

Skipworth facility needs replacement

Crime is always a hot-button issue when the public wants more police, and politicians clamor for more prison space. However, citizens rarely have the opportunity to vote to help treat juvenile crime before it becomes more serious adult offenses.

Voters are being asked to approve a \$39 million bond measure to make improvements to the Skipworth Juvenile Detention Center.

Whether it's a leaking roof or asbestos contained in the building, it's clear that the current facility is inadequate. Maintenance of the facility alone consumes a substantial portion of the operating budget.

In addition, the design of the building itself isn't conducive to helping offenders. Staff spend time escorting residents to communal bathrooms, while the maximum security rooms are on the opposite end of the facility from the staff control room. Clearly, security and rehabilitation aren't helped any by the current Skipworth.

When the building is falling apart and the design alone causes security problems, it would seem that rehabilitating the youth housed at the facility would become a second priority.

It's time for a new juvenile justice center. It's time to replace Skipworth.

Ballot Measure 20-48 would allow a bond sale, which would finance the construction of a new juvenile justice center. The new facility would nearly triple the capacity of the current detention center, with each room equipped with a sink and toilet, eliminating the need for the current communal bathrooms.

The increased capacity of the new facility would ensure that more juveniles can be prosecuted and treated in the facility. As it stands now, there isn't space for everyone at Skipworth who commits a serious crime. For example, theft cases of less than \$750 haven't been prosecuted, but are instead treated with letters to their parents.

Increased detention capacity at Skipworth will increase the capability of law enforcement to prosecute and help juveniles who have problems with the law.

Rebuilding Skipworth will not come without cost. The bond would cost the average taxpayer about \$25.70 a year for the owner of a \$100,000 home. While taxpayers are being asked to pay now for juvenile corrections, it is much less expensive than the possibility of having to lock up adults in prison for longer periods of time.

In addition, it's better to treat juvenile crime early to ensure that children don't become repeat offenders. Skipworth helps to treat many kinds of juvenile crime, allowing minors who have strayed from accepted societal norms of legal activity to live a life as productive citizens.

Vote yes for Ballot Measure 20-48. With help from the community, Skipworth can be replaced with a larger and more adequate facility that would help combat the problem of juvenile crime in Lane County.



LETTERS

Ignorance

As he regurgitates the misinformation of cannabis teetotalers, Brian Womack demonstrates his ignorance on yet another subject (*ODE*, May 2).

Womack's main argument against decriminalizing cannabis possession is that it will lead to more hard-core drug use and legalization. Why then does the Netherlands, where cannabis is legal to possess, have among the lowest rates of hard-core drug use of the western countries? By lumping cannabis with other drugs such as cocaine and heroin, Womack undermines his own credibility. Marijuana doesn't kill people. Cocaine and heroin do. Why should anyone believe Womack when he seems unable to make this important distinction?

Womack's reluctance to accept the practicality of cannabis products also demonstrates his shortsightedness. Cannabis may or may not cure brain tumors, but it does produce a superior grade of paper that requires less water and nutrients than trees and the paper can be made from any one of several strains of cannabis plant that don't produce an intoxicating effect. This is especially important to Oregon's natural resource-dependent economy.

Finally, Womack cites memory loss as a reason not to decriminalize cannabis. What about the loss of jail space it takes to imprison cannabis "offenders" or the loss of money and time it takes for the police to enforce cannabis laws?

Cannabis possession should be decriminalized because cannabis is a beneficial product and making it illegal causes more problems than the plant itself. Womack may call this a liberal view, but it is also a practical view. Even I, who have never even smoked a cigarette, can see that.

Sam Williams
Pre-Business
Administration

Disservice

I am writing to clear up any confusion the recent editorial entitled "Sobriety inquiries incriminate drivers" (*ODE*, May 2) may have caused. Last week in *State of Oregon v. Fish*, the Oregon Supreme Court ruled that a refusal to perform a field sobriety test could not be used as evidence against the refusing person in court because it violated the driver's privilege against self-incrimination under the Oregon Constitution. The Court did not, as your editorial leads readers to believe, rule that refusals to take a breath test could not be used in court proceedings.

Two kinds of sobriety tests exist, field sobriety tests and chemical tests that quantify blood-alcohol level. Field sobriety tests include walking a straight line and reciting the alphabet. Chemical tests include breath analysis and blood tests. Chemical tests are not field sobriety tests. As the name indicates, police officers conduct field sobriety tests in the field. Police or medical personnel conduct chemical tests at police stations, jails, or hospitals.

The editorial exchanges field sobriety tests with all sobriety tests. The *Fish* decision only deals with field sobriety tests and the Oregon Constitution's privilege against self-incrimination.

You do your readers a great disservice when you incorrectly editorialize about Oregon criminal law. I find it difficult to believe that anybody who had read the opinion could come away with the understanding that all sobriety test refusals violated the Oregon Constitution. This assumes that the author of this editorial took the time to locate and read the opinion and did not simply rely on a handful of articles that appeared in newspapers across the state.

In Oregon you may refuse to perform field sobriety tests without later repercussion. Refuse a chemical test at your own risk.

Michael A. Frome
Law

Uneducated

As usual, Mr. [Brian] Womack has displayed his lack of insight and responsibility. In response to his article on hemp (*ODE*, May 2), I'd like to offer some clarification.

First, hemp has been used for thousands of years in thousands of cultures for myriad other uses than intoxication. It has been only in the last 50 years in this country that hemp has been prohibited, thanks to Hearst in 1937 (a media giant) with his "Cannabis Tax Act." Check your history books, Brian.

Second, none of the examples Mr. Womack gives of the horrors of drugs is caused by pot; they are caused by heroin and crack. As he says, pot isn't as strong. It may only cause "memory impairment and hallucinations." So do television and religious fervor. Furthermore, when one smokes pot, which is illegal, one gets stoned and hungry. When one drinks NyQuil, which is legal, one passes out cold in a drunken stupor. Which sounds healthier?

Third, Mr. Womack is concerned about the message we might send to the kids if we were to legalize a drug. The government is currently administering marijuana to people who have illnesses with symptoms THC eliminates. What kind of message does this send to kids or adults? Pot will ruin your life, unless you're ill, then it makes life better?

I heartily agree that there are serious questions that need answers regarding the new hemp initiative, such as how would it be regulated and will it bring in criminals from other states where hemp is still illegal? Comparatively, Mr. Womack's column is uneducated and irresponsible. I suggest finding a conservative columnist with a more professional approach to argumentation.

Matthew Powell
Anthropology

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3159, EUGENE, OREGON 97403

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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