

SPEAKING OUT

Logic on abortion law runs counter to gun law

Your Turn
Carol Crossed
Guest columnist

This month ushers in new laws that take effect in states all across the country. In New York, for instance, the Concealed Carry Improvement Act strengthens requirements for firearm permits and keeps New Yorkers safe. It joins other states in enforcing greater legal protections by curbing gun deaths and mass shootings. New York ranks second in the country by some measures, for passing firearm restrictions, but despite this, it is reported that 70% of gun crime in New York is from weapons procured out-of-state. How do we enforce protections when individuals in neighboring states like Ohio and Pennsylvania with less restrictive laws bring or sell firearms over state lines?

This dilemma escapes Gov. Kathy Hochul. Like states that disrespect our gun restrictions, New York reciprocates an even greater contempt for states that have abortion restrictions. New York's Reproductive Freedom and Equity Grant Program, which advanced in the State Senate Health Committee this week, would subsidize abortions for out-of-state women if it passes.

Currently, New York's Family Planning Benefits include the service of free abortion for any state resident under 223% of the Federal Poverty Level. However, if the new reproductive freedom and equity bill becomes law, some 190,000 to 280,000 women from other states might travel to New York seeking an abortion. And the measure states it would subsidize "Anyone who seeks abortion in the state" and "regardless of their ability to pay."

Is it an irony that New York shares in another second-place state distinction that diverges from our sensible gun protection measures: The Kaiser Family Foundation named our state second for the highest rate of abortions. The bill is called by opponents a more transparent name, the Free Abortions for Out-of-Staters Act. The fine print indicates taxpayers would cover travel, child care housing, and paid employment leave for out-of-state abortion seekers.

A co-sponsor, former state Assembly member Yuh-Line Niou, describes it as a way "to expand our capacity to deal with the major influx of out-of-state patients."

If it makes sense that non-residents of our state are generally not eligible for a New York state pistol license, why should non-residents of our state be eligible for an abortion? And not just eligible, but paid for to some extent by New York state.

For me, this is greater than a budget concern. New York enacted restrictions on guns to protect human beings, and we can assume Pennsylvania and Ohio enacted restrictions on abortion to protect human beings. Limits on both gun rights and abortion rights advance non-violent protections.

Offering financial incentives to abortion clinics and non-profit organizations to increase access for women who travel from states with restrictive abortion laws makes this measure an even greater un-neighborly infringement. What would New Yorkers think if Ohio subsidized gun manufacturers to provide firearm permits to residents of New York? And their travel expenses, too?

Should there not be some interstate cooperation to honor a state's laws intended to protect people?

Carol Crossed is president of the Board of Directors of Feminists Choosing Life of New York.



Team RoSynth, from the University of Rochester, posing by the iGEM sign at the 2023 Grand Jamboree in Paris, France. PROVIDED BY CATHERINE XIE

Synthetic biology can make medicine more accessible

Your Turn
Catherine Xie
Guest columnist

A team of undergraduates from the University of Rochester has created new methods for synthesis of plant derived molecules using 3D printing.

The team presented this project to a panel of judges last autumn at the Giant Jamboree in Paris, France hosted by the International Genetically Engineered Machine (iGEM) Foundation. The competition is centered on using synthetic biology to address significant problems in fields such as human health, agriculture, manufacturing, and the environment, and over 400 teams from around the world compete each year.

Why this matters: The team's project addressed the issue of high cost and inaccessibility of essential medicines. Our unique solution: Optimizing the synthesis of large molecules and ultimately achieving greater

yield and lower production cost.

This can decrease the cost of synthetic plant-originating medical products, making them more affordable to a wider audience. With the success of the project at the Jamboree, this highlights the potential of microbe printing for future medical compounds to improve our community's access to health.

In Paris, the UR team's project used engineered microbes, bacteria and yeast, working together to print in-demand plant-derived molecules, all while trapped in separate gels to prevent escape. The team presented their homemade 3D bioprinter with an altered dual channel function and ability to print gels, made originally from a plastic printer.

During the Jamboree, members talked about their work on the different components of the project including running models, getting the printer to run, interviewing industry experts and leading educational workshops.

This year, the team won a gold medal

and was nominated for the best hardware and best bio-manufacturing awards at the Jamboree, making Team Rochester the third-most-awarded undergraduate iGEM team in the US.

Throughout the experience, the team was exposed to the synthetic biology industry and learned about the implications and impacts of their project in addition to networking with different start-up companies. Talking to other teams around the world gave the team insight on the local issues that different regions face.

With the advancement of science, solutions that might seem far-fetched could be attainable in the future. Working on this project taught the team the importance of ethical and policy considerations, how to overcome setbacks with experiments and how to communicate science to audiences from various backgrounds.

Catherine Xie is a University of Rochester student Class of 2025.

Frelick

Continued from Page 7B

"We ate grass, we were so hungry, crossing the mountains on foot," he told me.

After he crossed the barbed wire fences and trenches on the border separating Iran and Turkey, Turkish border police caught him and about 50 people he was traveling with and took them to a base about five minutes from the border fence.

"At the base they stripped us of our clothes and our belongings, set them on fire, and beat and kicked us," he said. "They used police batons and wooden sticks to beat us, about 2 inches in di-

ameter. They also whipped us with their belts. They hit me on my arms and knees with a wooden stick. I tried to protect my head with my hands, which is why my arms got beaten. ... Some people were taken away and I never saw them again."

Only a couple of nights before talking to me, he tried going to Greece, he said, "but the police caught me, stripped me and sent me back."

Beaten and stripped, young refugee continued his journey

This young man, brutalized and literally stripped multiple times, had nothing but the clothes he could scrounge to cover his nakedness. The last thing he

said was: "Tomorrow, I will try to cross into Greece again. The whole journey has been really hard. I have only survived by my parents' prayers."

The young Hazara man disappeared in the shadows. I went on to the last interview of the day. I never saw or heard from him again.

At the end of the day after my last interview, I gathered my things and went to the shopkeeper to settle the bill for the tea the refugees and I had been drinking for most of the day. He waved his hands, shook his head, and said no need. The young Hazara man had paid for the tea.

Bill Frelick is director of refugee and migrant rights for Human Rights Watch.

Kavanagh

Continued from Page 7B

by artificial intelligence. The latest scare is that the public will acquire minuscule amounts of DNA from the vaccine. Reality check: This is more likely to happen every time one eats a steak or even a carrot. The DNA does not enter a cell's nucleus or affect our genes, and the body efficiently handles this occurrence.

Herd Immunity is a pipe dream

Relying on herd immunity is also a

pipe dream; it does not exist. People are being reinfected, and long COVID-19 is frequently occurring.

The damage appears to be additive. The incidence of long COVID-19 in the CDC's pulse survey of adults with previous COVID-19 has dropped in half, but then stabilized at 11%.

Its peak incidence is found in ages 30 to 49, possibly because this age group is one of the most vaccine hesitant.

Vaccinations are one of our best defenses against long COVID-19. People can have severe vaccination reactions, but these are rare - and are much rarer than with infection. However, if one does the math, a 75% reduction in long COVID-19 with vaccination is still not

great with a highly infectious virus. But it is exceedingly better than zero.

Other steps are necessary to prevent infection. These include improvements in ventilation and the use of KN95 and N95 masks, not cloth masks.

We are still in a pandemic. We need to wake up as a society before we reach a point of no return, or before the damage to our frontal lobes from repeated viral infections reaches a point where we are unable to form a consensus and effectively respond to this pandemic.

Dr. Kevin Kavanagh is a retired physician from Somerset, Kentucky, and chairman of Health Watch USA. This column first published in the Louisville Courier Journal.

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