

## Issue tax credits, not refund checks

In a move certain to provoke debate in Salem and throughout the state, the Oregon Senate voted Wednesday to refund excess tax dollars to Oregon taxpayers later this year. But while some taxpayers may be a bit richer by December, everyone is going to lose in the end.

State law currently requires refunds if tax revenue exceeds expectations by 2 percent or more. The state's current \$313 million surplus exceeds the legal limit requiring refunds.

However, there are a number of ways that the Legislature can accomplish this goal. They can issue refund checks to Oregonians, at the cost of just under \$1 million, or they can refund the money through tax credits in future years.

While the money must eventually be given back under state law, the method that the state takes could determine the economic future of a number of programs and services, including crucial areas such as education.

It would be a tragedy for the state to give up the \$313 million now when schools and prisons are more crowded than in years past. It would be wrong to return the money immediately when some continue to wonder if the state can really afford to give state employees a raise. And it would be criminal to refund money to taxpayers under the guise that it isn't desperately needed by the state — it is.

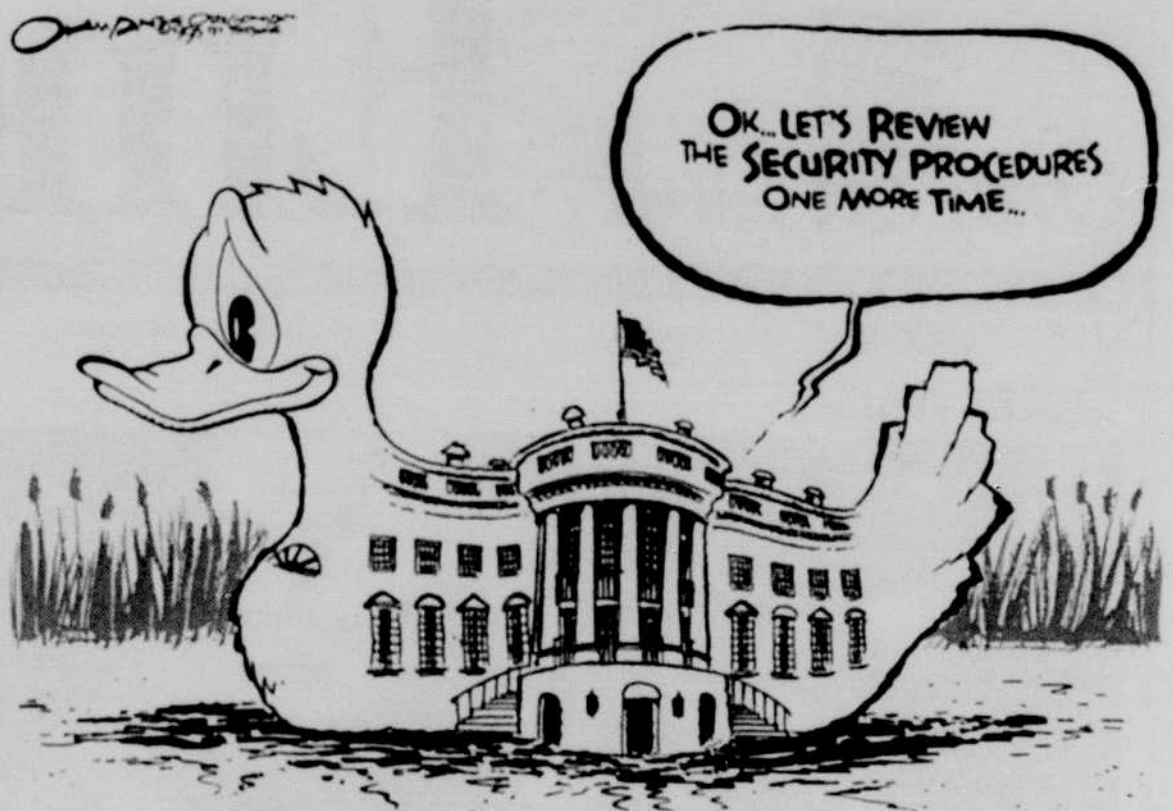
To his credit, Gov. John Kitzhaber believes that the refund should be returned to taxpayers through refund checks — the normal method of returning excess revenue. Through a spokesman, he vowed to veto the bill if it reaches his desk.

Senate supporters of issuing refund checks state that sending the money to taxpayers helps to make government more accountable to the people. Returning the money, they claim, is a tangible way of demonstrating that government doesn't — and shouldn't — spend more money than it needs.

However, the reality is that programs need the money now. While the "excess" revenue is designated as such because it exceeded state revenue forecasts, it doesn't mean that it exceeds the needs of the state, its programs and services. Does it make more sense to send checks to taxpayers or to add money back to state services, many of which have been cut to the bone in the past several years?

Some would twist the effort to keep the money as a political decision as a way to make those who care about state programs look like habitual tax-and-spend politicians. However, that would be inaccurate at best. Those who work to ensure that state programs are funded to the best ability of the state should be commended instead of condemned.

The Senate should look again at the cuts to state services before deciding to send checks to state taxpayers in December. Oregon can't afford to be Santa Claus to its residents.



### LETTERS

#### Unfortunate

The recent use of tear gas by the Eugene Police to break up a campus party was an unfortunate incident. However, it provides us with an opportunity to address problems for the future before they arise.

The incident highlights the importance of a close working relationship between the Eugene Police and the students of the University. The Campus-Community Relations Task Force was set up to facilitate this process and we plan to work to expand the lines of communication between the students and the community.

We empathize with the student renters of the house who had uninvited guests. However, we need to stress that the actions of those people present do not represent the 17,000 students of the University. We are thankful that no one was injured in such a dangerous situation and we encourage the citizens of Eugene to look at this as merely a one-time incident that will not be repeated.

On May 26, the Associated Students of the University of Oregon, the Dean of Students Office, Panhellenic Council, Carey Drayton from the Office of Public Safety, the University's Environmental Health and Safety Department and the City of Eugene all worked together to clean up the chemical residue left at the students' house where the party started. This cleaning was necessary to allow the students to prepare for finals and to return to their home.

Only through community unity can we begin to move forward and look toward solutions for the common problems that face all residents of Eugene. We hope this incident will spur better relations between the campus and the City of Eugene and help us look at ways of solving our community problems together.

Jennifer Williamson  
ASUO President  
and three co-signers

#### Dwindling

Some parting thoughts. I used to read the *Emerald*

for two reasons: It was free and it reflected the concerns and sensibilities of the University community in general and students in particular.

Well, it's still free.

It seems, of late, that every time I pick up the *Emerald*, I think I'm reading the paper of some religious Midwestern college, not the paper of a progressive university.

I've heard students talk about the environment, teachers, music, drugs, sex, relationships, rental ripoffs, tests and lack of money (not necessarily in that order), but I have never heard a student say, "Get the government off my back," — or anything like it.

I don't know who's in charge at the *Emerald*, but it appears some of its editors and writers take themselves and Rush Limbaugh too seriously. They are out of touch with their readership — most of whom depend on government largess for their funding, paychecks, grants or loans.

And a readership, according to students I've spoken with, that's dwindling.

Leslie Weinstein  
Journalism

#### Change mind

I have to admit, I rarely read anything beyond "Calvin and Hobbes" in the *Emerald*. However, my roommate, knowing I strongly advocate hemp agriculture and production, strongly encouraged me to read Brian Womack's "opinion" (*ODE*, May 9). I had already seen the headline, but because his past articles have always seemed misinformed, I passed it up. Unfortunately, I was under new obligation to read Brian's show of ignorance. It's unfortunate because this brought on another nagging responsibility to respond to such an opinion. I'd rather just ignore it.

With all due respect for Brian, I've seen him around campus and have spoken with him. To all you stirred stoners, he's not a bad guy. He does, however, misunderstand the difference between hemp and marijuana.

Brian's confusion exemplifies

why I have chosen not to support the Hemp Coalition. Actually, I feel the coalition propagates such confusion. The local Hemp Coalition has put forth a petition for initiative that would legalize marijuana for personal use and medicinal use (already legal in some cases) under the "hemp" banner. They are combining marijuana with hemp on the same ballot! This is a bad idea because hemp and marijuana are separate issues. The marijuana issue alone is a bagful that only complicates a very simple "hemp" issue. This is not to say that marijuana doesn't have its own merits and/or detriments, but it's a completely separate issue and should remain so. I suppose one could smoke hemp but I'd say they were already high if they think it's going to get them higher.

Hemp is one of the most important fiber producers on the planet today that could realistically replace nearly all our paper needs (not to mention numerous other uses such as clothes and food). Hemp's rapid growth rate and overall utility could and would significantly reduce the amount of trees inefficiently used. It disturbs me to see our trees bleached and filled with coffee, or handed out for free in dispensers to dry our hands, or wiping our ... mouth at the dinner table. There are many of reusable resources that could replace this consumption (i.e. curbside recyclable plastic mugs, reusable washable towels, air dryers, bidets, and the list goes on and on where subsistence can easily replace consumerism). So there you have it.

Another opinion. Generally, I find it a burden to share my opinions because I allow them to change so often I end up disagreeing with myself down the road. My values, however, change very little. So when it comes down to protecting our giver of life, the Earth, I become so inclined to voice myself. So to those who violently oppose Womack, and I know you're out there, chill out and allow him to perhaps change his mind.

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International  
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