

The United States is a country based on freedom, justice, and liberty. People came to this new world to escape oppression, unfair taxes and have an opportunity to worship freely and make their own decisions. They fought for freedom from England for the same rights. People have traveled across the world, endured treacherous terrain, for centuries; just to get a piece of the "American Dream". We live in a democracy, and slowly but surely, simple freedoms are being made more and more difficult to enjoy in the United States. The government is raising taxes, making laws, and even banning all together certain freedoms that seem so small, but have turned into huge issues. We find us asking ourselves, "how did we come to this point of regulation?" The answer--one step at a time.

Tobacco was one of the financial legs that supported our colonies. It was an exportable cash crop. Our government has supported tobacco crops with subsidies. Our government, at all levels, has enjoyed the taxes raised by tobacco. We, as U.S. citizens, have silently stood by and watched one restriction after another applied to tobacco; from usury type taxation, to restrictions on it's sale, to restrictions to places it can be used. States are finding it difficult to fund their roads. Cities and counties are finding it difficult to fund their teachers, peace officers and streets. In an attempt to raise revenue they turn to tobacco and are placing usury style taxation that results in consumers turning to out of state sources which takes all taxes away from local needs. One state placed 120% tax on cigars and lost revenue. When they repealed that and charged 50 cents, revenue not only returned it went up. The "single issue" people want to enjoy the financial benefits while at the same time eliminate the use of tobacco.

Now that the government has heavily taxed tobacco and banned the use of it in public places, they have moved on to the issue of obesity, and what they believe to be the cause of it, trans fatty foods. According to former U.S. Surgeon General, David Satcher, obesity counts for 300,000 premature deaths per year. Obesity raises our risk for heart disease, diabetes, stroke, high blood pressure, cancer and other chronic diseases. However, the president of the American Council of Science & Health, Dr. Elizabeth Whelan, has stated that there is no correlation between trans fat and obesity. She has been quoted saying, "Trans fats have nine calories per gram, just like any other fat, regardless if they are saturated or not. That means there is no caloric difference between oils containing trans fat and those that don't. Caloric intake is what's most important when it comes to losing weight and reducing the risk of heart disease." Whelan says education is the key to beating the country's obesity epidemic.

The problem with the government putting regulations on these types of issues is that it's an issue that involves personal choice. Are politicians so afraid of the real issues of war, energy, fair taxation, etc. that they have to turn to regulating personal freedoms and personal decisions of the people to keep their names before the voters and make themselves seem necessary? It's sad to think our soldiers will come home from defending freedom and peoples' rights to make their own decisions for themselves, to find that they themselves have lost some of their own freedoms at home. Where does one person's right stop and another's begin? When did we stop being able to decide for ourselves when and where we can enjoy a legal, very heavily taxed product?