

Calling Bernie Sanders; state board needs you

Marty Trillhaase/Lewiston Tribune

The Idaho State Board of Education says alcohol and college football is a toxic mixture.

So by all means, then, remove the threat.

Ban the booze.

The well-being of students, faculty and guests on campus must come first.

Funny thing, though.

The state board imposed Prohibition for some - but not for all.

And the key variant?

You guessed it: wealth and influence.

Earlier this month, the state board canceled its year-long pilot project that allowed the University of Idaho and Boise State University to sell alcohol at football games.

Fans who purchased a ticket at BSU's Albertson Stadium could buy a beer at the Huddle. At the UI's Kibbie Dome, ticket-

holders could stop by the Fan Zone and purchase a beverage.

The clientele was the general admission ticket-holder, the fan who attended games on a casual basis and sat in the cheap seats.

By a 7-1 vote, the state board stopped that practice. Spokesman Blake Youde told the Moscow-Pullman Daily News' Shanon Quinn the board acted to maintain a secure, family-friendly venue.

Without missing a beat, however, that same board maintained its long-standing approval of serving drinks to people who can afford to purchase season tickets and invest in suite seats or those with ties to corporate sponsors.

At BSU, they enjoy service at the Stueckle Sky Center.

At UI, sales will continue at the dome's Litehouse Center and Bud and June Ford Club room.

Still unsettled is the fate of the UI's tailgating community. For some time, the UI managed to get around the jurisdiction of the state board and its blue noses by designating the parking lots west of the Dome as "private" property - but only for the duration of the games.

Of course, the state board remained in the dark - until the Tribune's Mary Stone brought it up.

Youde deemed the apparent contradiction a "miscommunication."

State Board President Emma Atchley of Ashton says there's no ambiguity about it; without board permission, alcohol is banned from the UI's tailgating parties.

So the practice may be on its way out. But for now, if you can afford a pickup truck with a tailgate - let alone a recreational vehicle - and park it in the Dome's west lot, you too can imbibe.

What could account for extending privilege to some and imposing sobriety on others?

Is alcohol less of a safety concern when someone sitting in a box seat drinks from a glass rather than a can in the "Fan Zone"?

Do the people sitting in the expensive seats drink less - or at least more responsibly - than the ruffians with a general admission ticket?

To hear board member Bill Goesling of Moscow tell it, you might get that impression. Goesling told Stone it was more difficult to manage the Fan Zone than the Litehouse Center, where "they have much tighter control."

Or could it be Occam's razor - the simplest answer is the best?

In the realm of intercollegiate sports and higher education, cash is king. When someone with the means to expand the universities' endowments or capital funds orders a drink, you ask what brand, how much and how often.

If state board members are blind to that double standard, perhaps they should consult Bernie Sanders. - M.T.