

## OPINIONS

## River Right: Driving cards for illegal immigrants?

BY TOM CARSTENS

River right? Or river left? Which way to paddle?

While kayaking on a fast river, it's often difficult to tell which path to take around an island. You're down so low, you just can't see very far ahead. So mostly I just go with the big flow and hope for the best. It usually works out. But sometimes the roar of the river is so deafening in one direction that I chicken out and go the safer way, hoping not to scrape bottom in the shallower water.

This is sort of how I feel when I look at this business of giving illegal immigrants a license to drive. What's the right way to go? It's hard to know.

Undocumented workers in Oregon haven't been able to apply for driving privileges since 2008. Last May, though, our governor signed a bill that allows them the right to apply for a "driver card." The law was supposed to go into effect in January, but a group called "Oregonians for Immigration Reform" immediately challenged it. They successfully circulated a petition that put the law on hold until voters have their say. We'll vote on this issue in November. So...which way to vote?

The Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) says the driver card is different from a regular license. It can't be used for commercial vehicles (but it can have a farm vehicle endorsement). It can't be used to purchase or carry weapons. It's not *supposed* to be used as identification. It's more expensive than a regular license and is good for only four years. To get one, an individual must show a valid passport or consular identification documents and prove that he/she has lived in Oregon for more than a year. *Legal* residence is not a requirement. Not everyone, to say the least, thinks this is a good idea.

Many believe that granting driving privileges to undocumented immigrants is nothing but a reward for illegally entering our country. Why should our state promote and encourage criminal behavior?

Others feel that it's not right to discriminate against people who live here

and are contributing to our economy. They suggest we give them the right to drive to work or school. Our governor tells us that undocumented immigrants "deserve their shot at the American dream."

But what's the real issue? The Oregon legislature passed this law as a public safety measure. Holders of this new driver card must pass both the written and driving tests. The idea was to cut down on traffic accidents and hit-and-runs—and make sure everyone has liability insurance.

The AAA Foundation says that nationwide, unlicensed drivers are involved in one out of five fatal crashes and are much more likely to flee the scene. In researching their own new law, the California DMV determined that unlicensed drivers are *three times* more likely to cause fatal crashes. That sounds a lot like a public safety issue to me.

But hold on a minute. The Oregon DMV says unlicensed/uninsured drivers are no more likely to be involved in accidents than you or me. According to their annual report (google "Oregon Annual HB 3624 Report"), it looks like less than three percent of injury accidents in Oregon typically involve unlicensed and uninsured drivers. That's less than the proportion of illegal residents in our workforce. In fact, their accident rates are trending downward. We aren't exactly having a public safety crisis in Oregon.

Still, these folks *are* living and working here. They're also *driving*. And guess what? They're not moving back to their homelands. Would it be so wrong to test and certify them? (The Oregon DMV tests in six languages.)

It's a tough call, with a lot of conflicting emotions. River right: Go with the flow—don't give illegals a lawful ID and a license to drive. River left: take the more cautious route—give a nod to highway safety and personal accountability.

I'm ready to go left on this one.

See you on the river.

Tom Carstens

541-846-1025

## Genetic roulette anyone?

BY TOM KLINEFELTER

Why are GMOs banned in Europe and Canada? What do they know that we Americans don't? I recently watched Jeffrey Smith's film *Genetic Roulette*, which documents insidious mutations and the dangers posed to us and our future generations. The press has failed us with a kaleidoscope of information that diverts our attention from the facts. Unfortunately, in our country, the media are not separate from the government, the banking system and the industrial complex, which makes it almost impossible to present a clear and unbiased picture to the population.

But who can you trust? We would like to think that our government and its agencies like the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) have our best interests in mind, but with folks like Michael Taylor, former vice president of public policy for Monsanto (the leading producer of genetically engineered seed and Roundup) and now head of food safety for the FDA, this is not necessarily the case.

There has been a well-documented massive rise of a multitude of illnesses in epidemic proportions across the United States. "The dangerous side effects are much worse than we have ever imagined," says Dr. Don Huber in his letter of warning to the USDA, which includes "the threat we are facing from this pathogen is unique and of a high risk status, and should be treated as an emergency." His warning has been completely ignored by the USDA.

The original reports from scientists working for the biotech companies pronounced *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) corn safe for human consumption, but studies now show conclusively that Bt toxin actually eats holes in the intestinal walls of humans. The leaky intestines are shown to be responsible for everything from food allergy illnesses, birth defects and autism to various cancers and a multitude of gastrointestinal disorders. A recent Canadian study revealed that 93 percent of all pregnant women and 80

percent of their unborn fetuses have Bt toxin in their blood.

I'm a musician and farmer, not a research scientist, but I do have a lot of experience with animals and recently performed some testing with my own livestock. Given a choice, my goats, sheep, and even chickens will always choose the organic, non-GMO feed when placed side by side with GMO feed. Moreover, for the past year my two-year-old cat has chronically regurgitated her cat food, so I tried all of the brands from the Grange Co-op, but the condition persisted. Smith's documentary got me wondering if GMOs might be the culprit, so I went back to the Grange and read all of the labels and called the manufacturers to discover that none were GMO-free. In mid February I purchased some Canadian organic cat food from a Medford pet store and switched her diet. The results were immediate and lasting—she hasn't been sick since!

What about people food? All of the leading brands of infant formula contain GMO ingredients, as do almost all processed foods in this country. Sure, we can just choose not to buy these products, but as long as GMOs are legal, the proliferation of these mutations and the dangerous side effects continue.

Since the government agencies, the biotech corporations, and the media are not going to take the initiative, it is up to us to take control of our well-being and ban GMOs in our own country.

The simple truth is that genetic engineering is a billion-dollar industry, which is *not* built around improving the quality of our lives. Altering Mother Nature at this level and magnitude is truly a crime against all humanity and has the potential to adversely affect all life-forms on the planet.

Please watch the documentary *Genetic Roulette* ([geneticroulettetmovie.com](http://geneticroulettetmovie.com)) and draw your own conclusions—a 17-minute segment is free on youtube.com.

Tom Klinefelter

[tktomahawk49@gmail.com](mailto:tktomahawk49@gmail.com)

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