

LTD salary dispute not right for ballot

It's not often that citizens have the chance to vote on a proposal to cut thousands of dollars of existing spending. However, when the union representing the Lane Transit District employees tries to cut the pay of the LTD general manager, it's obvious that something more than budget cutting is intended. Someone's out for revenge.

A petition has been circulating for several months that would cut nearly \$30,000 from the pay of the LTD General Manager Phyllis Loobey. Plans for the initiative were to be filed at Lane County Elections late last week, with a vote possible by September.

The initiative is wrong for the same reason that Ballot Measure 8, a measure to cut state contributions to the pension plans for state employees, was wrong. Citizens do not fully understand why an official is paid a certain sum of money and will not discover the truth in a heated political campaign. Salaries of public officials should be decided by the agency or legislators, but don't belong on the ballot.

LTD serves, among other places, the second-largest city in Oregon. To be able to recruit and retain qualified and experienced personnel, LTD must be able to offer its executive staff competitive salaries.

However, the issue goes beyond cost-cutting. The motives of the union trying to cut the salaries of high-level LTD employees must be questioned.

Some who support the initiative claim executives get better benefits than lower-level employees. What could be wrong with this? Executives, who generally have more responsibilities and experience than other employees, generally get paid more and earn more benefits.

It is impractical and idealistic to think that all of LTD's problems would be solved if the executives were treated like lower-level employees.

It seems that there is a fair amount of friction between the union representing LTD employees and the LTD administration. If there are problems between the union and the management, they should be settled by those two groups. No purpose is served by taking the issue to the voters and asking them to do the union's dirty work.

Fortunately, the LTD administration is fighting back by supporting a bill in the Oregon Legislature that would prevent citizens from changing salaries of public transit employees through the initiative process. By passing House Bill 3218, legislators would take the first step to keeping salaries off the ballot, where they don't belong in the first place.

The childish game the union is playing only helps to increase tension between the two groups and in the end everyone loses.

Citizens don't fully know why this measure is being proposed. Don't drag the public into the squabble by asking citizens to cut the general manager's pay. Pay shouldn't be decided at the ballot box.



LETTERS

Inappropriate

We found the advertising supplement promoting pro-life to be inappropriate and offensive. We don't think the *Oregon Daily Emerald* should distribute such propaganda. We believe in free speech, but a 12-page paper devoted to pro-life without intelligently expressing the views of those who support choice is insulting.

Fara Musser
Art History
and three co-signers

Cold-hearted

Does the Constitution have to mandate something basic like affordable housing until we accept it as human rights? Why can other civilized countries do it (Austria)? What is America? A "democracy" — not recognizable — which tramples that right and has turned cold-hearted and mean spirited. The poor deserve better, especially the workers. The U.S. minimum wage is ridiculous and Congress is fully aware that workers end up under the poverty level and in need. Haven't any politicians ever been poor in their lives or are they all born in the manor and now have illusions of grandeur?

How long can we go on falling over the homeless and see whole families "camping" in their cars? They have lousy jobs (if any) and cannot make it. They need housing, not ridicule and persecution. It all started with Reagan, who let the wealthy and the corporations off from paying their fair share of taxes, at the same time raising defense spending and going overboard with crazy schemes like Star Wars, etc. Balancing the budget became impossible then as it is now — no matter what the Gingrichers promise.

We are not broke and can well afford building low cost housing for our people. Eugene is going about it in a peculiar way; the city says they have "no mechanism" to make developers include low cost housing in their plans. It is successful in other communities, so why not start to write it in? We cannot continue to build only luxury homes while tearing down Amazon housing with nothing to replace it. The University does not have any building plans

ready, yet it feels compelled to raze the complex right now! This is unhealthy for a college town and divides the community into rich and poor. Then there is the NIMBY effect, which implies that all poorer people are criminals and drug addicts (not the rich?).

May all the bigots and their kids remain wealthy and in no need of sympathy.

Hilde K. Cherry
Eugene

Keep Amazon

I am a World War II veteran and native Oregonian who would have been unable to attend college had it not been for Amazon Student Housing. As a long-time conservative Republican businessman, I believe in fiscal responsibility and social programs that promote self-reliance. I haven't heard any good reasons for destroying Amazon, a self-supporting public housing resource that's helped thousands of Oregonians like myself.

I believe the poor maintenance and neglect of Amazon by the University in recent years is reprehensible and worthy of the current investigation I read the State Audits Division is currently conducting, but it does not justify demolition. My own recent visit to Amazon and the fact that different developers stand ready to move and rehab Amazon buildings on other sites have lead me to conclude the buildings are structurally good enough to live in and repair right where they are.

I observed the fine old-growth wooden floors we enjoyed are still in the apartments. And many folks may not remember that half the complex was rewired and their foundations and roofs replaced in the early 1980s. Why on earth would we be destroying state property that still has so much use for the less advantaged among us and rebuilding them with what

young folks won't be able to afford?

It's unfair to take away the opportunity for access to higher education through Amazon low-cost housing that people like me have used for almost 50 years.

Woody Cowan
Eugene

Override

As an alumnus of the University of Oregon ('84), I am alarmed at the recent vote to defund OSPIRG. The Student Senate should override this ridiculous decision.

If the Student Senate allows OSPIRG's funding to be cut, it will be ignoring the will of those 65 percent of students that voted last year to continue a long tradition of supporting OSPIRG. Those who oppose student fees to support OSPIRG should campaign against it in the next student election that will consider the matter.

As a student, I appreciated the many benefits OSPIRG produced, such as the Renter's Handbook, which I used to confidently and successfully assert my rights as a tenant with a negligent landlord. OSPIRG's legal information was critical.

As a student and alumnus I benefit from the Citizen's Utility Board, which has saved all Oregon ratepayers, including students, millions of dollars in excessive charges that have been refunded by utilities.

Most importantly, OSPIRG empowers many students to learn about and engage in the democratic process. This is a critical lesson in civics, a subject that high school curricula has all but abandoned. To defund OSPIRG will further disenfranchise students.

I urge Student Senators to overturn this outrageous and foolish decision to defund OSPIRG, which continues to operate on behalf of Oregon students in a multitude of ways.

Cl. Orsinger
Eugene

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