

# EDITORIAL

## Question request for budget change

Gov. John Kitzhaber dropped a bombshell on the Oregon Legislature Monday when he announced another \$140 million might be necessary to pay for housing and handling prisoners in 1995-97.

The request to the Legislature almost seems criminal itself. It's no secret that Oregon's prison population is large and getting bigger. As Kitzhaber himself said, district attorneys are charging suspects more, judges are levying longer sentences and parole boards are much less generous in giving out parole.

Specifically, Kitzhaber has changed his estimate of the prison population drastically, believing now that 4,510 new inmates would be added to state prisons in the next two years instead of 1,200.

So what's new? In the time since Kitzhaber first announced a proposed budget several months ago, crime hasn't exploded in Oregon. Judges aren't filling up prisons any faster than before. Why the urgent change in policy?

There are several possible answers. As questionable as it might seem, it is possible that Kitzhaber really did lowball the costs for corrections by \$140 million. It's also possible that he is anticipating higher costs after Oregonians mandated minimum sentences for certain crimes in the November elections.

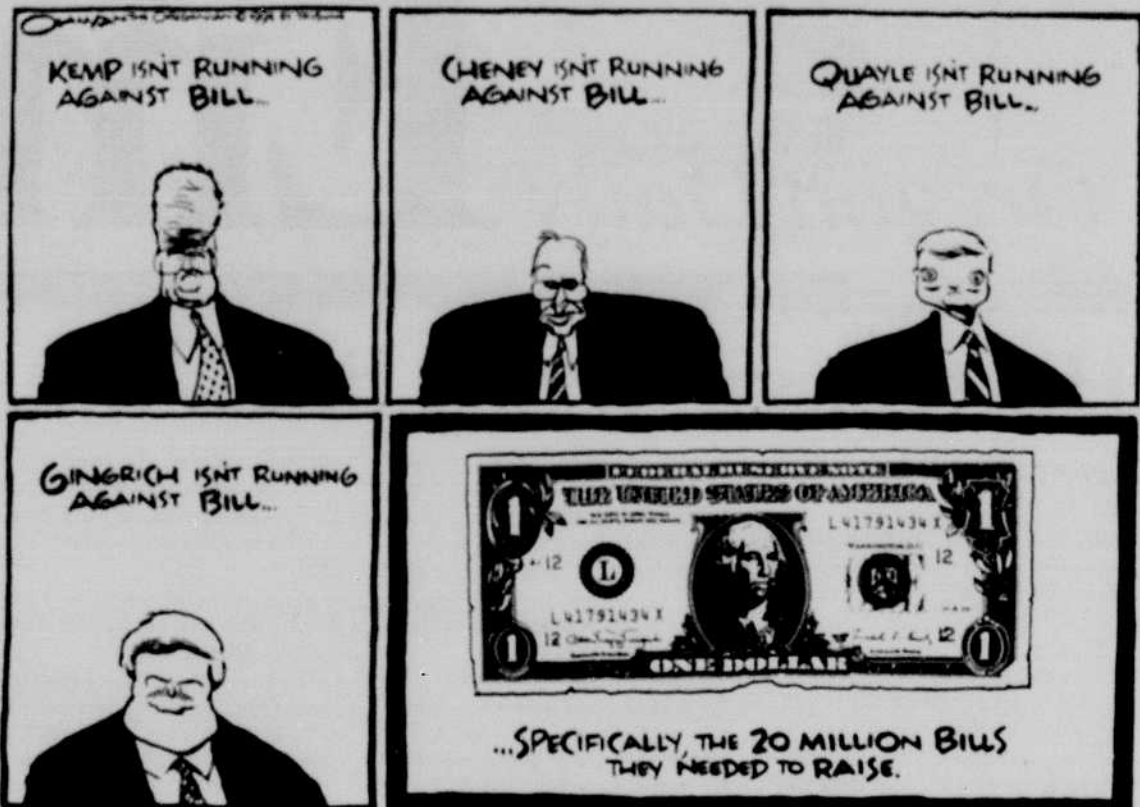
However, Republicans in the Legislature are seeing things differently. After they promised voters that taxes would not be raised, they see the request for more funds as a potential political tactic and a way for Kitzhaber to embarrass Republicans. As one said, Republicans are not going to let themselves be positioned.

And who can blame them? It's the job of the opposition party to question requests and policies by the other party. This request from the Governor must be looked into. Oregonians deserve to know why millions more dollars are needed than previously anticipated.

Even if it is conceded by legislators that additional money will be needed for Oregon prisons, it is unlikely there will be any quick consensus in the Legislature. The prison budget will not be resolved soon and the money won't be moving any quicker. Sudden monetary requests, especially large ones, must be looked at carefully to ensure they are necessary.

One would hope that Kitzhaber's motivation for requesting the money isn't political. Everyone would agree that prisons are an essential part of society and should be funded accordingly. Nobody wants to see violent criminals out on the street who should be behind bars because prison funding was too low. Playing on the emotions of citizens worried about crime to request more money for corrections is not any better.

Prisons must be funded, but so do many other programs. The \$140 million request must be questioned.



### OPINION

## Cut programs to reduce taxes



PRIMO A. J. FONTANA

This part of the year has not been easy. Last week's snowfall was a major pain, our Rose Bowl coaching staff has been picked apart by the St. Louis Rams, and worst of all, Van Halen has released a new album.

However, there is one situation more terrifying, depressing, and destructive to our country than any of the previously mentioned.

Of course, I am referring to those evil and capricious numbers which are on many of our minds right now: 15 (as in April), and 1040 (as in the most dreaded of dreadfuls, the tax form).

That's right folks, it's almost time to send our hard-earned money to John Kitzhaber and Bill Clinton so we can watch our federal, state, and local governments expand even more. Heaven knows, that's all we need.

As the cash is ripped away from the hands that earned it, namely ours, we should reflect upon taxation for a moment and where all of the money goes.

To keep a historical perspective, we should start with America's greatest political philosopher, James Madison. The founding father was a firm believer in proper laissez-faire free market capitalism, and was a proponent of the work that most precisely propagates these truths, Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*.

Madison believed taxation should be as unburdensome as possible. He believed government's intrusion (and taxes are a violent intrusion) into the free market should be "as free as the policy of nations will admit."

Oh, how far we have fallen. We have state taxes, local taxes, incidental fees (yes, that is a

tax), sales taxes, property taxes, capital gains taxes, dividend taxes, interest taxes, death taxes...need I continue?

And are we getting any money's worth? No way. Most of the money goes to entitlement programs which are inefficient, such as Social Security or Medicare, agricultural subsidies that in the long run hurt farmers rather than help them, or wasteful pork for elected officials to send back home so their constituents will be happy.

These sort of nonsensical programs, especially Social Security, should be completely abolished in favor of balancing the budget and reducing taxes.

It is disturbing that the American people have, for the most part, sat idly as the government has not only been profligate with our money, but through waste and unnecessary intervention, has decreased our nation's productivity and job availability.

Also, there is another grave problem with our tax system. Contrary to popular belief in Eugene, Santa Cruz, and Berkeley, the worst thing that can happen to an economy is socialism. Unfortunately, our tax system is socialist.

That's right folks, socialist. We must consider the classical definition of this failed theory, which is centrally planning an economy rather than allowing the market to bloom naturally.

Any person with even brief economic or political education knows this is infeasible. Cuba, the former Soviet Union, Haiti, the baseball monopoly and the Clinton Health Care Plan are all examples of the sort of disasters that can occur when market interference is attempted.

Earned money is freedom. This may not be moral and it may not be pretty, but it's the truth. When how we earn our money and what we do with it is decided for us, this freedom is violated. Without exception, such violation eventually leads to both social and fiscal turmoil.

Democrats (the party of rich bureaucrats) and Republicans (the party of rich businessmen)

have both attempted to centrally plan our economy through taxation.

The Wal-Marting of the American market, with its disturbing trend of mergers, horizontal integration, and large-scale discount stores that was hastened during the early 1980s, is not, as some would attest, due to competitive market forces.

Massive corporations such as these have a much easier time surviving thanks to our tax codes. The system, which both parties have fashioned, favors them rather than small businesses, mainly through excessive entitlement taxes, which are much more difficult for small businesses to provide than large ones.

This is the most distressing thing about taxes. Such policies have shifted the economy from where it belongs, "mom and pop" providers, to massive conglomerates.

Independent small businesses formed the social and economic backbone of the middle class in America for years. As they began to deteriorate due to unfavorable taxation, the amount of working poor as a percentage of the population began to increase.

So, what should be done? Taxation should be based upon consumption rather than income. This will increase saving and investment, and therefore decrease the need for many middle class entitlements. As a consequence, the budget will be smaller (Social Security is the largest allotment) and less taxes will be necessary.

Also, cut, cut, cut, cut the pork. Cut it until it's gone. Every single program should face scrutiny.

The government does not need any more of our money. They simply need to spend it more prudently.

No more excuses, no more partisan bickering.

Get the message to Washington. Any candidate who has raised your taxes does not deserve your vote. Period.

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## Oregon Daily Emerald

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

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