2) Increase access to capital.
- 3) Educate and train the workforce of tomorrow.
- 4) Retain, grow, recruit companies.
- 5) Cultivate innovation and technology.
- 6) Create a stronger Colorado brand.

With those general goals as a backdrop, Gov. Hickenlooper urged legislators to remember their role as public servants, not as politicians.

He rightly challenged all to put Colorado first. But, as a reminder from us, that means putting all residents from all parts of the state first, not just the Denver metro area.

THE WAR ON DRUGS

Marijuana injustices



E. J. DIONNE

Opinion

WASHINGTON — I have no desire to smoke marijuana, partly because doing so might drive me back to the cigarette habit I broke two decades ago. I don’t want to be one of those “cool parents” who pretend to be as culturally advanced as their kids. In my case, that’s a ridiculous aspiration anyway.

And I agree with those who call attention to the dangers of excessive indulgence in marijuana. Nobody wants us to become a nation of stoners.

Nonetheless, I have come to believe that we should legalize or at least decriminalize marijuana use. The way we enforce marijuana laws is unconscionable. The arrest rates for possession are astoundingly and shamefully different for whites and African-Americans. The incongruence between what our statutes require and what Americans actually do cannot be sustained.

The key document in this debate should be a study released last June by the American Civil Liberties Union. It found that marijuana use is comparable across racial lines — 14 percent for African-Americans and 12 percent for whites in 2010. But the arrest rates are not. It turns out that “a black person was 3.73 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than a white person.”

“In states with the worst disparities,” the report noted, “blacks were on average over six times more likely to be arrested for marijuana possession than whites. In the worst offending counties across the country, blacks were over 10, 15, even 30 times more likely to be arrested than white residents of the same county.”

True, we could equalize things by massively diverting

police energies to make sure that whites got arrested at the same rate as African-Americans, thus adding to the ranks of those with rap sheets. But to offer this “solution” is to show how absurd it is. If we’re not willing to guarantee that a law is enforced with rough equality, doesn’t this tell us something about what we think of it in the first place?

In a recent New York Times column, my friend David Brooks made the classic argument for keeping marijuana illegal. “Laws profoundly mold culture, so what sort of community do we want our laws to nurture?” he asked. “What sort of individuals and behaviors do our governments want to encourage?”

The “law as teacher” thesis is attractive until you start jailing people and creating arrest records that can harm them for many years. And we don’t need to make something illegal to discourage its use, as we have learned in the battle against cigarette smoking.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the proportion of cigarette smokers in our country dropped from 42.4 percent in 1965 to 18 percent in 2012. We have built legal fences around tobacco, using regulations to send the signals Brooks is talking about without making tobacco consumption a crime.

Colorado and Washington have embarked on their legalization experiments, while more than a dozen states have decriminalized pot by imposing, at most, limited, speeding-ticket style penalties for possession.

One way or another, public sentiment is moving toward change, and for good reason. A Pew poll last year found that 72 percent of Americans agreed that “government efforts to enforce marijuana laws cost more than they are worth.” That’s true, and those costs are far heavier for some of our fellow citizens than for others.

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TELL IT TO THE CHIEFTAIN

Cancer awareness

January is Cervical Health Awareness Month, and women across Colorado are encouraged to start the year by scheduling a pap test. A pap test is the first line of defense against cervical cancer. When it’s found early, more than 92 percent of women survive cervical cancer.

Under health care reform, insurance plans are required to cover women’s preventive health services, like pap tests, without charging co-pays. The Women’s Wellness Connection offers free cervical cancer screenings and any necessary follow-up treatments to Colorado women between the ages of 40-64 years who have little or no health insurance and meet income requirements. To find out details, call these local hotlines at 1-866-951-9355, 1-800-688-7777 or visit www.womenswellnessconnection.org.

Every year in the U.S., approximately 13,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer and about 4,000 women die of the disease. Latinas and African-American women are at higher risk for developing cervical cancer. A routine pap test can prevent most of these deaths. Screening save lives. *Hannah Nein Pueblo*

challenge.

I’ve known Bob Purvis all of my life, and share his frustrations in replacing his driver’s license. I do have some advice for Bob and everyone else. Don’t ever lose your Social Security card. The local office won’t even accept 12 years of their own benefit statements. The clerk, finally in my sixth try, accepted a monthly bill for my life insurance as proof of who I was.

There’s no excuse in hassling people when we provide two pounds of paper as proof of ID. *George L. Dwight Pueblo*

Supply and demand

In response to “High taxes will send weed users underground” (*Chieftain*, Jan. 2).

It is not high taxes that cause legal cannabis to cost so much, but rather lack of competition.

There are thousands of places for Colorado residents to purchase legal alcohol but very few places to buy legal cannabis.

If legal cannabis sells for more than \$200 an ounce, the black market will thrive. *Kirk Muse Mesa, Ariz.*

Legal pot

My opinion about marijuana is that we voted for it, now we have to deal with it.

Your opinion and Sheriff Taylor’s is “mostly concerned about the likely impact of expanded marijuana use on our young people” and “increased abuse by our youth.”

Sounds like these were the things we were saying about beer and cigarettes back in the day. Now “our youth” can buy beer at 18 years old, but “our youth” can’t buy marijuana until they are 21? The sky will not fall, deal with it. *Don Dever Pueblo*

Who are you?

Back on Oct. 10, a former neighbor stole my wallet filled with my driver’s license, gun permit, Social Security card, Medicare, health and auto insurance cards, along with my credit card which she used around town for \$400 in purchases.

Four days later, I went to Denver for surgery. Trying to replace all of these things over the next month, checking into the hospital without ID or insurance proof is quite the

MALLARD FILLMORE

By **BRUCE TINSLEY**

