

Deadline: 1 p.m. Tuesday. Submit opinions by email or mail to Penobscot Bay Press, P.O. Box 36, Stonington, ME 04681.

PACKET OPINION

Vote 'No' on Referendum Question 1 on March 3

In addition to voting for the Democratic and Republican presidential candidate in the primary election March 3, voters will also weigh in on Maine's vaccination law.

Question 1 seeks to repeal LD 798, "An Act to Protect Maine Children and Students from Preventable Diseases by Repealing Certain Exemptions from the Laws Governing Immunization Requirements." Approved in the House and Senate last year and signed by Gov. Janet Mills on May 24, 2019, the bill tightened the vaccination exemptions for students attending K-12 schools and colleges.

A successful petition drive resulted in the following Question 1: People's Veto, being placed on the statewide ballot: "Do you want to reject the new law that removes religious and philosophical exemptions to requiring immunization against certain communicable diseases for students to attend schools and colleges and for employees of nursery schools and health care facilities?"

"Yes" is a vote to repeal the current law, LD 798, while "No" is a vote to retain the current law.

If a person votes Yes on Question 1, religious and philosophical exemptions for vaccinations will (again) be permitted.

If a person votes No on Question 1, only medical exemptions will be permitted.

While enrollment in either the Republican or Democratic party is required to vote for presidential candidates in the primary election, unenrolled Maine voters may also cast ballots for Question 1.

The issue is a classic one, pitting the rights of the individual against the welfare of the whole community. Over many decades many vaccines have been developed, tested and proven safely effective at protecting those vaccinated against many virulent and potentially fatal diseases. Use of vaccines has become common practice to protect people, especially children, from catching these diseases. There is a massive amount of evidence supporting the health, societal and medical benefits of vaccinations. Most parents would do anything to protect their children.

Yet despite all the evidence of the worth of and need for vaccinations, some people do not wish to have themselves or their children vaccinated. Thus came about the petition to again allow religious and philosophical exemptions for vaccinations.

We must respect the reasonable rights of the individual in our pluralistic society. But do individuals have the right to put the welfare of the rest of our society at risk by their demand for rights? We think not.

We urge a "No" vote on Question 1 to help protect our children and all of us against potential disease and death.

R.N.W.B.

LETTERS

'Reject Big Lies'

When I first saw the signs asking me to vote yes on question 1 and "Reject Big Pharma," I thought, how great is that? Who loves Big Pharma? Who wouldn't want to reject it?

But, no. I was sadly mistaken.

Here's Question 1:

Do you want to reject the new law that removes religious and philosophical exemptions to requiring immunization against certain communicable diseases for students to attend schools and colleges and for employees of nursery schools and health care facilities?

Do you see anything about Big Pharma? Of course, you don't—because that's not the meaning or intent of this people's referendum. The Big Pharma hoax is a terrifyingly brilliant ad campaign designed to hoodwink the people of Maine; it targets the well-meaning but inadequately informed.

Governor Mills has been clear in her opposition to Question 1, but she needs to be polite and politic. I need to be neither: this referendum has been put on the ballot by anti-vaxxers who are both ignorant and selfish. They've accepted as fact fiction masquerading as science and have decided to endanger the health of children who cannot, for medical reason, be immunized.

They are selfish and willfully blind. Should they choose to reject vaccinations for their own children, fine, but those children should not be allowed

in public schools or in doctors' waiting rooms, or, indeed, anyplace else that puts the unimmunized at risk.

Please join me in letting your friends and neighbors know the truth and in voting "no" on Question 1 on March 3.

Reject Big Lies.

Margery Irvine
Brooklin

Better buoys

There was a public hearing at the Blue Hill Town Hall February 12 to discuss two ordinances to be put before Blue Hill Voters on Friday, April 3. There was some confusion about the Unencapsulated Polystyrene Ordinance. This ordinance would (after a grace period of five years) eliminate the use of Expanded Polystyrene (EPS, aka Styrofoam) from the use of moorings, docks and other flotation devices in Blue Hill waters. Polystyrene degrades into microscopic particles that end up in our food and water. Encapsulating polystyrene will protect against this happening. This ordinance is the same as Camden's ordinance of the same name. It was passed there in 2017.

Some buoys are now made with closed cell PVC (aka Spongex) or #2 plastic (HDPE, High Density Polyethylene, the type of plastic that is used for milk containers). Neither of these are expanded polystyrene and are, at this time, durable and desirable alternatives.

Gabrielle Wellman
Blue Hill

AWANADJO ALMANACK

Last Quarter Snow Moon February 14-21, 2020

BY ROB MCCALL

Calendar events—February 14 is St. Valentine's Day. February 15, 1898 the battleship *Maine* exploded in Havana Harbor. It's also the birthday of Susan B Anthony in 1820. February 16, 2005, the Kyoto Protocols on global warming went into effect in 140 nations, but not the United States. February 17 is Presidents' Day, and on this day "Winter's back breaks" according to the Old Farmer's Almanac.

Natural events—Just as there is a time in August when Summer turns toward Fall, there is a time in February when Winter's grip begins to weaken and we Northerners begin to feel a deep shift inside and out. It's far too soon to say 'Spring' but the sunlight slowly gains some headway against the darkness. It may be too early to say the

sap is running, but at least it's beginning to rise and little icicles hang on broken maple twigs, dripping gaily during the day and stopping still as evening comes. Nuthatches run more briskly up and down the tree trunks and their cranky call has a certain lilt to it that was not there before. Crows and gulls have more to say to each other than the meager squawks of a few weeks ago, and they don't squabble so over the scraps. Blue Jays whistle loudly from tree to tree. Folks honk and wave; so do geese. Every now and then you catch a whiff of sun-warmed pine needles under the big white pines and the scent of saltwater on the breeze. It's too soon to call it true love yet, but it's like the first kiss [remember?], and it's just in time for Valentine's Day.

Mountain report—Though there is plenty of bare and open ground on the sunny Southern slopes, in the woods and other shady places Awanadjo is still firmly locked in Winter. Rippled little glaciers fill the gullies and trails where

water has run, then frozen, then run over and frozen again to form silent, still cascades and cataracts. Crusty, crunchy snow underfoot is littered far and wide with fir cone scales scattered by red squirrels, the planters of the boreal forests. The freeze-thaw see-saw shifts rocks, widens cracks and crevices in the ledges, and pulverizes boulders in the eternal process of breaking down the mountain and delivering it to the sea.

Rank opinion—There may be more serious snow and cold to come, but it has been an exceedingly pleasant Winter so far. I'd like to say this is the response of a Just and Benevolent Creator to the cruel cutting of funding for heat, health, education and other basic measures of compassionate conservatism or liberalism in a misbegotten effort to balance budgets. Balanced budgets are good, but heat in the Winter is not a frivolity. Education for our children is not a frill. Health care for the helpless is not a triviality. We will pay the price tenfold tomorrow for such

false economies today. Until the day this country puts as much value on the well-being of its elders and children, the poor, the weak and the vulnerable, as it does on military hardware and tax cuts for the super-wealthy, budgets may be balanced, but our beloved country will remain dangerously unbalanced, and for that we will all pay alike.

Seedpods for you to carry around—From Plutarch's *Moralia* 1st c. CE: Antisthenes says that in a certain far away land the cold is so intense that words freeze as soon as they are uttered, and after some time then thaw and become audible so that words spoken in winter go unheard until summer.

And from a Japanese proverb: One kind word can warm three winter months.

That's the Almanack for this quarter moon, but don't take it from me; go out and see for yourself.



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—The Staff

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