

## Government and greed: Why we ran out of gas

■ **OUR OPINION:** The gas tax is both a political and an economic issue

Though it might be difficult to believe, the original intention of the gas tax was not to punish consumers or sweep them into a political battle between conservatives and liberals. Unfortunately, the gas tax has had both of these negative effects.

The history of the gas tax is just about as attractive as the political debate that now surrounds it. All of this chaos started in 1993 with the passing of the Omnibus Appropriations Bill, which President Clinton managed to pass without a single Republican vote.

The goals of this bill were to reduce the deficit and provide additional funding for minimum wage increases and education through the attachment of a 4.3 cent gas tax on specific types of transportation.

Six years later, the deficit is still growing, minimum wage has not been increased and education is suffering more than ever.

Since 1993, we have watched our government throw more tantrums, stage more childish stand-offs and propose more archaic legislation than any other previous administration. Some examples are the government shutdown, attempts to repeal social security and, well, Newt Gingrich.

But it is incorrect to assume that every time you pull up to the pump you are paying for another failed attempt at reducing the deficit. The extraordinarily high tax is a result of those wonderfully capitalistic and greedy organizations known as oil companies as well.

Yes, the gas tax controver-

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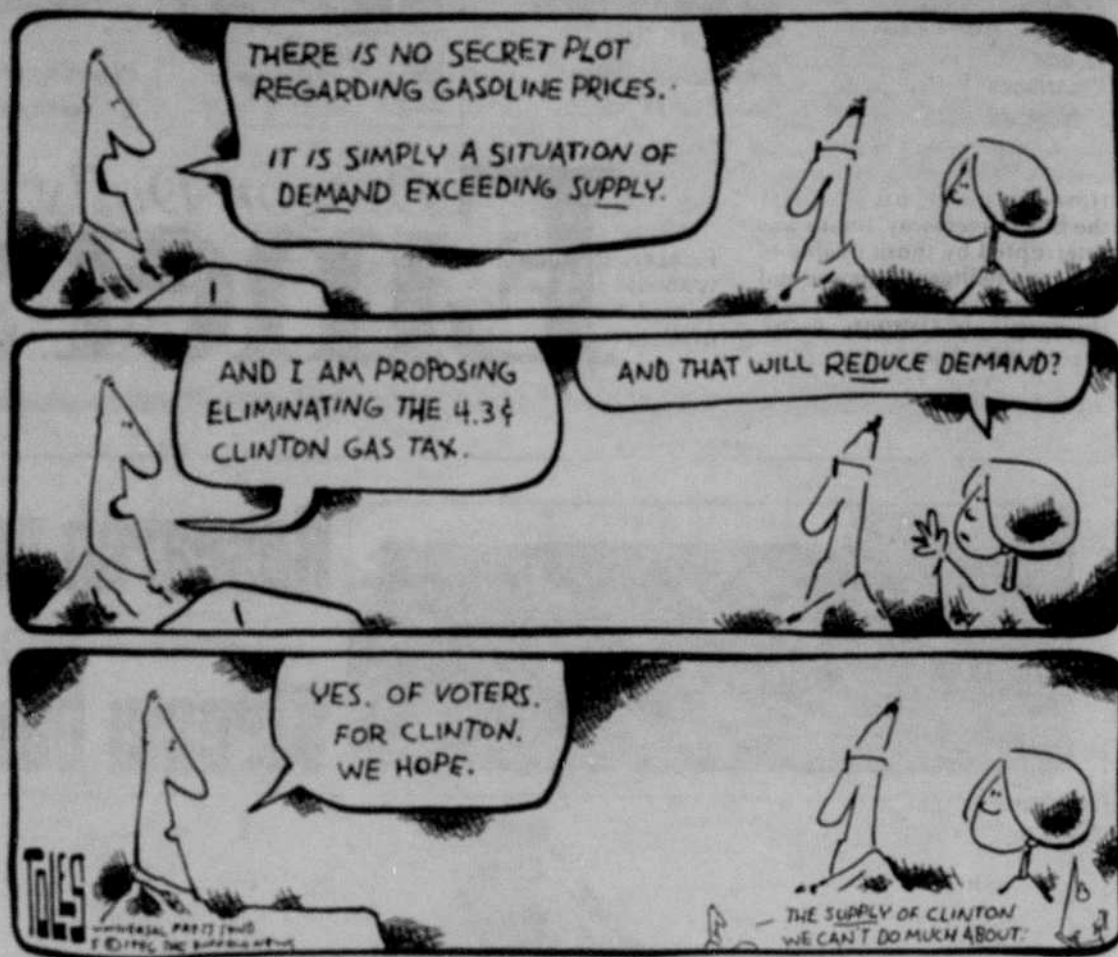
sy is related to the pursuit of profits as well as government legislation.

Last January, Iraq was negotiating with the United Nations. The deal involved an oil-for-food transaction. Oil refiners observed this negotiation and became very frightened that this transaction might result in their not making as much money because a flood of Iraqi oil would make their inventories less valuable. However, these negotiations disintegrated and now we supposedly have an oil deficiency.

But that is not the final factor involved in this complex issue concerning a simple tax. Both liberals and conservatives are using the controversy around the gas tax to stab their political opponents in the back.

Both Dole and Clinton are trying to look like they are defending the consumer. Dole is the driving force behind the repealing of the four-cent tax, while Clinton is taking credit for releasing oil from the nation's petroleum reserves.

However, the Omnibus Appropriations Bill itself mandates the sale so the Department of Energy can study the cause of price increases. That cause could very well be right under their noses: self-centered politicians and insensitive corporations.



## Landscape needs to reflect diversity

Thank you for your quick coverage (ODE, April 30) of the recent "Power and Place," workshop whose participants created several art installations, or interventions, around campus late last month.

I was interviewed by phone for the *Emerald* article and I apologize if my comments misled the reporter. Some critical additions and corrections need to be made about this important weekend.

This was not an event focused solely on landscape architects. The organizing committee included professors from four departments in the Allied and Applied Arts department. Workshop participants included students from throughout AAA, staff from Oregon Hall and members of the community at large.

The theme, "Power and Place," relates directly to a tagline at the bottom of all University documents:

"An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution committed to cultural diversity and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act."

Throughout the workshop, we explored whether or not the University's physical or "built" environment expresses that tagline, and whether or not people of minority groups feel welcomed and enabled by the design of this campus.

Universal Design is a tool or a way of thinking which helps achieve the expression of equal opportunity in the environment. It originated from the development of barrier-free design for the use of people with impaired mobility. In time, many of us who use wheelchairs realized that "disabled access" often meant entering by the back door, or being shunted aside, resulting in social isolation and second-class accommodation.

As in the Civil Rights movement, we saw that "separate but equal" only meant separate, but not equal.

Universal Design means universal access.

### COMMENTARY

Daniel G. Hunter

social integration and use by all. By its inclusive nature, issues of age, gender, ethnicity and all sorts of disabilities can be addressed. This was the spirit of the "Power and Place" weekend.

An important lesson was shared by speakers who have visual impairments. If we design for all the human senses, not just for sight, we automatically expand the integration and participation of many persons previously excluded by the built environment. Each of the seven art installations included multisensory elements as well as wheelchair access.

Universal Design is best achieved by including minority populations in the design process. If we design "with" people rather than "for" them, we distribute the power of making decisions and our result is more inclusive. This is one reason why the workshop itself purposefully recruited participants outside of the design professions, as well as people of minority populations.

The art installation, which wrapped the Pioneer Father, and made connection to the Pioneer Mother, addressed issues of gender as they are expressed in the landscape of the University. What do these campus icons have to say about power on campus in past and present times?

Finally, a common misconception is that Universal Design will lead to a bland, homogeneous landscape. In fact, the opposite is true. The wonderful variety of art installations built over that weekend demonstrated that inclusiveness produces a richness and depth of experience in the built environment.

A welcome is truly extended to all, not just in the words of a tagline, but in the landscape.

Daniel G. Hunter is a graduate student in the landscape architecture department.

### LETTERS

#### Emerald a no-show

On May 22, Gordon Smith visited the University, but you would not have known that if you read the *Emerald*.

Smith wanted to meet students and answer questions that they might have of him and his candidacy for the U.S. Senate. He did meet students and was quite clear in answering their questions at a rally for him in the EMU Courtyard.

Why didn't the *Emerald* find

his visitation to be important enough to cover? Every TV news station and news radio station in Eugene (as well as *The Register-Guard*), found his visit not only significant but informative and worthy of coverage.

Last fall Smith was accused of avoiding the University and now after he walked right into the heart of our school, the *Emerald* didn't seem to care. Why is that?

I think it is unfair for the

readers of the *Emerald* not to be at least informed of a political candidate's presence at our school.

Smith was and is trying to reach students at the University, and he will be back to answer more of our questions.

Hopefully, next time our school newspaper will find Smith's visit important enough to cover and report on to the students of this campus.

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## Oregon Daily Emerald

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