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Groups debate utility board

By Alfred Gross
Of the Emerald

A citizens' utility board would help keep rates down and give consumers expert representation at hearings on utility rates, say supporters of an initiative to create such a board.

But an executive of Pacific Northwest Bell Telephone Co. is not convinced that a citizens' utility board will provide any more protection for consumers than they already have.

Oregon Students Public Interest Research Group has been working in conjunction with other groups to collect enough signatures to get the CUB initiative on the ballot in November.

"The basic idea is to give utility rate payers representation when privately owned utilities, such as the phone company, PP&L (Pacific Power & Light Co.) and PG&E (Portland General Electric Co.) go in for rate hikes," says Daniel Malarkey, OSPIRG's canvass director for the initiative.

But CUB would not affect Eugene Water and Electric Board customers directly because they elect the EWEB board of commissioners, he adds.

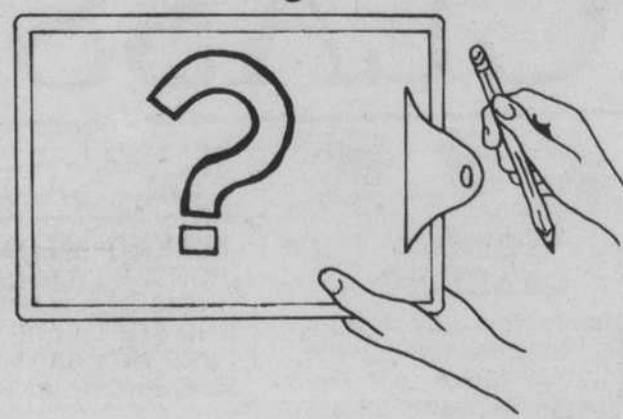
"The situation right now is that when, say, the phone company goes in for an increase, they go with an army of experts — lawyers, economists, accountants — to argue why they need a rate increase," Malarkey says. "At those hearings, there's really no one representing the consumer point of view."

Ironically, consumers pay for this army of experts when they pay their bills, Malarkey says.

"The state-appointed public commissioner then has to make a decision about a just rate increase after having heard only one side of the story," Malarkey explains.

Not everyone is as pleased as Malarkey with the initiative, however.

"We feel that CUB proponents are attacking a



Graphic by Karen Mobley

problem that doesn't exist," says Dennis Tooley, manager of public affairs for PNB in Oregon.

"We feel that the rate increases are justified. We feel that there are adequate means for consumer recourse," Tooley says. For example, the Public Utility Commissioner is a consumer advocate, he says.

On the other hand, if the CUB initiative is as important as its proponents say it is, Tooley says it should be fairly easy to get on the ballot.

OSPIRG representatives already have collected over 70,000 signatures for the initiative, according to Malarkey. Though only 62,500 signatures are needed to get the initiative on the ballot, OSPIRG workers plan to continue collecting signatures right up to the July 6 deadline, he says.

"OSPIRG brought CUB up in the Legislature. At that time the utilities spent over \$400,000 lobbying against CUB, so we anticipate a very tough fight," Malarkey says. "That's why it's so important for us to maintain the grass-roots effort door-to-door this summer."

IFC supports ongoing lawsuit

By Julie Shippen
Of the Emerald

The Incidental Fee Committee voted unanimously to offer financial support to an outstanding lawsuit and to an upcoming community program at an IFC subcommittee meeting held Thursday.

The subcommittee voted 3-0 to allocate an additional \$1,400 in legal expenses to the firm of Goldstein & Campbell for their continued handling of the South African divestiture suit, as requested by ASUO Pres. Julie Davis.

As set forth in a June 11 letter to Davis from the Eugene-based firm, the attorneys have determined the suit will require at least 500 more hours to see it through the November 29 trial date.

Last year the IFC allocated a total of \$6,000 to the suit, which paid for various legal expenses such as the initial discovery

process and 24 later depositions taken nationwide, according to an ASUO background memo presented to the IFC earlier this year.

In the past, much of the attorneys' time has been donated, with funds paying for the firm's out-of-pocket expenses only, the memo stated. At this time, however, the firm requires additional funding if they are to handle the suit and remain in business, the letter stated.

"Basically, the firm no longer can donate their services without compensation," said Mary Kay Menard, IFC subcommittee member. However, the attorneys have agreed to offer their services at rates under half of the usual \$65 per hour charge, Menard said.

The new \$1,400 allotment was drawn from unallocated reserve account balances, which would otherwise wash

back into incidental fee enrollment reserves if gone unused, said John Dreeszen, ASUO program administration and finance coordinator.

According to the firm's letter, the case may require up to \$13,000 in the future. Though much of that amount will come through other avenues, Davis said she will appear before the IFC in August and ask for additional funds at that time.

The IFC subcommittee also granted a \$300 loan to Bill Snyder, director of the new Food Center.

According to Snyder, who also is the coordinator of ASUO student affairs, the money will be used to make equipment repairs at the facility that are necessary before its scheduled opening in late July.

The IFC has asked that the loan be repaid by the beginning of next year.

Supporters of sanctuary to greet refugee caravan

Eugene will be a whistle-stop for an underground railroad of Central American refugees when the West Coast Sanctuary Caravan passes through town on its way to Seattle tonight.

Local supporters of the sanctuary movement will greet caravan members with a rally and fiesta in University Park at the corner of 24th Avenue and University Street beginning at 5 p.m.

The U.S. government does not grant political asylum to refugees from Guatemala and El Salvador, but sanctuary supporters say they are willing to risk federal prosecution to keep these people from being returned to their homes.

Refugees who are returned to these countries often have been tortured, murdered or "made to disappear," supporters contend. Giving sanctuary also is a way of protesting U.S. policy in Central America, they say.

The caravan is organized by the National Sanctuary Movement, composed of several churches and other organizations. In Eugene, sanctuary is being given to nine Salvadorans by Eugene Friends Meeting with the support of Interfaith Sanctuary Network.

Music and entertainment will accompany a benefit dinner, followed by statements by caravan supporters. The dinner costs \$5 for adults, \$2.50 for children ages 5 to 11, and is free for children under 5 years.

Artists' points of view represented in benefit

The Maude Kerns Art Center will hold a benefit and opening reception Friday for "Points of View," a show of national, regional and locally known representational artists.

The show will include works by Philip Behymer, Michael Harris, Andrew Johnston, Medelaine Liepe, Judith Nantker, Terry Olson, Walt Stevens, and the Platform Gallery of Realist Painters.

Ceramics by Karen Perkins and photographs by David Simone will appear concurrently in the Platform Gallery. The Mezzanine Gallery will feature drawings by Tom Blodgett and Mike Kelly.

Entertainment will feature Jivin' Johnny Etheredge, from radio stations KASH and KRVM, who will be spinning "the true stuff for the true believers," 1950s rock 'n' roll, plus the live sounds of John Averill and his Blue Grass Special.

The opening reception begins at 7 p.m. and the show will run through July 30 at the center, located at 1910 E. 15th Ave. Admission is free. For more information, call 345-1571.

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