

Chewing tobacco regulations have to go

Government legislators have created laws that unfairly deny athletes the right to use smokeless tobacco

Forty-four New York City Council members decided it was a just idea to ban smokeless tobacco at ticketed sporting events. It is a small drop in a huge bucket, but that does not mean that I am not infuriated by it.

Smokeless tobacco, also known as chewing tobacco, has long been a staple of baseball. Players pack the tobacco in their mouths and chew it. Then they spit out their brown saliva in a cup. Companies have marketed this type of tobacco to consumers as a safer alternative to regular tobacco, like cigarettes.

The American Cancer Society does state clearly on its website that it is "less lethal than smoking tobacco." However, it also states that overall, chewing tobacco will yield about the same amount of nicotine as regular smoking tobacco, along with at least 30 chemicals that are carcinogenic.

Affiliation with tobacco, whether it develops due to health reasons or personal reasons, does not give anyone the right to coerce others through governmental force to follow their line of thinking.

People can make arguments about how cigarette smoking can have negative effects on others through secondhand smoke, but chewing tobacco does not hurt anyone except those using it. Chewing tobacco can lead to various forms of cancer, but that is the choice and risk the individual makes on their own.

It is a victimless crime, if anyone can even consider it a crime. Nobody can dictate what goes into someone else's body, under the condition that it does not hurt anyone else. Chewing to-

bacco is no exception; it is merely a replay of former Mayor Michael Bloomberg's soda ban.

Although I do not personally have any affiliation with smokeless tobacco, I still believe that this decision should be entirely up to the individual.

There is also the argument that Major League Baseball players who chew tobacco during games and on camera influence youth negatively to copy their actions. Although this might be true in a sense, whose job is it to dictate what a good role model looks like? It is certainly not one of the basic functions of our government. It is the job of the parent or the teacher to shape youth positively, and explain that smoking and chewing tobacco are bad for their health.

Athletes should aspire to positively influence the youth that look up to them, but we should not force them to influence them through laws and regulations.

In regards to this law working, New York Yankees outfielder Carlos Beltran said, "If you do it, make sure you do it in a place where no one sees you. If you do it, make sure you do it somewhere where there are no cameras around." Even a professional baseball player admitted that players will attempt to dodge this law, similar to how most laws that outlaw nonviolent

actions are evaded.

While the MLB players may be able to deal with fines from New York City and the MLB when they are caught chewing tobacco in upcoming seasons, it is the fan who gets caught chewing tobacco at a sports venue who is really hurt financially by this law.

There is no need to punish someone minding their own business at a sporting event with arbitrary laws and unnecessary fines. In addition, this is not a small fine.

In other cities such as Boston, Chicago and Los Angeles, fines have been known to exceed \$100 per offense, which may amount to more than the price of a whole day out at the ballpark.

However, what concerns me, and what led me to pen this piece are the abhorrent measures that our legislators would go to in order to encroach upon our freedoms. I am not as surprised as I am disappointed by this measure.

This is just an extension of the extra laws enforced in New York City that only enable government control while restricting freedoms.

Like the saying goes, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

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