

Bowl tickets used to aid politicians

Oregon's first trip to the Rose Bowl in 37 years was the perfect opportunity to showcase our state.

Finally, people throughout the country can think about something other than Tonya Harding and Bob Packwood when they hear someone say "Oregon." With more than 200 million people watching the Rose Bowl game in the stands and on television, it's no wonder state officials tried to capitalize on this opportunity to promote a great state.

The Oregon Economic Development Department spent \$22,000 of public dollars to send 12 employees to Pasadena. Their mission was to woo companies and business dollars to Oregon. The agency purchased 100 game tickets for \$48 apiece with lottery dollars.

While the task of attracting new business to Oregon is not easy and does require schmoozing, the manner in which this trip was organized and the vague way in which state officials answered questions regarding the trip was inappropriate. Oregon House Speaker Bev Clarno has a legitimate reason to question the expense.

Like with any state government expenditure, public officials need to be accountable for their dollars. Although officials claimed they were working to promote Oregon while in Pasadena, it's too easy to assume that they were enjoying a free trip at the expense of taxpayers.

If this trip was a legitimate promotion of Oregon, the state should have no reason to hide it from its citizens. The purchase of the tickets was first publicized by an article in the *Statesman Journal* in Salem. If investigative reporters hadn't discovered the expense, it would have gone unmentioned. Citizens deserve to know how their money is spent, and what benefits result from their money. Did the state's schmoozers get any promises from companies or did the money just fund free games, nice hotel rooms and airfares?

State officials must have already been negotiating with companies before the bid to the Rose Bowl. Just the fact that Oregon made it to the "Granddaddy of them all" should have been enough publicity. Businesses obviously would recognize Oregon for that accomplishment, even if state officials didn't receive free tickets to the game.

Peggy Eberle, communication manager for the Economic Development Department, said state officials met with 60 representatives from 25 companies. When added to the 12 employees sent to the game, that accounts for 72 of the 100 purchased tickets. What happened to the remaining 18 tickets, which are worth \$864 of unaccounted for state money?

Rose Bowl tickets were a rare commodity. Many people stayed home from the game because they didn't fall under the very narrow categories that qualified Oregonians for face-value tickets. It would be a shame to think that some of these tickets were used in an unjustified manner.



OPINION

Roberts sticks it to condemned prisoners



JOE HARWOOD

Of all the things former Gov. Barbara Roberts did (and didn't) accomplish during her four years of aimless wandering in Salem and throughout the Oregon countryside, her paramount moment came on Jan. 8, 1995, at 11:59 p.m.

What achievement could possibly surpass her extraordinary and intelligent choice not to seek reelection you ask?

Although Roberts proclaimed Jan. 3 "Duck Day" in honor of the football team's winning season, "Duck Day" is relegated to third place in the all-time Barbara Roberts Hall of Fame for the purposes of this column.

No, it's not the decision to ax her laughable and insidious "A Conversation with Oregon" campaign that eventually led up to yet another sales tax proposal — a plan experiencing almost instantaneous demise following its public announcement.

And no, it's not the fact that with the former governor out of office, so ends a 30-year liberal reign of terror perpetrated by the Roberts clan in various governmental roles.

Rather, Roberts' exceptional decision to NOT commute the death sentences of nine out of the 17 death row inmates that seek clemency marks the pinnacle of her administrative career.

Among the model citizens begging for relief from Oregon's lethal needle was Dayton Leroy Rogers, a murderer who holds the dubious distinction as the deadliest serial killer in state history. Rogers moved into the infamous category after being convicted in 1987 of killing six women in the Molalla forest murder case.

Then there is Jeffrey R. Williams, a man who heard voices from God and decided to apply a psychotic twist to the "Welcome to Oregon" signs bordering our fair state. Williams was sentenced to die in 1989 for the murders of Unna Tuxen and Katherin Reith, two German students who were hitchhiking up the Oregon Coast.

Don't forget Grant S. Charboneau. He wants to exchange his death sentence for life in prison after a conviction stemming from the torture and murder of a Portland transient woman in 1993.

The reason for the accolades here is that I had a deliciously rabid column waiting in the wings in the event the former governor failed to put aside her personal beliefs and follow the mandates of voters, judges and juries.

Way to go Barbara! Although she did pardon three women before leaving office, none of them sat on death row, and the circumstances of two women didn't involve murder.

Roberts has repeatedly gone on the record as "personally and adamantly opposed to the death penalty." But during her 1990 campaign for governor, she said that while opposing society's ultimate sanction, she would nonetheless follow the will of voters and the law.

The death penalty was abolished in 1964 and reinstated in 1984 by voters, by a 3-to-1 ratio.

New Governor John Kitzhaber is likewise opposed to the death penalty. He told the *Emerald* editorial board in November that he wouldn't let his personal beliefs interfere with the will of voters. We'll see.

Groups, such as the Oregon Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, incessantly lobbied Roberts to commute the death sentences as the final act before leaving office.

Mark Kramer, a spokesman for the coalition, whined to *The Associated Press* because Roberts didn't "follow the

enlightened lead" of the outgoing governors of New Mexico and Ohio. Both granted clemency to murderers before slinking out the back doors of their respective capitols.

The electorate decided some people simply didn't deserve to live after perpetrating heinous crimes against fellow humans, namely those who tend to kill their fellow men and women. Forget all the hokey about the death penalty acting as any kind of deterrent for criminals. If the freaks on death row gave a damn about penalties, they wouldn't be in their present situations.

The death penalty is about justice and society's ultimate punishment against those who destroy that which we hold most dear — life, including the lives of family and friends. The last sentence likely presents a contradiction, a possible flaw in logic for those opposed to the death penalty. How could one say that life is the most precious thing we have, and then act as a proponent for state-sanctioned killing?

Easily. The majority of murderers don't possess that little moral taskmaster called a conscience. The number of those on death row feel remorse only because they were caught, convicted and sentenced. To warehouse these animals for their natural lives is a waste of taxes, as the opportunity for rehabilitation is nil.

The death penalty is also about punishment. It's simply too bad the Constitution forbids cruel and unusual punishment of criminals. In the ideal world, the state would use the same cruel and violent means to destroy killers as the killers themselves applied to their victims.

But that would be uncivilized. And we live in a domesticated, civilized society. Just look at the model citizens on Oregon's death row.

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