

Can the Oregon football team still make a postseason bowl game? Let us know.

# OPINION

editorials, letters, commentary and perspective

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## Prisons are everybody's responsibility

### BACKGROUND

**November 1994:** Voters pass Measures 11 and 17, requiring stricter sentencing laws and available work for prisoners.

**June 1996:** The Oregon Department of Corrections presents its plan for 10 new prisons statewide by the year 2005.

**October 1996:** The city of Eugene receives a letter from Gov. Kitzhaber, announcing its inclusion on a list of possible prison sites.

**November 16:** The state prison siting authority comes to Eugene and Oakridge to hold public hearings on the possible prison construction.

**December 2:** The siting authority will submit a ranked list of the possible prison sites to Gov. Kitzhaber.

**December 17:** The governor will announce his decisions.

■ **OUR OPINION:** Oregonians need to confront the facilities' construction instead of turning away

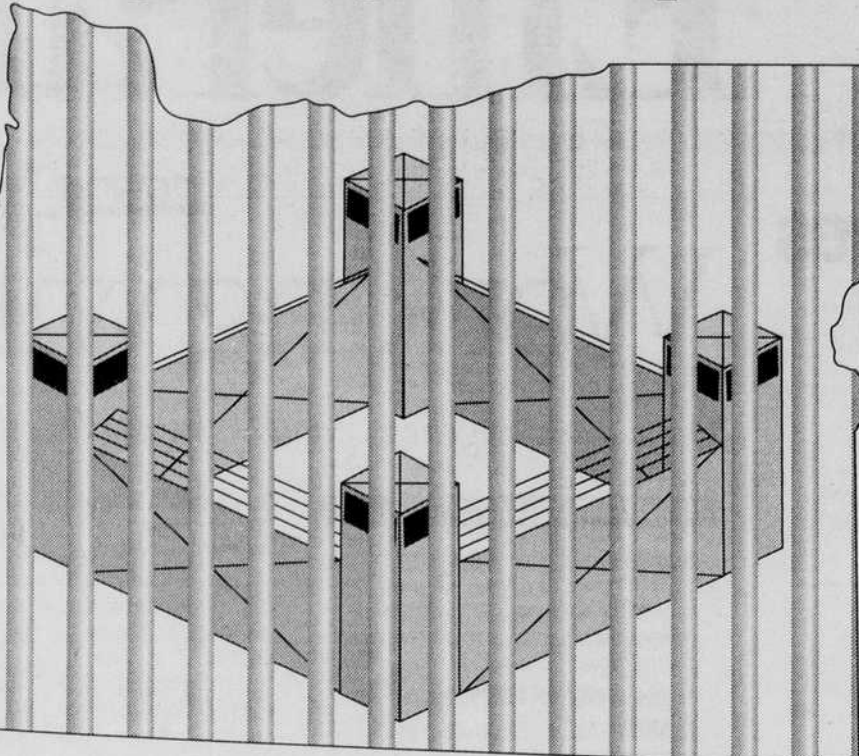
The usual community members and elected officials spoke out on the proposed prison sites near Mahlon Sweet Airport and Oakridge last weekend and surprised no one.

After the 1994 passages of Measure 11 and Measure 17, which created stricter sentencing laws for convicted felons and a state mandate to provide work for prisoners, Oregon was left with a prison population set to double before the end of the century.

Last month, Eugene area residents learned they were home to not one, but two of the 22 possible sites across the state where seven new prison facilities will be built in the next eight years. The Oregon Corrections Facilities Siting Committee hit the area on Nov. 16 in its statewide tour of potential sites.

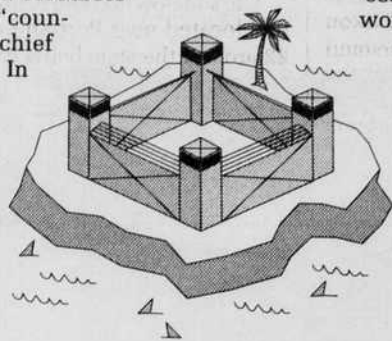
In Eugene, 11 people spoke against the facility during a committee hearing — citing budget problems, construction resources and the ruin of a "country lifestyle" as chief concerns. In Oakridge, where a prison-work camp is proposed, citizens worried about the site's water supply and the potentially negative image cast on the community.

These concerns are not new. The Siting Committee, which ends its series of city hearings this week, has



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

endured the same types of complaints across the state. Nobody wants a prison in their community. And a seemingly valid list of reasons is always brought up — from economic concerns to worries about the city sewage system.



But regardless of the justification for their beliefs, community members are simply scared. And in a sense, they have a right to be. Nobody wants a large group of convicted felons anywhere near their home or their family. The mere presence of criminals, however contained they are

within prison walls, breeds a rational fear.

Many citizens fear an inmate may possibly escape, threatening their neighborhood's security. While this is unlikely, the mere possibility brings up the ugly scenario of a newly free prisoner, creating havoc along his or her way.

But regarding the fear of a community's decimated reputation if a prison was built, the additional jobs and revenue to a city outweigh the facility's possible image problems. While the argument that prisons generally improve a community is a thin one, their construction does have its ad-



vantages. In Eugene, Lane Community College said it would provide training for prison officers with state funding. And the Lane Transit District volunteered to contract with the state to accommodate the larger population and traffic.

A medium-security prison and work camp won't make Eugene and Oakridge better places, but what is the alternative? Seven prisons will be built no matter how scared Oregonians are. By passing measures 11 and 17 two years ago, voters sealed their own fate. Now they must live with it.

Would building prisons out in the unpopulated wilderness of Eastern Oregon solve the problem? Unfortunately, no. Prisons need civilization for supplies, resources and labor. But civilization feels it doesn't need prisons. Citizens demand more effective law enforcement but are unwilling to help in the effort. Simply stated, more prisoners demand more prisons and therefore, more sacrifice from all Oregonians.

Easy solutions are not available. We can't put our prisons on abandoned islands or ship our violators of society into space in state-funded rocket ships. Placing prisons in citizens' "backyards" is not only a possibility but a necessity. So whose backyards will they be? Each of the 22 potential sites will try to pass the buck. But eventually, the buck will stop — perhaps even in Eugene. We need to be ready, not just scared.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board.

### LETTERS

#### Rash decision

I am completely dismayed at your decision to write a retraction so immediately to the now infamous Nov. 12 editorial. The decision to so eagerly jump off the bridge into the abyss of political correctness is spineless. The question is: Will you remain under the thumb of the Multicultural Center and sacrifice your true opinions on future editorials?

The article itself, while illworded, contains an important topic for students to consider. Does the creation of new student groups branching off from already larger ones aid the educational and cultural stimulation of students? No, it is only going to require more funding in the long run. If it would help, I would have started my own group a long time ago: Seattle Mariner fans of Hibernian-Anglo-Saxon descent without residency in any state in the Union Student Union.

The Emerald this year has shown remarkable improve-

ment to years past. This is especially true in the editorials; the one examining classroom stereotypes was outstanding. The scathing review of Clancy Thurber's, by Thom Schoenborn, was informative yet contained needed wit. The Nov. 12 editorial, while being biased, caused a great deal of response and thinking on the part of students. Why apologize?

Make sure of your opinions before you print them. But if you can help it, don't ever say you're sorry. Egg makes for horrible make up.

Gordon Gilbert  
Undeclared

#### Autzen dangerous

As most of us on campus know, there has been a recent student housing boom in the Autzen Stadium area. The Parkgrove, Chaise Village and Duck Village apartment complexes have attracted many students, including myself, to

move into the area next to Autzen.

The problem is that while the complexes themselves are safe, the walk to and from campus is not. This is especially a problem at night because the lighting on the walking path is weak, and there are no emergency call boxes along the route. Therefore, a campaign is being mounted to urge the University to install call boxes along the main path and to increase lighting along this path. We feel this is a needed improvement to help ensure the safety of students who live and exercise in the area. We urge you to support this idea before someone gets hurt.

Robert Ackley  
Political Science

#### Spirit missing

On Nov. 9, Autzen Stadium was not filled to capacity, but more than 40,000 were there to support their favorite football team and were definitely into

the game against Arizona. It was nice to see after the miserable performance we as "faithful" fans gave two weeks earlier for the Washington game.

The battle on the field against Washington was fought hard by the Ducks. The battle in the stands, however, was no contest. It was over in the third quarter when Oregon fans quit. What a disappointment for an Oregon football team that has given us so much to cheer about in the last few years. Washington fans owned our stadium at the end of the game, with at least four sections still completely occupied by the Husky faithful.

To the Oregon football team, I say thank you for showing continued support for each other and your commitment to your individual and shared goals. To the fans, I say take a good look. There is a lot to cheer about with this football team.

Billie Nix  
Portland

## Oregon Daily Emerald

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