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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

Pop The Sales Tax Exemption For Soda

LINCOLN JOURNAL STAR (Nov. 24): Sen. Bill Avery of Lincoln has not given up on the idea that the sales tax exemption for soda pop should be eliminated. He plans to introduce a bill next session to do just that.

Good. There's no logical reason that soda pop and other sugary drinks should enjoy exemption from sales tax. In fact, sometimes the state taxes sugary drinks.

There are good reasons, however, why soda pop should be taxed all the time.

The biggest reason is that sugary drinks are linked to obesity. Taxing them might reduce consumption, and the revenue could be set aside to use for anti-obesity programs.

It's not chump change, either. The Legislature's fiscal office estimated the tax would bring in about \$11 million a year.

Americans literally drink tons of the stuff. In 1977, sugary drinks were about 4 percent of American's daily calorie intake. By 2001, that had risen to 9 percent. Last year, about 28.4 percent of Nebraskans were classified as obese, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Judging by recent history, Avery's proposal seems destined to bring out howls about how he is trying to turn Nebraska into a nanny state.

Spare us.

This not a matter of great principle. It's merely a garden-variety question of tax policy.

Nebraska taxes sugary drinks under many circumstances.

Pick up a 12-pack of pop from a grocery store shelf and there's no tax. Grab a can of pop from a vending machine on the way out of the store, and it's subject to tax.

Order a soft drink in a restaurant and it's subject to tax.

Grab a plastic drink cup and fill it yourself at a convenience store? Pay the tax.

And here's another rule lifted right from the Department of Revenue website: "Examples of taxable sales are . Can of soda when straws are available on seller's counter."

Nebraska hardly would be alone in charging sales tax on pop. Every state around Nebraska taxes sugary drinks, with the exception of Wyoming. Only 15 states exempt soda pop and sugary drinks from taxes.

Originally, soda pop was exempted because it was classified as food, and lawmakers did not want to add to the price of food. But soda pop has no significant nutritional value.

It's important to remember that Nebraskans still would be able to drink sugary drinks. We're not talking about soft drink prohibition. Avery is merely proposing elimination of an unjustifiable tax exemption.

As Dr. Bob Rauner of the Partnership for a Healthy Lincoln put it, if you had to pick one thing to start with to fight obesity, "any sane person would start with this."

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Monday, Dec. 3, the 338th day of 2012. There are 28 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Dec. 3, 1992, the first telephone text message was sent by British engineer Neil Papworth, who transmitted the greeting "Merry Christmas" from his work computer in Newbury, Berkshire, to Vodafone executive Richard Jarvis' mobile phone.

On this date: In 1810, British forces captured Mauritius from the French, who had renamed the island nation off south-east Africa "Ile de France."

In 1818, Illinois was admitted as the 21st state.

In 1828, Andrew Jackson was elected president of the United States by the Electoral College.

In 1833, Oberlin College in Ohio — the first truly coeducational school of higher learning in the United States — began holding classes.

In 1925, George Gershwin's Concerto in F had its world premiere at New York's Carnegie Hall, with Gershwin at the piano.

In 1947, the Tennessee Williams play "A Streetcar Named Desire" opened on Broadway.

In 1960, the Lerner and Loewe musical "Camelot" opened on Broadway.

In 1967, surgeons in Cape Town, South Africa led by Dr. Christiaan Barnard performed the first human heart transplant on Louis Washkansky, who lived 18 days with the new heart. The 20th Century Limited, the famed luxury train, completed its final run from New York to Chicago.

In 1979, 11 people were killed in a crush of fans at Cincinnati's Riverfront Coliseum, where the British rock group The Who was performing.

In 1984, thousands of people died after a cloud of methyl isocyanate gas escaped from a pesticide plant operated by a Union Carbide subsidiary in Bhopal, India.

In 1991, radicals in Lebanon released American hostage Alann Steen, who'd been held captive nearly five years.

In 1992, the Greek tanker Aegean Sea spilled more than 21 million gallons of crude oil when it ran aground off northwestern Spain.

Ten years ago: Thousands of personnel files released under a court order showed that the Archdiocese of Boston went to great lengths to hide priests accused of abuse, including clergy who'd allegedly snorted cocaine and had sex with girls aspiring to be nuns. U.N. weapons inspectors made their first unannounced visit to one of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's presidential palaces.

Five years ago: A U.S. intelligence report concluded that Iran had halted its nuclear weapons development program in the fall of 2003 under international pressure but was continuing to enrich uranium. British teacher Gillian Gibbons, jailed in Sudan for insulting Islam after allowing her students to name a teddy bear Muhammad, flew home after being pardoned by the country's president. Former commissioner Bowie Kuhn was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame; former Dodgers owner Walter O'Malley, managers Dick Williams and Billy Southworth and ex-Pirates owner Barney Dreyfuss also were elected.

One year ago: In Atlanta, a defiant Herman Cain suspended his faltering bid for the Republican presidential nomination amid a drumbeat of sexual misconduct allegations, which he condemned as "false and unproven." Oklahoma State defeated Oklahoma 44-10 to win the Big 12 championship. (Exultant Oklahoma State fans stormed the field, resulting in a dozen injuries.)

Today's Birthdays: Movie director Jean-Luc Godard is 82. Singer Jaye P Morgan is 81. Actor Nicolas Coster is 79. Actress Mary Alice is 71. Rock singer Ozzy Osbourne is 64. Actress Heather Menzies is 63. Rock singer Mickey Thomas is 63. Country musician Paul Gregg (Restless Heart) is 58. Actor Steven Culp is 57. Actress Daryl Hannah is 52. Actress Julianne Moore is 52. Olympic gold medal figure skater Katarina Witt is 47. Actor Brendan Fraser is 44. Singer Montell Jordan is 44. Actor Royale Watkins is 43. Actor Bruno Campos is 39. Actress Holly Marie Combs is 39. Actress Liza Lapira (TV: "Don't Trust the B---- in Apartment 23") is 37. Actress Lauren Roman is 37. Pop-rock singer Daniel Bedingfield is 33. Actress Anna Chlumsky is 32. Actor Brian Bonsall is 31. Pop-rock singer-songwriter Andy Grammer is 29. Actress Amanda Seyfried is 27. Actor Michael Angarano is 25. Actor Jake T. Austin is 18.

Thought for Today: "What the world really needs is more love and less paper work." — Pearl Bailey, American entertainer (1918-1990).

FROM THE BIBLE

Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means put him to death. 1 Kings 3:26. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

Blender Success

Jessica Woerner, Lori Stephenson, Mary Klein, Denise Taggart and Heidi Sandal, SHS Vendor Blender Committee

Thank you to everyone who attended Sacred Heart School's fourth annual Vendor Blender on Nov. 17! It was a huge success, and a wonderful variety of items were collected for the SHS Gala in April.

Also, a huge thank you to our fantastic vendors and volunteers, including MANY parents, teachers and staff! A special thank you to Steph Tamsiea who organized the Bake Sale and to Lois Halbur-Katterhagen who publicized our event.

Blessings to you this Christmas season!

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To Be A Fly On The Wall

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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WASHINGTON — Much speculation has followed the private luncheon between President Obama and Mitt Romney, about which little is known.

Photographers captured grainy images of Romney arriving in a black SUV, from which he emerged unassisted and unguarded. Reporters received only the homophonically ironic luncheon menu in response to queries about what transpired in the presidential dining room: White turkey chili and chicken salad.

Alas, where there is a White House, there is always someone willing to whisper a few tidbits in the interest of national curiosity. According to Mr. Fly, who happened to be nearby feasting on a grain of salt, the meeting began with small talk, during which Romney took a stab at self-deprecating humor, while the president remained Rushmorian.

President: Governor, nice to see you again. Welcome to my Oval Office.

Romney: Thank you, Mr. President. Love the way you've decorated the place. Very understated, but where's the bling? Heh-heh.

President: Mitt, you always know just what to say. Jay (press secretary Carney), could you please let the chef know we're ready?

Romney: I don't suppose your chef speaks Spanish, eh? Just a little immigration humor there. You know I never did employ any illegal aliens, despite what they said. Wow, is that the Churchill bust? I thought you gave it back!

President: No, that's Alfred Hitchcock. I'm a fan. You like turkey chili?

Romney: Love turkey chili! Of course, I love everything, especially America.

President: (Smiles while reaching down to pat Bo on the head.)

Romney: Hey, who let the dog out? Heh-heh.

Carney: Mr. President, lunch is served.

President: This way, Mitt.

(Seated, the tone becomes more reserved.)

Romney: Mr. President, first I want to thank you for extending this invitation. I'm honored to be here and hopeful that I can continue to serve my country in any way you see fit.

President: Thank you, Mitt. I really appreciate your willingness to come here today. I know it can't have been easy and, by the way, my apologies for your reception outside.

Romney: Oh, I'm used to hecklers.

President: No, I mean the media.

Romney: No, that's what I meant, too.

President: Very good.

Romney: Well, what can I do for you, Mr. President? Not to be presumptuous, but I think I have some ideas for turning around the economy.

President: So I've heard, but I'm really not that interested. I mostly invited you here because I said I would. Team of rivals and all that, blah, blah, blah.

Romney: Oh. Well, since I'm here, could I just say, Mr. President, that you really must cut discretionary and entitlement spending. Seeking \$50 billion more in stimulus funds on top of raising tax rates will break the country. You will decimate the small business community.

President, stifling a yawn: So I've heard, but again, I don't really care that much. I was re-elected and elections matter. Legacies matter even more. I have to raise taxes on the rich and I can't and won't cut spending on the less fortunate. Obviously, closing loopholes and capping deductions won't produce enough revenues to cut the debt and deficit.

Romney: Well, no, it won't, not unless you also significantly cut spending. Moreover, as you know, you're already raising taxes across the board with Obamacare. What happened to your saying you'd go anywhere and do anything to reach a compromise with Republicans? If we go over this cliff and enter another recession, the American people are going to be hurting and eventually they'll understand why.

President: All true, Governor, but by then my agenda will be entrenched and most Americans — your benighted 47 percent among others — will be content with the nation's new organization. Eventually, even the middle class won't mind coughing up more in taxes to finance what I've put in place. By the time I leave office, everyone in this country will have equal access to health care; the rich won't be so rich and the poor won't be so poor. What's wrong with that?

Romney: Nothing much, Mr. President, except the reality is that not everyone can have everything. Equal outcomes, which you seem to see as desirable, inevitably means coercion. Moreover, what you've just described is not free-market capitalism.

President, looking bemused: Your point?

Carney: Excuse me, Mr. President, sorry to interrupt, but your next appointments are here. Gov. Christie, Gov. Jindal, right this way.

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Kathleen PARKER

Coping With Teenage Werewolves

BY BILL O'REILLY

Creators Syndicate

Back in the 1950s, "Little Joe Cartwright" starred in a movie called "I Was a Teenage Werewolf." That's right, after seeing a full moon, Michael Landon ran around a public high school foaming at the mouth and pretty much out of control. Since there was little difference between his behavior and that of the normal students, he got away with it for two semesters.

As I watched the film, I remember thinking that it was going to be tough for Landon to get into college with that on his resume. But then the 1960s happened, so that was that.

This brings me to the present. My life these days is largely confronting political and social madness on television and then going home to deal with teenage drama from an almost-14-year-old girl. I vaguely remember being 14, because I was ensconced in a Catholic high school that gave out homework assignments like they were M&M's. Believe me, I had plenty of angst. But nobody paid much attention to it.

Like today, many teenagers back then brooded full time. Check out James Dean, an outstandingly cloudy guy. But now teens have two things that embolden their disenchantment: the Internet and permissive parents.

Earlier this week, I was encouraging my urchins to speed it up because the bus was coming.

"I can't go faster 'cause you're staring at me," the teen wailed.

"I'm not staring at you. I just came into the room."

"But I can see you!"

You get the idea. My daughter also did not want to wear anything that covered her legs — even though it was 39 degrees outside. She wanted to wear shorts. At that

point, I started wishing she'd turn into a werewolf. At least the fur would keep her warm.

But it is the Internet that is truly changing the teenage dynamic in America.

It used to be that teenagers would hang out together and swap stories of woe. I remember seeing Billy Joel and his crew at stores on Levittown Parkway. They were just slouching around the same as my guys were. Just being with other teenagers was comforting, but we actually had to leave our houses to do that. Now, teens can gang-brood from their rooms on the Net.

Because nearly every awful occurrence is highlighted on various Facebook pages, teenagers now find it easier to justify their own craziness. "How can you criticize me for getting a C when Shelley got all F's and crashed her dad's car?" That kind of thing.

Nothing is private anymore. Teenagers are subjected to (and some participate in) incredibly destructive behavior online.

And parents have few options. Even if you ban home computers, handheld devices are all over the place. You'd have to put a full-time bodyguard on the child in order to provide complete protection.

In the end, all parents can do is try their best to impose a sense of responsibility on their kids. But don't expect any appreciation, and be watchful at all times. Kids today are growing up at warp speed; the machines march them into adulthood way before they're ready.

Even with fangs, Landon had it easier.

Veteran TV news anchor Bill O'Reilly is host of the Fox News show "The O'Reilly Factor" and author of the book "Pinheads and Patriots: Where You Stand in the Age of Obama."



Bill O'REILLY

YOUR LETTERS

Climate Mythology

Michael Snow, Gayville

The Press & Dakotan editorial of Nov. 21 ("Our View: Climate Change And A New Momentum") hypes the tabloid climatology that we have come to expect from the mainstream (dying) media and politicians. Jumping on the "Superstorm Sandy" bandwagon meme of "extreme and destructive weather" obscures the facts.

Sandy's storm surge came at high tide. The Great Gale of 1821 had a similar surge but came at dead low tide. Tidal range at The Battery, NYC, is 7.5 feet. Given the same tide, it would have far surpassed Sandy.

Was The Great Gale, at the end of the Little Ice Age, caused by CO2? How about the high

tide and the full moon? A check of NOAA's National Hurricane Center history book puts things into perspective.

Doctors Roger Pielke, Jr. & Sr., of the University of Colorado, have both written that there is no connection shown between hurricanes and global warming.

Following politician Bloomberg, who deflected attention from the need for emergency planning by proclaiming, "This requires urgent action on carbon dioxide emissions," and the Bloomberg magazine cover, "It's Global Warming, Stupid," the P&D follows suit with the "Denier" label. As anyone who has followed this hysteria knows, this label was used as a direct reference to those who deny the Holocaust. And it is especially despicable when one of the "deniers" is the Jewish atmospheric physicist,

Prof. Richard Lindzen of MIT, one of the world's leading climate scientists.

You might learn something by reading his articles online. Start by learning about the mythical positive feedbacks of the computer models and their aerosol fudge factors versus the empirical negative feedback shown by satellite data.

"One is working with data that is far from what one might wish for. Moreover, the complexity of the situation tends to defeat simple analyses. Nonetheless, certain things are clear: models are at great variance with observations, the simple regressions between outgoing radiation and surface temperature will severely misrepresent climate sensitivity, and the observations suggest negative rather than positive feedbacks." — Richard S. Lindzen.