

Will new drunk driving limits make a difference

On the
Prairie Dog
Steve Haynes



The National Transportation Safety Board wants to lower the legal limit for a drunk driving conviction from the current .08 blood alcohol reading down to .05.

The difference could be dramatic for casual and social drinkers – from as many as four drinks in an hour down to just two or three for the average man, and one for many women – but the expected gains on drinking-related accidents would not be so great.

Nearly all states have cut their definition of drunk driving by nearly half over the last 33 years. In 1980, before the nation began a push to eliminate DUI – most states used a blood alcohol reading of .15 to define drunk driving. Today, the figure is down to .08 in nearly every state.

The changes we've made since then have cut deaths caused by drunk drivers in half over 30 years. The coming change, down to .05, is expected to reduce highway deaths by as many as 500 a year, but that's a drop of only 5 percent.

Many are asking, is that worth the price? Will an even-tighter standard really reduce fatalities, or is this movement being driven by the anti-alcohol crazies who seem to have taken over the drunk-driving crusade?

It's become difficult to speak out against any tightening of drunk-driving laws in the U.S., because anyone who does so is branded as being against safe roads and for drunk driving. It's a position most politicians can't afford to be in.

But do we want to prevent social drinkers who aren't really the problem from driving, or do we want to eliminate drunk-driving deaths?

Increasingly, the evidence shows that some things work and some don't. One of the biggest problems is dealing with repeat offenders, people who keep drinking and driving. Often, when caught, they're driving without a license already. It's common for police to stop people "driving under suspension," even though penalties can be stiff.

It's nearly impossible to live in America today, hold a job – and not drive. We set people up so they are punished for driving drunk, but they find they need to drive to hold a job. Or drive to the bar.

These are the people causing the problem. They are hard to deal with. They are problem drinkers because they are firmly in the grips of a terrible disease, and they just don't care. They'd rather drink.

Yet the "drunk driving" establishment seems to be more interested in punishing people not for driving drunk, but just for drinking.

That's why the founder of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Candy Lightner, quit the group. She said the people now in charge are "neo-prohibitionist" pursuing an anti-alcohol agenda.

"I didn't start MADD to deal with alcohol," she said recently. "I started MADD to deal with the issue of drunk driving."

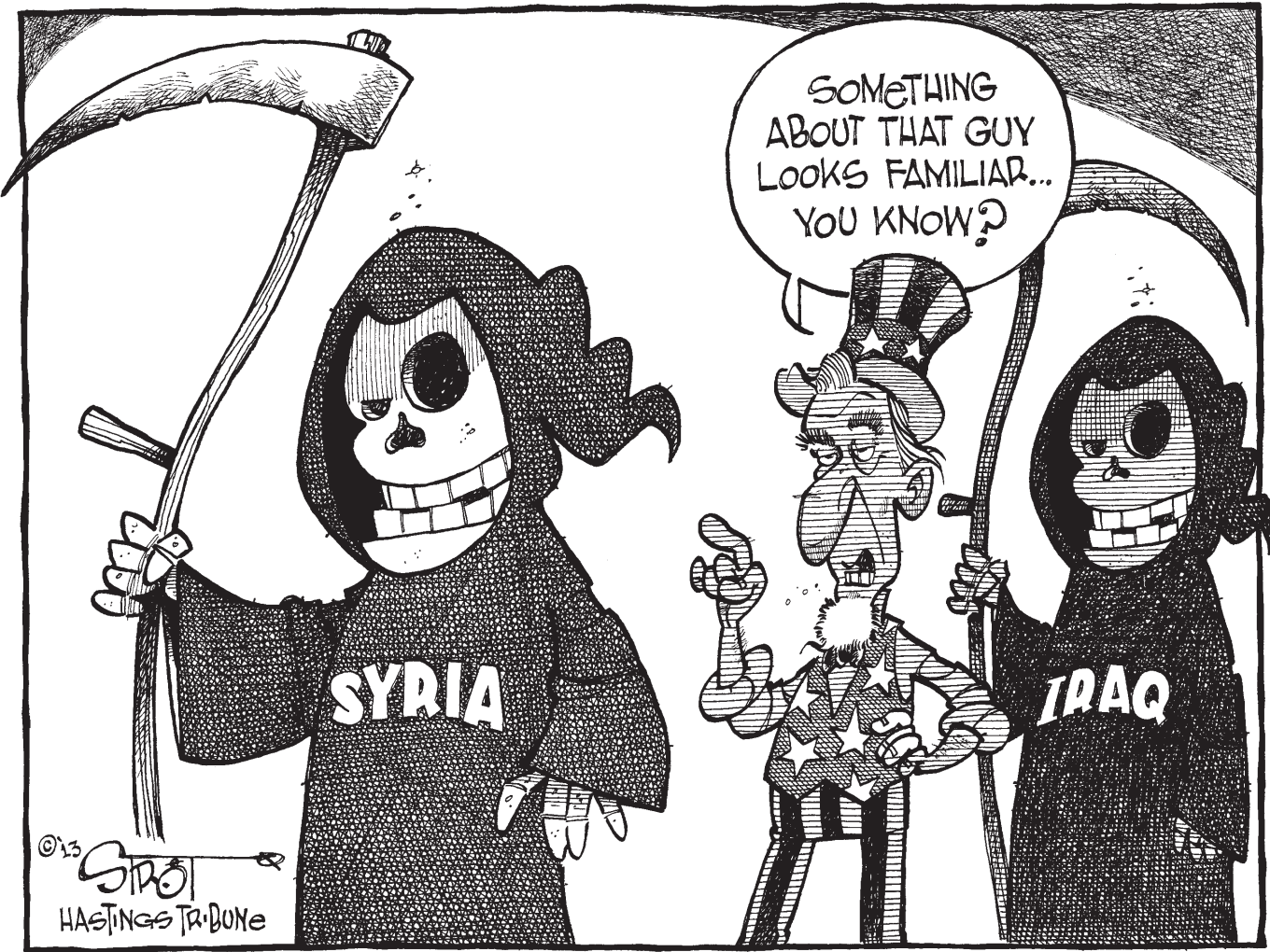
Since most drivers involved in drunk-driving deaths are repeat offenders with a blood reading of .20 or higher, it would make sense to go after them with tougher penalties, ignition interlocks and other tactics, not the social drinker.

But in a world where we've already attempted to reinstate prohibition for college-age kids – a foolish law that's problematical and widely ignored – that's not what the anti-drinkers want.

Will the new push for a .05 standard bring about stiffer drunk-driving laws? Quite possibly. But will it solve the problem? Not likely. It'll just make life more difficult for the rest of us.

But dealing with problem drinkers is no easy thing. We can expect Congress and the states to take the easy course instead of one that might help solve the problem.

– Steve Haynes



To step in or keep our nose out of it

Phase II
Mary Kay
Woodyard



There are very few subjects upon which I have no opinion, but the situation in Syria is one of them. I am grateful that President Obama decided to go to Congress for approval, before deciding to make a strike on the Middle Eastern country. Although there are some who feel it wasn't necessary or others who believe it sets a dangerous precedent to seek prior approval, I, for one, believe this is a significant enough action to require a Congressional nod. I also believe it is important for the rest of the world to see how our method of government seeks to do the will of the people.

I can see both sides of this complicated issue. Syria is a tormented country, in a tormented area of the world. An area which over centuries has been fraught with wars and fighting. Certainly, the humane aspect requires us to believe we should step in against a government intent on using chemical weapons to kill their own people. Previous

intelligence reports of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq make us wary of becoming involved in another country with the possibility of another long and costly war. On the other side of the coin however, history has shown us the result of ignoring inhumane actions and certainly makes us question our own humanity if we refrain from action against such a regime. I certainly feel for both sides.

When President Bashar al-Assad became President of Syria when his father died in 2000, it was believed he would be a reformer and bring the country into the new century. Instead,

he has proven to be a corrupt and heartless leader. In the spring of 2011, a Syrian uprising sought to overthrow his government, in what became known as a part of the Arab Spring movement.

Some things, truth be known probably most, have no right or wrong answers. The gray area wins, although black or white would make life so much easier. This is the point where I have to trust our elected officials and the intelligence community. It isn't merely the United States or Syria which will be affected by the decisions made. Our relationship with other countries may be jeopardized and we may find ourselves on a very tumultuous path with some. A decision to strike may set us at odds with other nonparticipating allies. A decision to sit back and wait wreaks havoc on an already devastated country. This is when we pray for guidance and courage for our officials. Grant us peace, Lord. mkwoyard@ruraltel.net

The joys of being a grandparent today

This Too
Shall Pass
Nancy
Hagman



"Last week I HAD to babysit my grandson."

You should have seen the eye rolls I got when those words came out of my mouth.

So, okay, "Last week I GOT to babysit my grandson."

How things have changed! We all know babies are supposed to sleep on their backs. Not to discount the seriousness of SIDS but my babies loved being on their tummies.

In order to get babies to sleep on their backs parents are advised to swaddle. Swaddling, done properly, requires beautiful cotton gauze clothes at \$15 or \$20 a pop. Opinions on when to stop swaddling vary by health care providers.

Mo is four months old. His parents stopped swaddling at three months. Other children are swaddled much longer.

Parents of swaddled children are admonished to give their babies "tummy time".

Tummy time allows babies to develop their neck muscles. It has been discovered that babies who are constantly swaddled are not strong enough to lift their heads. Thus the risk for suffocation increases if they accidentally get turned on their sides or tummies.

Most mothers report their babies hate tummy time! That completely blows my theory that my babies were happy on their tummies!

To further reduce the suffocation risk, blankets, crib bumpers and stuffed animals are strictly forbidden. Some children are denied these items into the toddler years.

Children who are exclusively laid on their backs develop a malformation

of the head. They are the ones we see with helmets; in some cases physical therapy is required.

In their July 22 "Briefing" section, Time magazine reported: "47%. Percentage of babies in a Canadian study who had a deformation on the back of the head because of clumsy parenting."

Obviously whoever wrote that blurb is not a new parent or grandparent. Parents are trying to do something recommended by every expert, only to get blasted for "clumsy parenting."

How precious babies are! They cause us to become well-intended, muddled messes! Patricia calls it "baby brain"! It's not just confined to mothers who have every right to post-partum mood swings.

The first time Mo stayed at our house I had a meltdown.

I had a beautiful Jenny Lind crib in the attic, plus all the bedding including a lovely bumper pad, which of course we cannot use! I purchased a new mattress.

But Patricia was leery of the "old" crib, and insisted upon bringing the portable crib. So I left the unassembled crib in the attic. Upon arrival they announced they had decided to humor me and use it.

I rushed to the attic. Drug the side rails etc. out. Now where is the hardware? It was in a bag taped to the crib----it must

have fallen off. Frantically I began moving things. The attic has natural light from a small window. It was getting dark.

OUCH---what was that? Something bit me, twice.

I never found the hardware. I didn't die from the bites. Although three months later you can still see where the puncture wounds were!

Patricia hugged me and patted my back with a fluttering caress, "Sh-sh---it's okay." That's when I knew she was going to be a great mom!

Three months later, I decide to get the crib together. I went on line to see if replacement hardware was available.

The sites had all manner of advice and replacement parts to secure new cribs (made in China) with plastic "hardware"!

I found a place to call about parts. No machines answering the phone, just Stacy! I gave her the model number of the made in the USA crib. Stacy said, "That is a good one!"

The hardware arrived. Much like my life, I haven't got the crib together, yet.

Things have indeed changed since I was a parent. My biggest concern before the birth of my first; would the baby have hair? Labor and delivery quickly brought the realization: there are a lot worse things than a bald baby! (Thankfully she had a full head of hair!)

Mo also has a fine head of hair and beautiful blue eyes. No one else can be what he is and he cannot be anyone else.

He is as we all are in our own way-- --PERFECT!

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