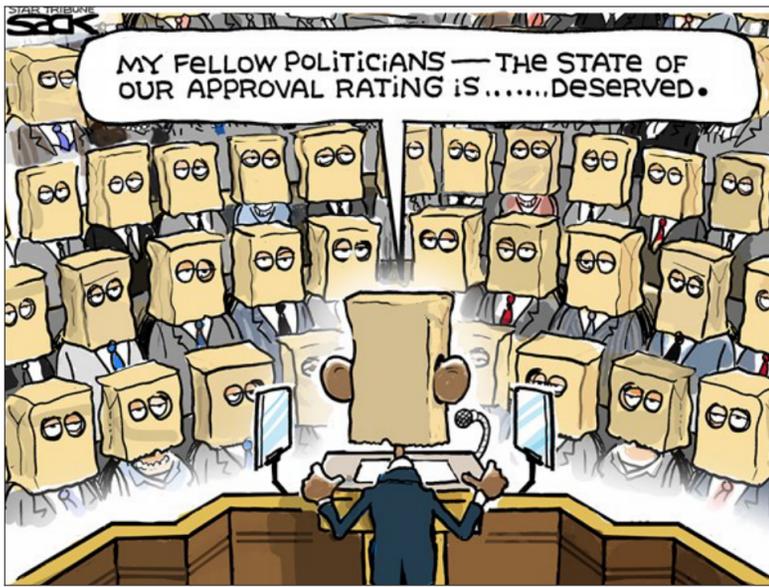


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Improving drug, alcohol prevention

By **MATTHEW CHINMAN, JOIE ACOSTA** and **ROSALIE PACULA**
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Now that Colorado, Washington, and, most recently, Uruguay have legalized marijuana, many believe changes are needed in the U.S. “War on Drugs” – with good reason. Policymakers fear that legalized marijuana could lead to increased use.

Already, one-in-three high school seniors reports using marijuana in the last year and one-in-five reports using other illegal drugs. While alcohol is less mentioned as a target in the “War on Drugs,” it is alone responsible for the death of about 5,000 youth under age 21 each year and for \$62 billion in annual costs because of delinquency and crime, according to one study.

As familiar as Americans are with the problems of youth drug and alcohol abuse, we are not identifying all the potential solutions. Schools and communities could substantially reduce alcohol and drug use if they chose good programs, implemented them well and continuously monitored outcomes. RAND research shows that such programs can save taxpayers \$18 in avoided costs for every \$1 spent, yet such investment is rare. For example, a recent Department of Education report showed that only 8 percent of U.S. schools use tested programs and less than half of those implemented them well enough. The Drug Abuse Resistance Education, D.A.R.E., a collection of free programs taught by police officers, is the most popular prevention program in U.S. schools even though several of its programs have been shown conclusively not to reduce alcohol and drug use.

To make prevention programs live up to their potential, our research shows that schools and communities face several challenges.

First, school and community personnel rarely receive training in how to choose and teach good programs or monitor their performance in meaningful ways. This is doable. With adequate support, community organizations can be trained to effectively select, plan, implement and evaluate strong prevention programs. RAND is continuing this research with 31 Boys and Girls Club sites in the greater Los Angeles area.

Second, schools and communities do not receive clear guidance on how to run programs because, other than concerned parents, there is no single entity in the United States that is responsible for alcohol and drug prevention. The federal departments of Health and Human Services, Justice, Education and Transportation – not to mention every state – each have their own prevention efforts, funding streams and standards.

Third, there is no consistency on what outcomes various funding agencies are trying to achieve through prevention programs, let alone guidance on how to measure them. As a result, the quality of performance data and the frequency with which they are collected vary, making it difficult to determine where things stand and whether they are improving.

Finally, most government funding agencies devote only a small portion of their overall portfolio to alcohol and drug prevention. Only 1.9 percent of the total federal, state and local spending for substance abuse goes to prevention. A whopping 58 percent is spent on health care related to alcohol and drug use.

To fix the problems, the various federal agencies responsible for prevention need to better collaborate and support a few high quality programs with common expectations that work well for all youth. Schools and communities need support to help them choose and run strong programs to meet those expectations. Finally, citizens can request that their legislators increase funding for alcohol and drug prevention programs and monitor them to reward the effective ones. These fixes would strengthen America’s “War on Drugs” and should be part of the overall strategy.

Matthew Chinman and Joie Acosta are behavioral scientists, and Rosalie Liccardo Pacula is a senior economist at the RAND Corporation.

Correction

Cymantha Atkinson is manager of government and community relations for the county of Orange. Her affiliation was misstated in an editorial that appeared in the Jan. 29 edition of the Register.

THE PRESIDENT'S UNILATERAL AGENDA

State of the Union was progressivism on display.

By **JOHN C. EASTMAN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Listening to the president’s State of the Union speech Tuesday, I counted 10 (and perhaps a few more) specific examples where the president announced he would act unilaterally if Congress would not advance some part of the agenda he wants.

“America does not stand still, and neither will I,” he said. “So wherever and whenever I can take steps without Congress to expand opportunity, that’s what I’m going to do.”

On the environment, the president announced that he and his EPA are unilaterally going to set new standards for carbon emissions. They are unilaterally going to expand federal fuel economy standards to cover trucks as well as cars. He is unilaterally going to expand federal control over our “pristine lands” to protect them for future generations. And, trading in his hat as regulator-in-chief for scientist-in-chief, the president proclaimed that the debate over climate change is over. “Climate change is a fact.” (Heraclitus would be proud!)

On the economy, the president announced that he is tasking Vice President Joe Biden to take over a review of all jobs training programs, inviting Congress to send money if it wants to help. He is unilaterally going to expand pre-kindergarten programs until Congress decides what it wants to do on the subject. He is unilaterally going to change the terms of student loan contracts, capping the payment schedule at 10 percent of the student’s post-graduation income.

He urged Congress to pass water and transportation bills by summer, but announced that he will act on his own as well, to streamline the permitting process for key projects. He and his Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew are going to start a new program to allow people to save more for retirement, called MyIRAs.

And in the coming weeks, the president says he is going to issue an executive order requiring federal contractors – that is, private businesses who sell goods or services to the federal government – to pay at least \$10.10 per hour to every single one of their employees, a 40 percent increase in the minimum wage.

Truth be told, the president’s speech was progressivism on display. Government is good, so more government must be better. And the Constitution’s checks on government power – such as that pesky constitutional requirement that laws be made by Congress – are, in the progressives’ view, just so many impediments to good government that they should be dispensed with.

This president, time and time and time again, announced his willingness to end run Congress and the Constitution in order to advance his agenda.

Of course, Congress has delegated so many of its lawmaking powers to unelected administrative agencies in the past century that the president’s assertions of unilateral executive power probably find support from one bizarre ambiguous statute or another, particularly as those statutes have been manipulated and interpreted by clever government lawyers at agencies seeking to expand their own powers.

But the president is taking delegation to dizzying new heights, and it is long past time for the American people to demand that basic policy decisions affecting our nation be made by our elected representatives in Congress, not by unelected bureaucrats in administrative agencies, doing the bidding of a president with an aggressively pro-government agenda.

This is particularly urgent when that agenda is really more beatific vision than real world. The president seems to think, for example, that he can just magically raise the minimum wage and thereby eliminate poverty among the working poor, overlooking decades of evidence that doing so dramatically increases unemployment, particularly among disadvantaged youth. He seems to think that we can force automakers to produce lighter, more fuel-efficient cars without any trade-off in safety, just by passing new regulations. He seems to think that he, apparently with just the wave of a magic wand, can create retirement savings accounts for everyone that will, as he claimed, “guarantee a decent return with no risk.”

Coming from a government that caused a mega-billion savings and loan collapse, that coerced banks to give mortgages to people whom they knew had no capacity to pay them and thereby caused a multi-trillion dollar collapse in our financial markets, that can’t seem to run the trains or the post office or anything else on budget, we should all rest assured that our new My-IRAs will generate a decent return without any risk.

President Ronald Reagan once famously described the phrase, “I’m from the government, and I’m here to help,” as the nine most terrifying words in the English language.

Obama has outdone him with 13 even more terrifying words: “I’m the president, and I actually believe I can do anything I want.” The only question that remains – will the rest of us sit by and let him?

John C. Eastman is a law professor at Chapman University.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Women deserve equal pay for equal work

In his State of the Union address, President Obama talked about creating pathways to the middle class.

The quickest way to move millions of people up the economic ladder is to pay women 100 percent of the dollar. The 77 percent they earn today is both unfair and un-American. The best way to accomplish this goal is to require every female member of the House and Senate to take a pay cut of nearly \$40,000 a year. That’s right.

Why should they get a full \$170,000 a year salary like their male colleagues, when every day working women coast to coast fail to make the same pay as the

men in their office or on their assembly line? As soon as the elected women of both parties feel the full force of this economic discrimination, the sooner Congress will act on equal pay for equal work.

The positive impact of women being paid 100 percent on the dollar will be immediately felt in their homes, in their local shops, and on their tax returns. This economic boost will be a win-win for all Americans.

Denny Freidenrich
Laguna Beach

POSTAL RATES INCREASE

Today the cost to mail a letter went up (again) – this time to 49 cents. Everyone knows our postal system is in financial trouble. Our rates keep going up while service remains the same at best. Yet, every day I get tons of unsolicited junk mail from non-profits and charities that pay only

ly a fraction of what I must pay for postage.

If everyone paid the same amount to mail a letter, I think the post office would not need to raise rates so often.

And perhaps there would be more real mail and less junk mail. Just something to think about.

Laurie Lairson-Lacourciere
Costa Mesa

BEATING BYSTANDER BLAME

I’m prompted to respond to letter-writer Veronica Hill’s “Social media frenzy” [Jan. 28] comments on Bill Johnson’s column about Annie Kim Pham’s beating death [“Don’t just record an attack – stop it,” Local, Jan. 25]. Hill asserts that the “narcissism” and “callous-



Pham

ness” arising from social media’s inducement to record and post excitement negates human decency, particularly the kind of male behavior once expected and viewed as noble. She states that, “Prior to this current social media frenzy, I remember when being a man actually meant something.” Hill continued, “A man would actually come to the aid of a female in distress.”

Certainly social media has a desensitizing effect, but the passing of the male behavior Hill laments hasn’t so much to do with social media as with our altered gender expectations. Women have become as aggressive as men have become passive. After reading about Pham’s beating death at the hands, and feet, of other women, a male friend asked me if I could ever have imagined our mothers kicking another woman in the head. I couldn’t.

However, in the pursuit of a fair society, high heels have

stamped out manly behavior. Don’t dismiss the modern male for receiving the gender-neutral Gospel: Women are equal to them in every way and to help or protect them is to degrade them, whether it’s recorded or not.

Marceline Lescault
Orange

MARLBORO’S LASTING LEGACY

Eric Lawson, 72, one of the actors who portrayed the Marlboro Man in cigarette commercials in the late 1970s and early 1980s, has recently died of lung disease.

This demonstrates that smoking isn’t so “cool” after all, as it can lead to several serious diseases, including lung and other types of cancer, emphysema, coronary heart disease, strokes and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, which not only can shorten life but also worsen the quality of life.

Kenneth L. Zimmerman
Huntington Beach