

opinion

Progressive tax package needed

The Oregon Legislature — both House and Senate — needs to get back to the drawing board and come up with a more comprehensive and progressive tax plan to get us through the next biennium.

Friday, the Senate released their \$437 million budget-balancing tax package calling for a continued 8-percent income tax surcharge, 10-cent cigarette tax and state separation from the federal tax code on depreciation allowances for businesses. The plan also calls for changing Oregon's \$1,000 personal tax exemption to an \$85 tax credit (automatic deduction) and recalculating part-time resident's income taxes as well.

The plan is similar to the House's original draft excluding the \$85 tax credit plan. However, neither plan raises enough revenue to relieve property tax. In fact, property tax relief has dwindled during the session from \$800 to less than \$200 maximum in order to balance the budget.

Neither plan deals with the restructuring of the Oregon tax system.

The House Revenue committee has spit out a watered-down tax relief package during the last few weeks, taking the original 4 percent sales tax bill of Reps. Peter Courtney, D-Salem and Tony Van Vliet, R-Corvallis and switching the aim from homeowner property tax relief — two-thirds of taxes go toward school funding — to relief for all classes of property coupled with a state and local government spending lid.

This is not exactly a progressive approach to property tax relief or a sales tax. And a progressive approach is called for in this state that needs continued if not increased support for education, economic development and social service programs.

The House Democrats and Republicans have proposed a homestead exemption — that is, reducing the assessed value of a house for tax purposes. The Republicans suggest a \$10,000 reduction on assessed value paid with existing tax relief money. The Democrats suggested a \$20,000 reduction paid from both existing relief and an income tax increase.

Which brings the dilemma down to the bottom line. The coffers are dry and if property tax is a must (and it seems to be, if only for political reasons) then relief must come from sales tax revenue or income tax revenue.

Ask any Democrat senator: A sales tax package will not get through the Senate floor and with a nine-defeat history, a sales tax in Oregon is not promising.

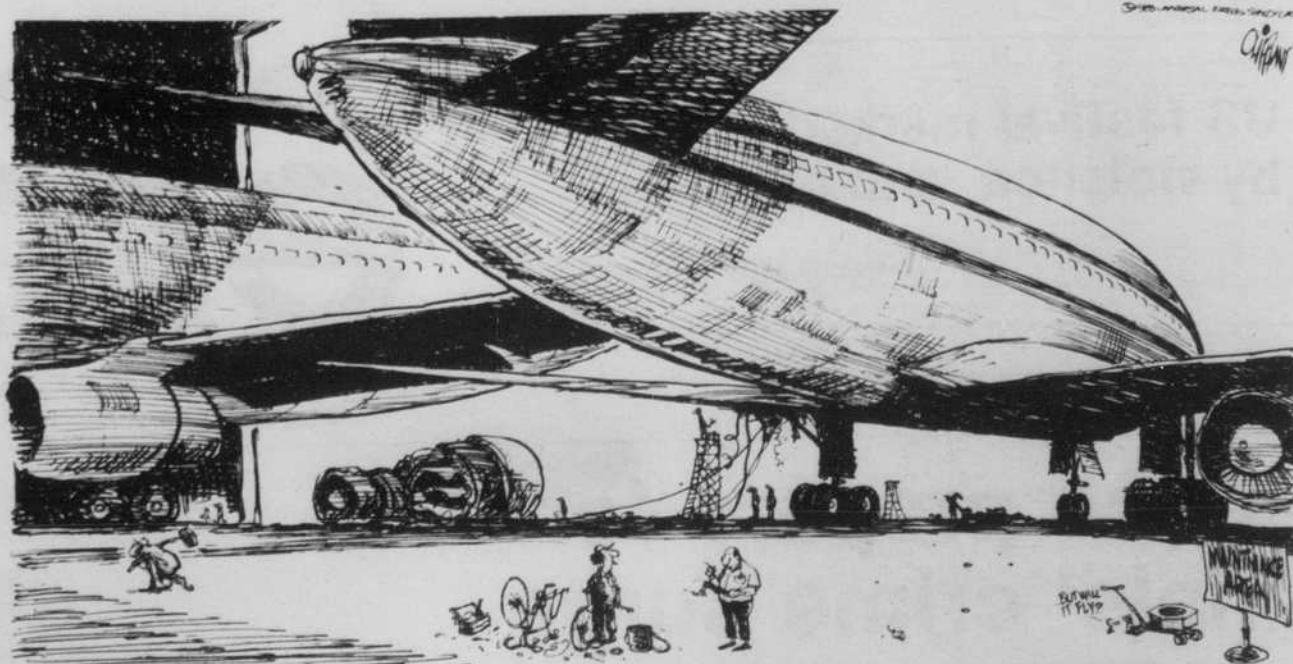
Income tax revenue looks like the source for property tax relief, but again a 17-percent increase across the board, one suggestion, will not do in a state with one of the highest income tax burdens in the nation.

A Hendriksen/Hosticka-type tax plan, which raises revenue by readjusting tax brackets in favor of lower and middle incomes, would be one way to raise money for property tax relief while maintaining a progressive tax structure.

Gov. Vic Atiyeh suggests relieving homeowners by raising the HAARP fund qualifications from those earning \$17,500 to those earning \$30,000 and freezing property tax rates at current levels.

Many taxation ideas could easily be combined. For instance, a sales tax on luxury items, coupled with a proposal like the Hendriksen/Hosticka plan, would both raise revenue and allow for homeowner property tax relief.

The Senate and the House have the time — the Governor gladly will lengthen the session — and the brains to come up with something better than the piecemeal packages drawn up so far. They will have to use both to come up with a satisfactory tax plan.



letters

Art museum

I would like to thank the Emerald for featuring the Museum of Art in two front page articles in the May 18 edition. However, I want to be sure your readers are aware of three points, two of them omitted from the articles entirely and other reported incorrectly.

First — neither article mentioned the museum's open hours. The museum is open to the public Wednesdays through Sundays from noon to 5 p.m.

Second — the article, "Hidden courtyard boasts..." states that the museum is "free of campus administration." This is incorrect. The Museum of Art falls directly under the administrative jurisdiction of the Vice President for University Relations, who, in turn, reports to the President of this University.

Third — neither article mentioned the summer closure of the museum. While it is true that the museum is a state-owned museum and does belong to the people of Oregon and not to the University, as the article incorrectly reported, it was the campus administration's decision to close down the museum for two months each year as part of University budget cutting. This year, the museum will be closed during July and August with all staff laid off for the second consecutive year.

Again, thanks for the free, front page publicity. Do come visit your museum — while you still can.

Becky Slade
Museum of Art

Outbursts

To Mary Hope — from Jeff Nudelman's (imaginary) rich daddy:

My son has informed me that you had a tad bit of difficulty swallowing one of his many outbursts he made in the Emerald. Although that kid can be a real tiger sometimes, this time honey, I'm going to have to back him up.

When Jeff ran for the Incidental Fee Committee, he did not even know that the members received a stipend for their services. However, I didn't raise a fool. Come pay day, I'm sure my son was first in line to pick up some green.

Jeff has told me that he ran for the office because he felt that he could contribute to the University. The stipend just proved to be a little icing on the cake.

Stipends are not salaries. Incidental fees (student dollars) should not be used to subsidize any student's complete living expenses. Hopefully, students choose to get involved in the ASUO and its various programs for the rewarding experience received from working with wonderful people like you, Mary.

Anyone who chooses to get involved in student government need only walk into Suite 4 and ask. The question of how much money they are going to receive should not be the first thing out of their mouth. The ASUO is not an employment agency.

Let me add that the stipend my son received this year was paltry when compared to the projected incomes of the incoming ASUO administration. Since Jeff is graduating soon, I guess you'll just have to find someone else at the University to pick on. I'd suggest trying the University president or the dean of the law school, but you already took the time to blast these fine men in a previous letter. I'm sure you'll find something else to bitch about real soon, though. Until then, see you at the bank.

Jeff Nudelman
senior, unemployed

Protest time

The first U.S. military adviser has died in El Salvador. His death is only one of many, but it is significant.

American nuns and journalists also have been killed in this Central American entanglement, as have thousands of Salvadoran citizens.

Pres. Reagan has made his position quite clear: He will keep sending war to El Salvador as long as the American people will allow it. How long will it be until we demand a change?

El Salvadoran citizens don't have the luxury of apathy. The "communist guerrilla" who killed that U.S. adviser is crying out for human rights in the only way he can. These people need our help — not our weapons.

This latest American death can only arouse more anger and violence in Central America. But it can stimulate thought in the United States.

As a university community, we should be more thoughtful than most. If that thought does not lead to action the status quo will remain. If we are not working for change, we are supporting the atrocities committed by the Salvadoran government.

We gather to hear campus speakers denounce the "sin" of homosexuality, while U.S. tax dollars support murder, torture and rape in El Salvador.

When will we begin to assemble for human rights?

The end has been declared to student apathy, and I do not believe students are apathetic about this matter.

How about it, ASUO? My conscience tells me it is time to protest.

Leslie Scales
junior, journalism

letters policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to 250 words, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in to the Emerald office. The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, style or content.

"Your turn" is an Emerald opinion feature submitted by members of the University community. "Your turns" must be limited to 500 words and typed. This editorial column will not be edited by the staff, but selection will be based on appropriateness.

Letters to the editor and "Your turns" should be turned into the Emerald office, Suite 300 EMU.

Unsigned editorials appearing in the Emerald are based upon the majority opinion of the editorial board.

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