

LETTER OF THE WEEK

A foolish UF ban

If it is more environmentally sound to use solar power, why are we even having this debate?

I have been enjoying my second year at UF after being privileged to finally live in graduate housing. On-campus life had been comfortable until I was confronted with an obsolete regulation that prohibits residents in the villages from drying their clothes outside.

Think about it: Outside the sun is shining the birds are chirping, and we can take advantage of both and save energy when we hang out our laundry — and for free. Instead, residents are forced to use drying machines every time they do a load (\$1.25 per machine).

Although UF is now framing itself as environmentally sustainable, housing regulations are just plain backwards.

Housing says this policy is in place for reasons of safety and aesthetics. Erecting clotheslines would be dangerous for children playing around and would mar the beauty of facilities.

My home country of Japan is famously high-tech, but I have rarely seen dryers or people using them. In Japan everyone uses clotheslines and the most powerful machine of all: the sun.

I am sure Florida, the Sunshine State, has just as much if not more solar drying capacity than Japan. So if it is more environmentally sound to use solar power, why are we even having this debate?

Talking with other residents, I realized that people all over the world use clotheslines. One resident in the same complex, Raissa Guerra, from Brazil, complains that dryers wear out her clothes and that she cannot instead have the option of freshly sun dried laundry.

Nancy Montes from Guatemala, also a resident in graduate housing, insists that a clothesline



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is better for drying many items for her family, including a young child.

Ricardo Brown-Salazar, another resident in Tanglewood, has been trying to convince UF Housing for the right to dry outside for two years. As of last month Ricardo is Tanglewood's elected mayor, a position which provides him with newfound leverage.

Given the increasing public awareness about global environmental change, he feels that the clothesline issue is an example of how we can all act locally for larger aims.

Many of us have formed a group to demand the right to use something that is as natural as the rising and the setting of the ... well, you know what I was about to say.

We are conducting an ongoing online survey of residents in graduate housing to gauge their opinions on the use of clotheslines, and so far a majority of respondents support the idea of having clotheslines available to dry their clothes.

We presented our idea to the staff at the graduate housing office. But it is challenging to change any regulation, especially at a large institution with people resisting the changes.

We believe strongly that if people show their willingness to become green, things can and will change. Go Green Gators!

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generate about \$1 billion in new net revenue, save 100,000 Floridians from smoking-related death, 123,600 adults quit smoking and prevent 209,000 young people from ever starting.

But what many people hear about is the extra financial burden smoking causes our state, a burden we are unable to handle in our current fiscal situation, one that can be alleviated, albeit not eradicated, by increasing the tax.

Increasing the cigarette tax by one dollar would not only help lower the cost of living for Florida's households, it will bring our tax in line with other states (the national average is \$1.19) and allow Florida to receive the same type of revenue that other states have utilized in the past years to offset their smoking-related costs. Currently, at 18 cents, Florida's tax has been raised in more than 10 years, but the cost of living to our state is increasing exponentially.

Every year, Florida spends \$6.32 billion in health care costs related to smoking. That is \$6.32 billion all of which we pay through our taxes. (Florida's Medicaid program incurs an estimated \$1.5 billion in costs due to smoking per year) or in added costs to our health care plans.

Roughly translated, that's a single Florida household paying \$586 per year for our smokers. It doesn't matter if someone in your household smokes or not—you are paying \$586 for the deadly habit.

Increasing the tax by one dollar will reduce smoking levels — in fact, it is the most efficient way to reduce smoking among young adults. Reducing smoking levels will lower the amount the state is paying in health care costs.

Lowering Florida's smoking-related costs means we will have to take less from our pocketbooks to cover our smokers. And we can use some of the revenue to fund prevention and cessation programs.

It is time we demand that smokers contribute to the public burden of this deadly habit. It is time