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Kronberg: The longtime master of manufactured outrage in Texas faces real outrage from GOP voters

Abbott put Patrick on defense with an unusually long veto message in which the governor described what must be in THC legislation that he would sign and denies Patrick legislative hostages during a special session

What a delicious moment in Texas politics.

Lieutenant Governor **Dan Patrick**, who built a career on manufactured outrage, is finding the technique falling flat as he tries to persuade an audience of the evils and perils of THC, apparently oblivious to the huge constituencies who know he is misleading them. The vast majority of Texans have some kind of first or second-hand contact with THC and know that the *Reefer Madness* scenarios painted by the Lite Gov has virtually no basis in reality.

But it is the politics that are truly interesting.

In this week's news conference, a passive-aggressive Patrick took his war directly to the Governor, accusing him of acting in bad faith.

The press conference was honestly embarrassing as Patrick fashioned himself as a geriatric scold trying to sell a bill of goods to an audience that knows better. Virtually every data point he mentioned was misleading. Of particular interest was his claim that more than 100 lawmakers supported the THC ban. Of course, he neglected to mention and reference what he does best: Patrick's unique contribution to the process is to hold hostage something that must be done in exchange for something only he prioritizes.

A couple sessions ago I wrote that Patrick not only specialized in taking legislative hostages, he enjoys shooting them.

Along with his apparent willing accomplice Speaker **Dustin Burrows**, Patrick held teacher pay raises hostage for a THC ban.

Most doubt that there were 40 votes in the House for the ban absent the threat of another cycle denying teachers much needed pay raises. Add to that the fact that Patrick had enlisted emissaries in the lobby to convey to House members that their unrelated stalled bills in the Senate could have new life if they voted "yes" on the amendment by Rep. **Tom Oliverson** to enact a full ban. Patrick used all the immense leverage available to him.

And of course, you can back out the Republican Senators from his math. The Senate GOP Caucus' most notable accomplishment in recent years is doing what they're told.

Patrick claims banning THC is a matter of life and death which frankly is a laugh out loud line since it is contrary to the experience of millions of Texans. Quite the opposite: It is the denial of THC that is a matter of life and death for those suffering seizures, epilepsy, chronic pain, and PTSD.

The Lt. Gov. claimed business would be less likely to relocate to a state that embraces cannabis in any fashion. But criminalizing women's health to the level that Texas medical schools can't fill residencies for OB-GYNs and the resulting shortages will have a more direct impact on the workforces of those businesses considering relocation.

He referred to the endorsement of law enforcement groups for the ban but never mentioned that they were tacitly threatened to get on board. Most law enforcement considers enforcing a THC ban a royal

pain when they could be pursuing criminals.

Patrick said it was impossible to conduct tests at the 8000 locations that market THC products. But much like alcohol the only testing that is necessary is at the point of origin along with distribution through regulated channels.

We are now in a moment when Gov. Abbott's approval is higher among Republican primary voters than Patrick's. Perhaps it is little more than coincidence but in just 10 days Abbott has both elevated Patrick's ***Penalty Box*** inhabitant **Kelly Hancock** to a likely statewide office as well as vetoing the Lite Guv's signature piece of legislation.

Indicating his growing savviness towards Patrick, Abbott has discovered that he holds the cards. So far he isn't placing anything on the special session call that can be used to hold hostage In exchange for something as unpalatable as what Patrick is selling.

Patrick can normally count on the so-called conservative (read ***MAGA***) ecosystem of talk radio and ***Twitter***. With rare exception, nearly every conservative microphone has been excoriating Patrick over his ban.

OK, the coup de gras of laugh lines was somehow claiming the cartels were in cahoots with the thousands of business locations selling THC products.

The arguments were specious and sad.

It might not be at the same order of magnitude but the current intensity of the pushback is such that at the next state Republican convention, Patrick could find himself being "***Cornyn'ed***."

After the Uvalde massacre, Cornyn supported a very minor change in gun law. This relatively trivial act in his career resulted in the senior senator from Texas being booed for 25 of the 30 minutes he spoke at the state Republican convention in Houston a couple years ago. I have no idea if this has the same level of intensity but every veteran I know is raging and every veterans' group is animated. Hell, the national VFW came out against the ban. Many in the ***FOX News***-watching target audience of 70+ year olds relies on infused drinks for sleeping. Epileptics and those suffering seizures are a smaller but no less significant constituency.

The politics for Abbott are obvious and the polling backs him up. **Trump** has supported decriminalization. There is no authentic constituency for criminalizing friends, family and neighbors for what most people believe to be an innocuous product.

The manufactured outrage industry has turned against their Manufacturer in Chief.

By Harvey Kronberg

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