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Portland man creates Oregon think tank

SALEM (AP) — After giving it some thought, Steve Buckstein decided that Oregon needed a think tank.

So he created the Cascade Policy Institute, a Portland-based group that bills itself as a "non-profit, non-partisan public policy research organization."

The institute, in its second year of operation, seeks to educate and promote its philosophy. Buckstein roughly described that as seeking private sector solutions to public problems.

"We have conservatives, Libertarians, people who call themselves liberals and neo-liberals," Buckstein said. "Our mission is to explore voluntary market-oriented answers to Oregon's public policy questions."

Buckstein is a former Portland stockbroker who ran for state treasurer as the Libertarian Party nominee in 1988. He also led an unsuccessful effort to pass a statewide "school choice" initiative measure on the 1990 general election ballot.

But Cascade doesn't endorse political candidates or take positions on legislation, Buckstein said.

Cascade has issued policy papers on various subjects, most

recently an analysis of the effects of the property tax limit imposed by Measure 5.

Skepticism of government is a Cascade theme.

The Measure 5 report, for example, says Oregon's problem isn't taxes but high government spending.

Buckstein said the institute has suggested turning over the Portland-area auto emission inspection system to private shops and shifting audits of state agencies from the state to private firms.

Some lawmakers and political observers said they were aware of the organization's mailings but not much else about the group.

"I've seen their material, but I guess their credibility has yet to be established. I don't know much about them," said House Speaker Larry Campbell, R-Eugene.

Buckstein said nearly all of Cascade's budget comes from individual donations and from foundations. The institute qualifies as a tax-exempt public charity, so contributions are tax deductible.

The institute was formed in January 1991, and last year's budget was \$57,000. Better fund-raising efforts should put 1992 revenue at more than \$150,000, Buckstein said.

He declined to identify donors. He said the institute has no allegiances to businesses and gets little of its money from corporations of any size.

Cascade's directors are Buckstein, William Udy, a Northwest Natural Gas Co. accountant, and Corvallis businessman David Gore.

Cascade doesn't do contract research work for other organizations, Buckstein said, or do projects with the idea of making money directly from them.

Most the institute's papers have been distributed free to public officials, the news media and other interested citizens. The group charged \$5 for the full Measure 5 report, a larger than usual effort.

Cascade has recruited about a dozen present and retired college professors and others to write its papers. They are chosen for expertise in their subjects, Buckstein said.

The author of the Measure 5 study, Vernon White, is a former research director for Oregon Tax Research. That's a longtime Oregon tax analysis organization.

Buckstein said the institute shouldn't be viewed as a pro-business group.

"We are a free market group. There's a difference," he said. "We are for market and indi-

'The think tank movement believes it's more important to change people's minds than to change people's votes.'

— Steve Buckstein, creator of the Cascade Policy Institute

vidual freedom but not for supporting the kind of protectionism a lot of businesses advocate."

Richard Butrick, president of Associated Oregon Industries, the state's largest business lobbying group, said he's heard little of the institute.

However, Butrick said terms such as "free market" often are used casually and don't mean much unless an organization's political agenda is defined.

Buckstein said Cascade's goal is long-range influence on public policy.

The tax-exempt status forbids supporting candidates, and Buckstein said little lobbying on issues is planned.

Harvard writers' work hasn't changed

(AP) — Despite the high stakes, many former *Harvard Lampoon* staffers say their workdays are remarkably similar to their student days.

"All these comedy writing places, it's amazing how collegiate they are," said Kurt Andersen, editor in chief of *Spy* magazine. "The way these guys dress, the staying up all night, the bad food. It's like the old dining hall 20 years later."

Unlike the humorists, the humor has evolved.

"We came along at a time when for a variety of reasons the country was extremely well prepared for a more cutting humor, more direct and sophisticated than it had been," says Henry Beard, '67, one of the founders of *National Lampoon*. "It had a lot to do with the war,

and the presence of Richard Nixon, one of the major sources of satire this country has ever produced.

"Now we have *The Simpsons*. Then you could not dream of having something on television like that."

In today's comedy, "the culture is constantly being mined and reminded. Brand names are at the center of every joke. Because of television and mass media, we have a shared mass culture. Johnny says 'Dolly Parton' and everybody knows. Before (World War II), few things were totally universal."

Because of their high rate of media literacy, today's audiences are also more tolerant of

"surrealism, dream-like stuff that doesn't make pure sense," says Mark O'Donnell, who has written for *Saturday Night Live*, among others. "You see it on Letterman, in the works of David Lynch, on shows like *Northern Exposure*. Twenty years ago, people would have said, 'Huh?'"

At the same time, today's humor is "not as rebellious as 20 years ago," says Steve Young, who writes for *Late Night With David Letterman*.

"In the early days of Harvard's comedic ascendancy, there was an angry edge to everything. Now, there's more of a delight in absurdity, like *The Simpsons*, pricking at stupid idiotic things of everyday life."

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SERVICE

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rules, Legal Services will not help a student if the adverse party is another student, professor or representative of the University.

But Legal Services will do an expungement of all misdemeanor and class C felonies, which means the record of the crime will be sealed. This is good for some people, Miller said, who maybe did something years ago that they now regret.

"Especially when you were 18 or 19 and did something stupid," she said.

By getting an expungement, she said, it means that if you are asked on an application if you have a criminal record, you can legally say no.

Two attorneys are on staff — one who works almost exclusively on landlord issues. Also helping is one legal assistant and several law students who research issues.

Legal Services also will refer students to another lawyer, if for example, the student needs personal injury representation.

The office is on the third floor of the EMU and is open regular business hours. To make an appointment call 346-4273.

"We've had some fender bender accidents and things that we've been able to get settlements for," Miller said.

"We've had a lot of people say, 'Oh, thank you so much,'" she said.

However, she warns that students need to realize their case may take awhile.

Legal Services won't give advice over the phone and will spend considerable time looking the case over carefully.

"A lot of people think their question will only take five or 10 minutes and it's not," she said.

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