Christian Janes
POLITICAL COLUMNIST

With President Trump’s proclamation of a federal ban on vaping devices, I thought I would weigh in to share my thoughts on the topic. However, you should take my views with the most scrutinized grains of refined iodized sea salt, since I do not vape or smoke and have no interest to start or promote my not doing so.

My general thoughts are essentially the same as the ones I have on the sale of cigarettes: they shouldn’t be marketed to children, they should be firmly regulated, and companies who sell the public false advertisements for their product should have to pay an appropriate penalty for it. I think that these are reasonable and have precedence with how we have regulated tobacco.

If you concluded from my beliefs that I don’t agree with the president’s decision, then you are quite shrewd and should probably be writing this column instead of me. I do not feel a drastic move like banning devices and pods is an appropriate response. The reason I feel this way is two-fold.

The first reason being the administration plans to ban only the vaping devices and nicotine pods; and the second being the administration would ban, as The New York Times points out, “cigarettes and nicotine pods from the market, excluding tobacco flavors.” My question is this: If the administration feels that vaping is becoming a serious health risk and this is the reason they should be banned, why would they not also ban what has been proven year after year, death after death to be a worse health risk and killer: the smoking of tobacco products? The administration would leave the tobacco industry as is, but ban vaping devices and nicotine pods — except those that are tobacco flavored. This seems lopsided to me and counterintuitive. For where will those that want tobacco flavors get them from if not the arguably safer vaping devices? The main difference to me between tobacco and vaping is its history. Tobacco has a long history where we have been able to study its effects on the human body and know its danger. Vaping, however, is new — it’s modern — and we are not entirely certain at the moment as to the health risks associated with it. This is especially true with long-term vaping where we know practically nothing, whereas with short-term vaping the effects are only just starting to have scientific studies published. Again, I think this is mainly due to the fact that tobacco use has been a wide-ranging cultural phenomenon across time and history, but the technology to successfully market and profit off of vaping devices is very recent and was made to fill the hole that tobacco regulation left. As of now we just have not had the time to get a full picture. But as I said before, I think it should be regulated akin to tobacco products, at least to be on the safe side.

I’m in no way a conspiracy theorist, but even I know that “Big Tobacco” has had its hand in maneuvering how the public and especially the government view their products. This seems to me to be a way for them to cut back into the business they lost from vaping companies like JUUL. The uncertainty of the effects of vaping that I stated before can make one wary when cases of illness and death pop up, but if we proportionally treated the use of vapes as we do tobacco, a ban like this would not have even been considered, in my mind. I think if we are going to allow tobacco use to continue as is, then vaping use should be allowed in that way as well; and if we were to ban the use of tobacco products, then vapes should have the same fate.