



Simon says: Our rights are ‘slip slidin’ away’

By Jim Waters

Like school kids atop a snow-covered hill during a driving storm — oblivious to conditions around them — so health nannies stand, gleefully ready to push us and our freedoms down a slippery slope leading to a ride that might not offer so much fun.

I don’t question the motives behind a [smoking-ban proposal](#) now under consideration by the Bullitt County Health Department and its Board of Health. They and many — including me — have grave concerns about the health of Kentuckians.

Kentucky ranks as one of the unhealthiest states in the union. If the University of Kentucky football team did as well in polls as Kentucky does in poor health rankings, Big Blue fans would forget about basketball.

But I run into problems with how bureaucrats act on such a crisis.

C.S. Lewis once said, “Of all tyrannies, a tyranny exercised for the good of its victim may be the most oppressive.”

Appointed (not elected) health-department bureaucrats see nothing wrong with pushing that sled down the hill, no matter where it may end up. Those riding the sled have a different view. At a minimum, they would like to have some notion of where it’s going to end up.

If a public health department can bypass elected officials and engineer policies that trump other important liberties — such as constitutionally endorsed private-property rights — while using claims that “we’re responsible for the public’s health,” that sled won’t stop in a good place.

I’m sure that when New York City banned smoking in 2003, many folks who like dining in smoke-free surroundings welcomed that decision. But I also suspect that many of them never dreamed the city would in only three years ban those same restaurants from using trans fats in their food.

What?! No margarine on my dinner roll?

Now the health nannies and their unsalted nuts in the New York General Assembly have filed a bill that would fine restaurants \$1,000 if chefs use salt in recipes. That sled ride turned into the equivalent of skiing down Mount Everest.

Yes, the health police want to send us careening down a slippery slope toward more nanny-ism, less liberty and even less personal responsibility. They will never be satisfied until they can stand in homes throwing out cigarettes and forcing inhabitants to eat unseasoned Brussel sprouts.

Coming next: The Sugar Free Candy Halloween Ordinance.

It’s hard to stop a sled careening down a snow-covered slope.

At a [forum](#) I attended in Hillview, near Shepherdsville, some who support the proposed smoking ban repeatedly stated that they want to go to restaurants in which they breathe smoke-free air. Me, too.

But that's a very shortsighted view — one that health-department bureaucrats count on to attack property rights in the future.

Keep in mind: Local health boards could apply their “public nuisance” arguments to private residences, too.

“If a person has rats running out of their house, the health department can move in because that's a public nuisance,” said Harlen Compton, a local businessman and spokesman for Bullitt County Choice. “What's to keep them from using that same argument to ban smoking in a private residence as well?”

Or if the department gets its way on [smoking bans](#), what will it have to attack next to justify keeping so many bureaucrats on taxpayer-backed payrolls?

I bet those folks who want to use government force to ensure a more enjoyable dining experience might not smile as widely when denied margarine on their baked potatoes, salt on their Happy Meal fries or Halloween candy that tastes like wax.

If the health bureaucrats can get by with claiming that smoking bans address a “public nuisance,” who's to say that more, much more, won't follow — and soon?

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