

## A 4 percent sales tax may be best option

As the May primaries get closer and closer, once again everybody is talking about sales tax proposals.

The subject of a sales tax is not a new one to Oregon voters. Eight times, there has been some sort of a sales tax proposal on the ballot. Eight times, voters have shot it down; usually by overwhelming numbers.

In the past, it has been difficult for sales tax proponents to get bipartisan support. If one side liked the proposal, the other side usually was against it. Such is the nature of politics. But times change, and so do opinions.

Both front-running gubernatorial candidates, Democrat Barbara Roberts and Republican Dave Frohnmayer, support a 4 percent sales tax proposal which will be on the May ballot. Voters will comment on five different sales tax options. All the measures are advisory.

Why the sudden support for a historically unpopular tax? Because the Oregon public education system is a dinosaur. The state government contributes less than 40 percent of education costs, forcing local lawmakers to rely on property taxes to finance the rest of the budget. The system is falling apart, as schools are increasingly sinking into debt because local voters keep turning down property tax levies.

Of all the options, the 4 percent sales tax seems to be the best one. Only goods, not services, would be taxed. An estimated \$900 million would be raised, slashing property taxes on homes and businesses in half.

There are many drawbacks to a sales tax. As far as progressive taxes go, a sales tax isn't one of them. But the sad, simple, blunt and honest truth is that Oregon needs another source of revenue.

Oregon voters avoid any sort of new tax as if it were the black plague. However, the education system cannot keep running as is. Schools will go bankrupt soon unless the whole system is changed from the bottom up. Continued short-term measures and quick solutions won't work anymore.

Support for a sales tax from this side is qualified. The idea to make it part of the state constitution makes sense. In addition, there should be some sort of a freeze on increasing the percentage. Both gubernatorial candidates are right in wanting to keep future lawmakers from tampering with the tax.

If past form holds true, this tax proposal will not be a popular one with voters. But before anyone rejects it out of hand, they should think about the implications. Unless some sort of a new tax form is passed, the state education system will not function for very long.



## Self-serve ban leaves room for cardlocks

For now, Oregon is committed to continuing its lonely but commendable crusade as one of the few states remaining in the nation that prohibits the public from pumping its own gasoline.

State Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer issued an opinion last week that clarified some limits to the state's self-serve ban. In doing so, Frohnmayer reaffirmed the original intent of the law while wisely leaving room for legislative input.

The impetus for Frohnmayer's ruling was a recent flap over whether so-called cardlock stations are legal. Under a cardlock system, the customer must insert a magnetic card to operate a pump. The customer pumps his or her own gas.

Frohnmayer's opinion was based on a 1966 attorney general ruling that found the legislature's aim in creating the self-serve ban was to prohibit the general public from pumping its own gasoline.

Following this reasoning, Frohnmayer ruled that cardlock stations serving only a limited clientele such as commercial, industrial or government accounts are legal. The

cardlock station may not serve the general public; it must limit itself to only these accounts. In effect, the station must become non-retail.

That ruling closes loopholes for stations hoping to go around the self-serve ban by forming cooperatives or selling cardlock memberships to the regular public customers. The Frohnmayer ruling did not establish a minimum quantity of gas required for consideration as a non-retail customer and left that clarification to the legislature.

Self-serve gas is an issue that pops up from time to time, especially in election years. Frohnmayer was wise to leave the issue largely before the voters and state representatives.

For the most part, Frohnmayer's opinion continues the state's commitment to a self-serve ban. This is a prohibition we'd like to see continued; bringing self-serve to Oregon would eliminate 20,000 jobs and would not, contrary to conventional wisdom, do anything to lower the price of gas (some recent studies have found that self-serve prices are about the same as full-serve prices).

## Letters

### Peel the wax

If you believe that the Central Intelligence Agency has the right to recruit on campus, then you are a racist, sexist, homophobic bigot. That seems to be the logic used by the many people who have responded to my letters (ODE, Feb. 28). This "logic" is patently absurd.

I have never discussed God, morality, or even said that people should not seek to change the CIA's hiring rules. All I have said is that students on this campus should not be denied the opportunity to interview with the CIA. This is what the radical left-wing is trying to do; deny you that right.

It would be nice if there were a small number of real liberals on this campus; however, that is not the case. The Marxists — sorry, they prefer "Social Democrats" — on this campus like to cloak themselves with the "liberal" label so as to appear mainstream. Marxism is dead! Eastern Europe knows this; when will you?

Anyone that has been follow-

ing this series can see that the opponents of CIA recruiting are desperate. From Laurel Sharp's needless discussion of her sexuality (ODE, March 7) to Steve Close's pointless reference to the Ku Klux Klan (ODE, March 9), these people have not addressed one substantive issue. When people can peel the wax off their eyes, maybe a real discussion can take place.

Eric Eckman  
Student

### Pen pals

From time to time, we receive requests from people in foreign countries who would like a pen pal from the state of Oregon. It is our hope that you might help us locate students from your institution who might like to participate in such a program.

Students who would like to establish a pen pal relationship with a person from a foreign country should sent their name, address, age, sex and countries of interest to: Dr. Don Perkins, Oregon Department of Education, Salem, OR 97310.

Currently, interest exists for pen pals located in Japan and Turkey.

Thanks for your help. It is genuinely appreciated.

Don Perkins  
Student services specialist

### On Shiva

I was pleased to see your coverage of an event from the March 3 environmental law conference (ODE, March 5). However, it was quite distressing to note that of the two speakers you covered, Jay Hair, president of the National Wildlife Foundation, was quoted extensively and pictured on the front page, while Vandana Shiva, coordinator of the Research Foundation for Science and Ecology — India, was relegated to a few short paragraphs at the end of the article on the inside page.

While I did not attend that particular event, I heard Shiva speak at other times during the conference and felt unequivocally that she was one of the

best speakers I have ever heard.

White males have garnered the cover stories of newspapers and magazines long enough. Vandana Shiva's words of wisdom, and her photograph, were at least as worthy of front page coverage as were Jay Hair's.

Andrea Davis  
Student

### Peace studies

The University peace studies program certainly appreciates the front page coverage given to the Peace Studies Association Conference (ODE, March 8). It seems particularly relevant that the article focuses on Elise Boulding, as March 8 was International Women's Day, and Boulding is one of only seven women in the history of

the Nobel Peace Prize to be nominated for that award.

I do want to clarify one comment that really epitomizes a central conference theme. The peace studies program is not saying that so-called minorities are "disengaged," or that peace studies thinks it can or should go into these communities with our agenda and recruit people to engage in it.

Peace studies is about building relationships which are based on trust and reciprocity. We actually changed the name of the workshop addressing the issue to "Peace Studies for Whom." It was held at 10:30 a.m., March 10, and was open to everyone.

Leslie Scott  
Peace studies

### Letters Policy

The Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community. Comments must be factually accurate and refrain from personal attacks on the character of others.