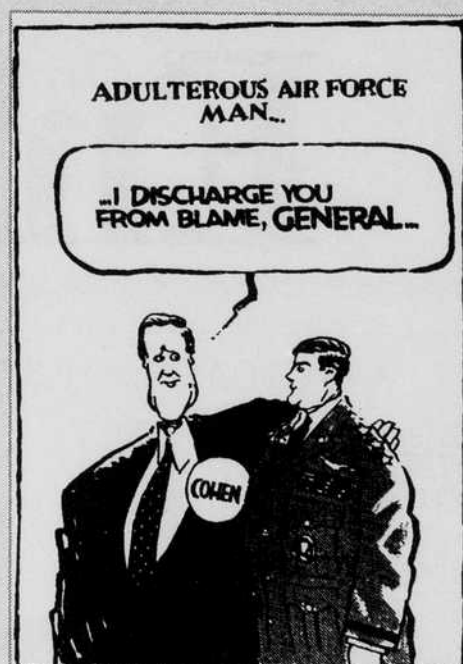


The Drawing Board



Legislative session has its ups and downs

OUR OPINION: *The government did some good for higher education this session with the tuition freeze, but more could have been done*

Now they can go home. After a 174-day session, the Legislature wrapped up business over the weekend and slipped away in the middle of the night. Now Oregon's part-time leaders can return to the business and social interests that govern most of their lives and can at time influence their policies.

They didn't leave much of a legacy. There were few drastic policies passed by the Legislature, good or bad. Mistakes were made, particularly when it came time to respect the will of the voters. Good decisions were also made, such as providing needed money for schools and higher education.

A Senate dominated by conservative Republicans combined with a mixed House and progressive governor in failing to accomplish much. Some of the most aggravating bills didn't pass. Eugene's toxic reporting law stands; a legislative attempt to overturn it failed. Efforts to end student fees as we know them were also blocked.

Other unfortunate bills slipped through. A tax break for timber companies passed, as did a bill recriminalizing the possession of small amounts of marijuana.

For college students, the most important part of the session went fairly well. Higher education's \$577 million budget, the first increase in three sessions, will provide a much-needed tuition freeze over the next two years. Additionally, the University system received \$7.5 million to help recruit and retain faculty. It may not prove enough to com-

pete with private institutions for valued professors, but it will help.

Other schools benefited as well. While Portland will still have to make massive cuts because of the equity in school funding required under a variety of ballot measures and bills, many school districts will finally be able to put aside the budget axe after years of hacking because of Measure 5.

While schools and social services both received important funds, more could have been spent. Schools and universities have taken such massive cuts that it would take a great influx of money to restore important programs and staff positions. This money could have come from a proposal by Gov. Kitzhaber to retain the so-called "kicker."

The kicker is the legally mandated return of state income taxes collected above budgeted amounts. This year, the money amounts to a tax refund of \$447 million, much of which will go to businesses. It might be nice to get your share of the refund in the mail, but the money could be better spent. Not only could schools and services use more, but parks and transportation suffered.

The horrible possibility that parks across the state would close was avoided, but the system is still relying upon increased fees and reduced hours, as are many recreational services across the state. Transportation took a massive hit, as the legislature failed to pass a bill to provide increased revenue to repair crumbling roads. Money from the kicker could certainly have been used for transportation and recreation.

A more alarming legislative trend developed as well. In several instances, the legislature proved unwilling to accept the mandate of the voters. In attempting to overturn the anti-toxins law, law-

makers who claim to be interested in increasing community control were all too willing to squash the will of Eugene's citizens.

Similarly, legislators who had a personal objection to assisted-suicide, which voters narrowly approved a few years back, decided the voters must not have known what they were doing. In an offensive display of paternalism, they decided to send the issue back to the ballot.

Perhaps most alarming of all was the Measure 50 fiasco. Not only did the legislature decide to rework Measure 47 to hide some of the harms of the property tax bill, but they openly intervened in the elections process. First, they coerced voters by insisting Measure 47, as written, would be struck down by the courts. Then, in a move insulting to the democratic process, they rewrote the measure after a quarter of voters had already turned in their ballots.

Perhaps Measure 47 would have been rejected by the courts. After the treachery by the Legislature concerning Measure 50, the rejection of this "constitution-friendly" revision by the Oregon Supreme Court is not only likely, but welcome. After watching the latest session, voters may be wondering that anyway. Compared to past sessions, in which the progressive spirit of Oregon has manifested itself in ways that led the nation, this unimpressive session provided little reason for Oregonians to care. Everyone got some money, no one got enough, businesses generally came out ahead, and individuals didn't fall too far behind.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

Quoted

"For new students on campus, I think it's fair to warn them that setting your backpack down and going away for two minutes can result in theft."

Sgt. Dave Poppe, on the need to stay alert during these lazy summer days, quoted in the July 1 Emerald.

"A lot of these kids are from small towns where they may be the only kid in school interested in writing poetry."

Bobbie Blackwell, director of the Summer Enrichment Program, on students attending summer camp at the University. Let's just hope they know not to set their backpacks down.

"The Rough Rider newspaper at Roosevelt Middle School recently sent two investigative reporters on an important mission: find the best french fries around."

And the Register-Guard recently filled space using this story, in the Monday issue to be exact.

"The crimes of the United States throughout the world have been systematic, remorseless and fully documented, but nobody talks about them. Nobody ever has."

Harold Pinter, writing in the Feb. Z Magazine. I guess they have more important things to cover.

Corrections

In the June 26 *Emerald*, it was reported that Neill Archer Roan is the executive director of the Bach Festival. In fact, he retired in April and Royce Saltzman is the director in the interim.

In the July 1 *Emerald*, it was reported that University Housing residents will pay for none of the \$2 million Bean Hall construction project. In fact, residents will be paying back the bonds over a 30-year period and will experience a slight increase in costs.

In the July 3 *Emerald*, Bobbie Blackwell was not fully identified. She is the director of the Summer Enrichment Program.

The *Emerald* regrets the errors.

READER VOICES

What would you do if you were organizing a mission to Mars?



"This planet is going to be overcrowded and over-polluted, so we could send the extra people and pollution there."

Elizabeth Boehm
Senior
Biology



"[I would] try to find some type of life, because that would answer a lot of questions."

Jacob Todd
Junior
Fine arts



"I'd take most of the money and spend it on education to make sure that we will have a healthy future generation that can use the information we find."

Molly Sloan
Graduate student
Education



"I'd go on a hover adventure there, and then [I'd] leave it alone."

Nicole Wheelwright
Senior
Fine arts



"I'd spend the money on a more constructive issue like food and medicine for the hungry people of the world."

Jung HongKyoo
Student
American English
Institute



"I don't want to go there because I'd have vertigo."

Marilyn Fourdin
Graduate student
International studies