

## Provide full access for disabled citizens

Eugene's Mayor-elect, Ruth Bascom, has yet to take the oath of office, but she has already become the subject of controversy.

On Friday, Bascom ordered her swearing-in ceremony invitations to be reprinted, allegedly because they referred to her and incoming City Council members as "mayor-elect" and "councilor-elect," rather than "mayor" and "councilor."

If those were the only changes she had made, there would be no controversy. But she also ordered the removal of information stating the event was wheelchair-accessible and that it would be interpreted for the hearing-impaired.

Bascom's reasoning for the deletion was one of aesthetics. "I was trying not to get it to look so cluttered," she was reported as saying in *The Register-Guard*.

Whatever the reason, Bascom's action will likely alienate much of the disabled community. Disabled citizens are often overlooked in society, and any effort to remind them they are welcome should not be avoided.

Bascom furthered the problem by saying she doesn't believe it's necessary to have "every public event" interpreted for the hearing-impaired. If that's the case, who will decide what events should be interpreted and what will be the criteria? When do hearing-impaired citizens lose their right to the same access to public events and information that other citizens enjoy?

Bascom should remember that she was elected to represent all Eugene citizens, equally and fairly. And while Bascom's action should not imply that she is insensitive or uncaring, it should serve notice that, as mayor, her every action will be subject to intense scrutiny.

Mayors are only human, and they make mistakes. Hopefully, Bascom will learn from hers and be a better mayor because of them.

**When do hearing-impaired citizens lose their right to the same access to public events and information that other citizens enjoy?**



## OPINION

# Earth will adjust to catastrophes



### General License

Stephanie Sisson

An oil tanker, carrying twice the oil of the Exxon Valdez, ran aground last week and began spilling oil in the Shetland Islands.

Damage to wildlife in the Shetlands has already been described by Coast Guard officials as horrendous. Although the actual number of birds and fish in that area is less now than it would be in the spring, the 25 million gallons of oil spilled still has a significant effect on wildlife in the area.

This is the latest example of the negative effects of modern technology and our limited means of controlling it.

In March 1989, the infamous Exxon oil tanker ran aground in Valdez, Alaska, and spilled 11 million gallons of oil into the Prince William Sound.

A cleanup crew of 10,000, six months and \$1.3 billion could not repair the damage done to the beaches at Valdez. Thousands of sea birds and hundreds of bald eagles and sea otters died, and the carcasses of more than 3,000 shore birds in the Gulf of Alaska have been recovered.

"We didn't have the precautions in place to prevent (the spill) from occurring, we didn't have the capability to deal with

it once it was in the water, and now we're finding that there wasn't any technology to deal with it on the beaches," said Steve Provant, on-screen coordinator for the Alaskan conservation department.

The condition of the earth's water supply is only part of the big picture. Air pollution is another big concern. According to a report from the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, the level of carbon dioxide in the earth's air has steadily increased since the 1800s and has risen sharply since the 1950s.

Can humanity and Mother Nature live together in harmony? I believe so, but it will take more effort on our part.

Man's carelessness and greed have done terrible things to the environment. Fortunately, just as it has done in the wake of volcanoes, earthquakes and other devastating disasters, our planet will survive.

"Mother Nature, to a great degree, will eventually do the best job of cleaning up this spill," said Coast Guard Vice Admiral Clyde Robbins, the federal cleanup coordinator for the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Robbins has the right perspective. Although it is important for us to be concerned about air and water pollution, it is just as important to realize the earth will endure despite humanity and humanity's mistakes.

It does not hurt to be more careful about how we use the technology we are lucky enough to have, but misplaced

fear can make us too cautious. Statistics created to make Americans feel guilty about the harm we are doing to our planet are ridiculous. These statistics don't show that air and water pollution levels in the United States are among the lowest of countries comparable to ours in economics, government and industry.

There is only one way to preserve the planet as it is now, and that is to eliminate man. Mankind's existence, which demands progress, has to have some effect on the earth. As technology changes, as the way we live shifts from an agricultural basis to mechanical, the earth must change with us.

We cannot halt progress and go back to an age before automobiles and oil development in order to accommodate the planet. We just have to be more careful about how we use automobiles and oil.

Humanity is not the enemy of the earth. Humanity is not big enough or powerful enough to destroy the earth. Our planet has ways of purifying its air, cleaning its water and mending itself after both natural and man-made disasters.

The earth is a lot sturdier than we like to admit in this panicked, environmentally aware era. The earth has survived disasters for thousands of years. It will survive our generation and many generations to follow.

Stephanie Sisson writes a monthly column for the Emerald.

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