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**Politics**

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Anna Austin of Sam Barlow High School practices her humorous speech.  
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**Oregon Forum**

- Here we go yet again! by Chexxx 04/19/2007 6:48 a.m. PT
- You could have just said by HonkiesRule 04/19/2007 6:59 a.m. PT
- Have we lost yet? by Chexxx 04/19/2007 8:11 a.m. PT
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## Thank you for not snusing

Oregon health officials have good reason to be skeptical of Portland being picked for the test marketing of snus

Tuesday, January 09, 2007

R.J. Reynolds has lit up a hot new skirmish in the tobacco wars with a trial run of a nicotine product called Camel Snus.

Infuriated health advocates insist the flavored, spitless, smokeless product is aimed at young people. Executives at the tobacco giant sound hurt and surprised that anyone would accuse them of such a thing.

It's certainly true that advertisements for Camel Snus (pronounced "Snoose") don't seem to be directed at children. The product is touted as "a different way to do tobacco" -- in little pouches promising "pleasure for wherever."

But pop open one of the cute little tins of "frost" flavored Camel Snus. It smells like candy. Stick one of the sweetened little pouches between cheek and gum (but only if you're of legal age), and it tastes like a cross between Wrigley's Spearmint and Dubble Bubble.

The product's obvious appeal to adolescent tastes doesn't prove that the tobacco company is back to its old tricks, as in the days of the Joe Camel cartoon ads that were so attractive to kids. But you can't fault anti-tobacco activists for suspecting the worst, especially since snus, though safer than cigarettes, causes mouth and throat cancer and heart disease.

As The Oregonian's Andy Dworkin reported Sunday ("No smoke, no spit, but many worry about kids," Jan. 7), Camel Snus sparks suspicion not so much because of the way it's being marketed, but because of where it's being marketed: Portland and Austin, Texas.

Since the test sales began last summer, those are the only two cities where consumers can buy Camel Snus in bars and tobacco shops. R.J. Reynolds marketers could have launched their experiment instead in "chewin' tabacky" country, or even in cities like Houston that are demographically more representative of Texas as a whole.

But no. They chose Portland and Austin. A company spokesman lamely told Dworkin the two cities were selected merely as good places for feedback from "all adult tobacco consumers."

Those working to protect young people from nicotine addiction can be forgiven for suspecting that a more calculated strategy is at play here. Portland and Austin just happen to be two famously progressive cities, home to large populations of young adults in America's burgeoning creative class of trend-setting consumers.

"Camel Snus is clearly being marketed to our twentysomethings, and teens want to be like twentysomethings," says Tabithia Engle of the Tobacco-Free Coalition of Oregon. "The company's overall goal is to hook kids on tobacco."

R.J. Reynolds vigorously denies such a goal. But if the company is truly sincere about the well-being of young people, it should pull the plug on its experiment with the addictive new product in the pretty bubble-gum tins.

Oregon legislators, meanwhile, should look upon the Camel Snus marketing campaign as one more good reason to support Gov. Ted Kulongoski's proposed increase in the state's tobacco tax. Ten percent of it would be dedicated to nicotine-addiction prevention programs, a proven antidote to the millions spent by the tobacco industry to push its products.



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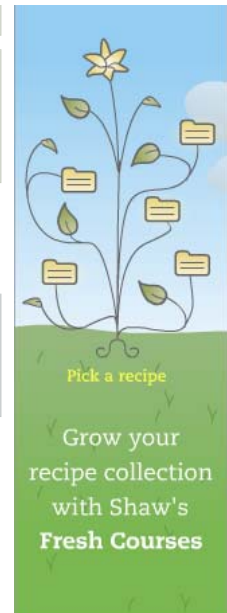
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