

DRAWN & QUARTERED



THE PUBLIC FORUM

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Misguided on cannabis

I am writing to address some inaccuracies in Sen. Mitt Romney's recent remarks concerning cannabis legalization. Romney suggested that cannabis legalization could jeopardize our international trade deals and alliances, citing international treaties as a primary obstacle. However, this perspective is not supported by the facts and warrants clarification.

Firstly, numerous cannabis companies and advocacy organizations have pointed out that the international treaties in question — principally the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1954 — provide ample flexibility for nations to reform their domestic drug policies. Indeed, several countries that are signatories to these treaties, including Canada and Uruguay, have already legalized cannabis without facing significant international repercussions or breaches of treaty obligations.

It is crucial to understand that the treaties allow for considerable discretion in how countries control substances on their territory, provided that the overarching goals of public health and welfare are upheld. This flexibility has been affirmed by legal scholars and international bodies who have studied the treaty's provisions in detail.

Moreover, Romney's concerns about negative impacts on trade deals and alliances seem to overlook the evolving global stance on cannabis. Many of our allies are moving toward a more progressive approach to cannabis, recognizing its medical benefits and the failures of prohibition. Aligning our laws with this global shift could, in fact, strengthen our international relationships by demonstrating adaptability and respect for scientific consensus on cannabis.

It is vital for public discourse on this issue to be informed by accurate information and grounded in a realistic understanding of international law and relations. Misrepresentations serve only to hinder progress and stifle informed debate.

Michael Harris
Layton

Stop and think

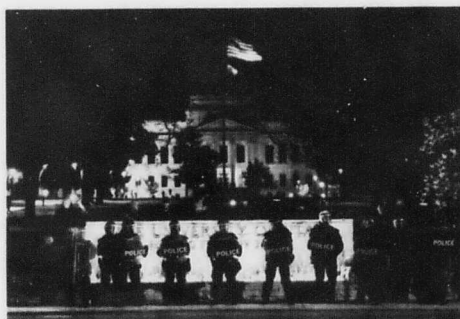
I think the old saying "Hit me again, it feels so good" applies here. There are many, many reasons not to vote for former president Donald Trump.

The following are only three. First, the U.S. Capitol insurrection — where hundreds were arrested — brought on by Trump's words. Second, the fact that former vice president Mike Pence said he would not endorse former president Trump. Third, no other president or former president has had criminal charges brought against them. Voters need to stop and think before they cast their votes this November.

Stan Jacobson
Ogden

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Law enforcement officers stand in front of the University of Utah sign during the pro-Palestine rally at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City on April 29.

U. of U. administrators need to allow protesters to speak out

As a retired University of Utah professor, I am deeply disturbed by the recent violence of law enforcement against peaceful student protesters there. By all accounts, these students were doing what college students all across the United States have been doing — protesting Israel's ongoing slaughter of Palestinian civilians in Gaza. According to various accounts, at least 34,000 Palestinians of all ages have been killed, another 7,000 or more are buried under rubble, and countless others have been wounded. Trapped in that tiny enclave with nowhere to go, many are now homeless, many are on the verge of starvation.

What Hamas did on Oct. 7 was despicable

and has been condemned by all. But Israel's response has been grotesquely disproportionate, amounting to a war crime against the entire population of Gaza and even international workers. And the United States, I'm ashamed to say, is an accomplice by providing Israel with its bombs and bullets and by protecting Israel against international condemnation and censure.

The United States has a long, proud tradition of protesting injustice going back to its founding. I hope University of Utah administrators will come to their senses and allow students to continue peacefully speaking out.

Tom Huckin
Salt Lake City

Our Mideast policy must reflect commitment to human rights

I am deeply concerned about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and Palestine, particularly following Sen. Cokie Maloy's recent endorsement of Israel during her visit to Jerusalem.

Reports from Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International suggest that actions by the Israeli government may constitute violations of international law, including potential war crimes. These concerns are exacerbated by the recent expressions of support from our leaders. Key issues include:

- Confiscation of essential resources: Israel has restricted access to vital resources like water and electricity in Gaza, potentially violating international protections for occupied territories (Human Rights Watch, 2023).
- Starvation as a weapon: Intentional destruction of Gaza's agricultural infrastructure impedes civilian access to food, using starvation as a warfare tactic (Human Rights Watch, 2023).
- Indiscriminate attacks on civilians: High civilian casualties from these attacks warrant

investigations as potential war crimes (Amnesty International, 2023).

- Targeting of medical facilities: Continuous strikes on hospitals throughout October and November 2023 have crippled Gaza's health-care system (Human Rights Watch, 2023; United Nations reports).

- Denial of humanitarian access: Severe restrictions on humanitarian aid exacerbate the health care and food crises (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2023).

These documented actions are troubling, especially given the perceived endorsement by our senators. Their stances have significant implications for our community's values and the U.S.'s international reputation.

It is crucial that our foreign policy reflects a firm commitment to human rights and the rule of law, principles our community staunchly supports.

Anna Zumwalt
Salt Lake City

To appear in the Opinion section

The Salt Lake Tribune encourages readers to submit their own commentaries for publication. These essays should address timely topics of general interest and should not exceed 800 words.

Authors should include a recent photograph and a sentence or two of biographical information that includes any experience or expertise in the subject matter addressed. They may be sent to Sara Weber, Voices editor, at sweber@sltrib.com.

Sending text in the body of an email is preferred, as attachments do not always arrive in a usable form. We accept one commentary per person in any 45-day period.

Submissions may also be mailed to The Salt Lake Tribune, Editorial Dept., 90 South 400 West, Suite 600, Salt Lake City, Utah 84101.

If only the public had a say

Having grown up in rural Michigan, I know the difference between a thriving hockey scene and a place where hockey doesn't exist. In the cold northern U.S. and Canada hockey is ubiquitous. I grew up playing "little league" hockey like everyone else. In Utah, it is not cold enough for outdoor hockey and, for the most part, no one plays. Changing downtown for the further enrichment of the Smith Entertainment Group at the expense of the taxpayers for the benefit of corporate ticket sales is another ridiculous example of the old-boy-work network exploiting tax payer dollars.

My guess is if the public were able to weigh in on this it wouldn't stand a chance.

Kennard Nachol
Salt Lake City

A vote for education

"Children are our future." As public education leaders, not only have we heard those words countless times, but we wholeheartedly believe them. And we believe that the best way to invest in those futures is by investing in public education.

Increasing the quality of Utah's public schools is priority number one for Jeff Howell, Democratic candidate for House District 23 seat in the Utah Legislature — which is why the Utah Education Association, the Salt Lake Education Association, and we, as education leaders, endorse him. Education has the potential to break barriers, remove obstacles to opportunity, and make education in Utah more equitable. The way to fully tap into that potential is by providing quality education to every student. And the way to provide that quality education is by investing in the public school system.

Utah spends \$4,443 per student per year and receives \$922 per student from the federal government, which is the lowest amount of any state. Higher spending per student often correlates with better educational outcomes for students, and because 97% of our families send their children to our public schools, 97% of our resources should be there as well. This is particularly true in Salt Lake District where we have diverse students and families with dramatically diverse needs.

Howell cares deeply about amplifying the Salt Lake City School District's "Strategic Plan for Student Achievement," which aims to have 80% of K-3 students reading on grade level by 2029. Education is the key to empowering the next generation. Howell understands this, and that's why we believe he is the best representative for House District 23. He would be the strongest voice to advocate for students, families, and teachers.

Carol Lear, Utah State Board of Education, District 2; Carol Spackman Moss, Utah State House of Representatives, District 34; Mohamed Baqai, Salt Lake City School Board, District 6; Rebekah Cummings, Utah Library Association, Advocacy co-chair; Public Education Parent leaders in House District 23: Angelina Pace, Bonanza Elementary; Kim Cairne, Indian Hills Elementary; Sarah Lowe, Utah Education; Emily Wiseman, Heather Hayes, Clayton Middle School

LETTER POLICY

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Letters must include the writer's full name, street address and daytime telephone number, though only the name and the city of residence will be published. Letters by email are encouraged.

They should have the word "letter" in the subject line and not include attachments. Only one letter per writer can be published in any 30-day period.

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