

## Bicycle helmet bill wrong for Oregon

Senate Bill 1088 would require all bicyclists in Oregon to wear a helmet at all times. Failure to do so could result in a \$25 fine.

Although helmets are certainly a wise idea, and smart cyclists do use them, enacting a helmet law is a misguided attempt at increasing public safety. Why? Because it ignores one of the basic tenets of bicycling — to relax under a sunny sky on a quiet bike path.

Helmets do save lives. No one disputes this. Increased helmet use leads to fewer head injuries, cheaper medical bills and additional taxpayer savings.

But many cycling accidents occur on busy streets or intersections, not side streets and bike paths. Many people don't use their bikes so much for commuting to work or school — when a helmet probably should be used — but instead just want to take advantage of blue skies and nice weather.

To wear a helmet when a cool breeze is blowing and the sun is raining down is akin to using a condom when both partners are HIV-negative and have no risk of children. In both cases, the conditions are perfect. Why spoil the moment with clutter, uncomfortable gear?

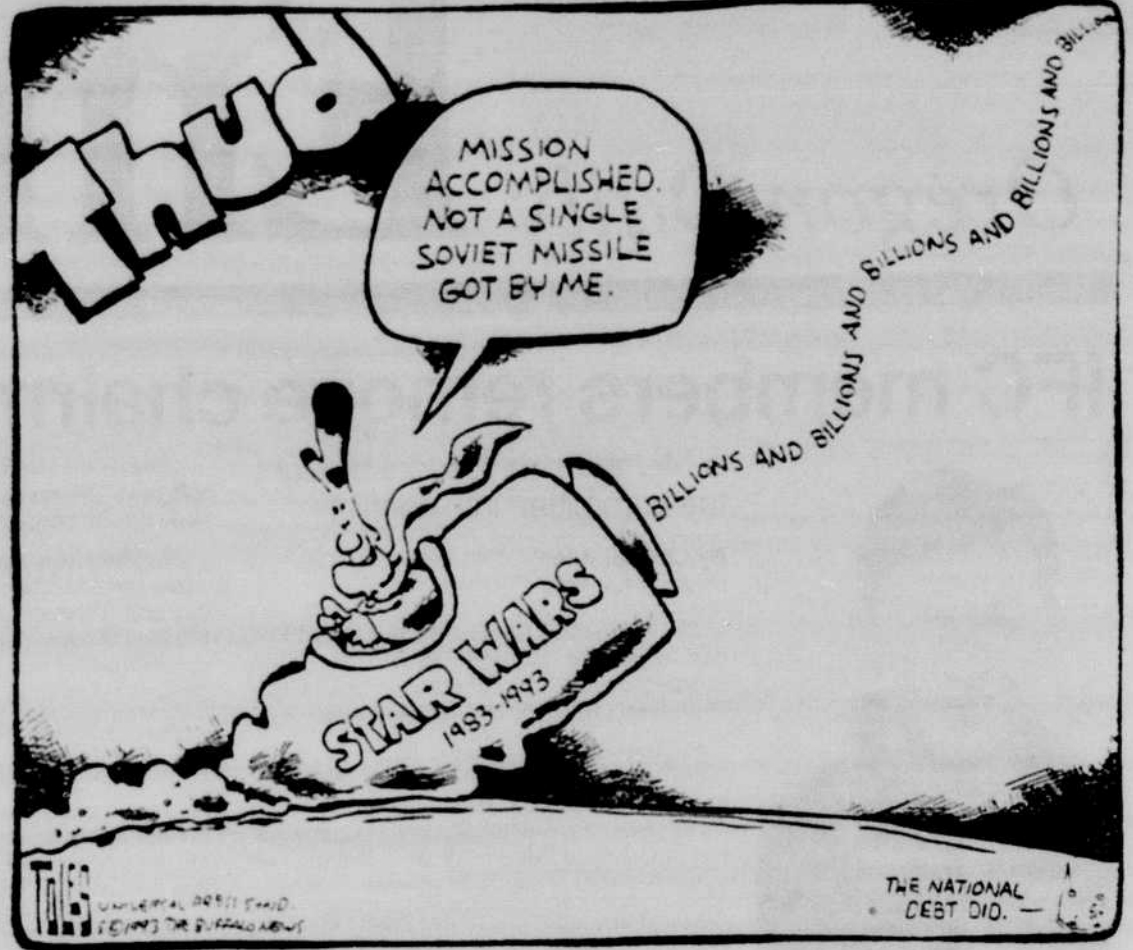
One of the most attractive arguments for the helmet law is that it would lower insurance rates by cutting medical costs. However, Americans make personal choices every day that potentially affect insurance rates. Every time someone takes a bite out of a Big Mac, he or she is one step closer to a heart attack. Yet cholesterol is still legal. Singling out cyclists because they make a hedonistic and dangerous decision is unfair. People make bad choices every day.

Some people also say the bicycle helmet law is governed by the same principle as Oregon's seat belt law, its motorcycle helmet law, and its mandate of safety restraints for children riding in cars, all of which wisely protect citizens from serious injury. The difference, however, is that cars and motorcycles go significantly faster than bikes. Only experienced cyclists frequently go faster than 30 mph, and they wear helmets because they know better than to ride that fast without protection. If someone makes a stupid mistake, that's their prerogative. Only 10 people were killed in Oregon last year from bike accidents, and it's a safe bet that most of the state's 2.8 million residents own a bike.

And unlike seat belts, bike helmets cost money — anywhere from \$35 to \$120. College students who can barely afford food may be forced to ride on the lam for quite some time.

While there is little doubt that people riding on busy streets and highways should wear helmets for their own sake, everyone else should not be so restricted. Riding unhindered on a bike path is not dangerous, and cyclists should not be forced to wear clunky headgear like helmets.

**The bill ignores one of the basic tenets of bicycling — to relax under a sunny sky on a quiet bike path.**



## LETTERS

### Won't defend

So, not one of us "sad people without visions" screamed in Bob Weigel's defense, huh? Gee whiz, chill out.

We are individuals and each one of us can appreciate celibacy or not. It appears to me that Weigel is making a martyr of himself, running around complaining (yes, complaining) no one wants to caress him with his point of view. I, for one, will not defend him, simply because I do not agree with him.

His commentary (*ODE*, May 18) is quite aggressive in that it knocks other people left and right. In one sense he's preaching love and understanding, but an underlying tone of hypocrisy manifests itself.

Be celibate. Go right ahead. It doesn't bother me. I'm not saying he shouldn't be celibate. So why do I (we) bother you? Why does it bother you that "Andrew's silly letter" should be published? I applaud the *Emerald* for publishing dissenting points of view.

Weigel can call me and anyone else his "opponent" if he wants. He is creating sides here, not me. It's true, I do not have the "same hope and love" for him as he might for me. I never asked for anything from him. So why on earth would he have "hope" for me? Am I, or anyone, missing something he can give me?

Peter Shair  
Post Baccalaureate

### Righteous?

Bob Weigel's commentary in the *Emerald* on May 18 really struck a nerve within me. Initially, I was impressed with his courage to stand up for his lifestyle. However, I didn't like the methods Weigel used to vent his anger over the fact that, God forbid, someone made fun of his lifestyle.

He certainly has a right to express his displeasure with the way he is being treated. But for someone who dislikes the current state of humanity so much,

he seems bent on generalizing about those who aren't as incorruptible as him.

He states, "How dare any of you compare a lifestyle whose very focus is fruitless self-gratification with a lifestyle of celibacy." How dare Weigel believe he is somehow more righteous because he leads this "pure" life. For someone who claims to have just as much love and hope for other people, he fails to understand that there are some people who actually make love to each other instead of using sex for this "fruitless self-gratification."

Another phrase in Weigel's commentary disturbed me. He claims we don't understand the personal sacrifices he has made for those who "are/were gay." Since when do gay people simply stop being gay? He says he offers a "total lack of persecution." Seems Weigel has some learning to catch up on.

Perhaps he should stop congratulating himself so much.

Paul VanSickle  
Pre-Journalism

### Junior fascists

It's instructive to see the junior Fascists from the *Student Insurgent* demonstrating their thuggish approach to political discussion in their latest issue. Even more instructive is the silence of their friends on the faculty.

At the first University Assembly meeting to discuss the amendment to the race, gender, non-European requirement, the issue came up of intimidation of the faculty who openly opposed the proposed change. Proponents of the motion ridiculed this concern at the meeting, and in the last issue of the *Insurgent* listed this as one of the issues in the debate that "poisoned the atmosphere of the campus."

Now the intimidation has become overt and public in the *Insurgent*, and we're waiting to hear from those who told us that this was a silly and poisonous issue. Perhaps we misunderstood — maybe all they meant

was that there was no issue of intimidation on the part of the faculty or the administration, because that would be handled by their student auxiliaries.

Scott DeLancey  
Professor, Linguistics

### Brand speaks

Recently I wrote to five faculty members who were attacked by the *Student Insurgent*. I told them that I directed members of the University administration to respond quickly, and as a result, Provost Norm Wessells wrote a letter to the editor of the *Emerald*. The letter would have come from me if I had been on campus to sign it.

I also offered the resources of the University, through Director of Public Safety and the Coordinator of Student Conduct, to help in dealing with any repercussions from that publication.

I find it totally irresponsible to label individuals, as was done in the *Insurgent*. It is contrary to the ideals and traditions of higher education. This type of intimidation hinders constructive dialogue and makes it more difficult for the campus community to resolve the complex issues surrounding curricular change.

While it is true that free speech and First Amendment rights permit significant latitude, respect for others cannot be forsaken. Unfortunately, in this instance, as well as others that have taken place recently, some persons have not shown the respect each person deserves.

We need to get past these attacks. We need to reopen the conversations that will lead to mutual respect. Neither the President nor the Provost can do this for the campus; it requires the participation of faculty, staff and students alike. Let us commit ourselves to building a community in which each individual person is appreciated and respected.

Myles Brand  
President

## Oregon Daily Emerald

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