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Perspectives

Oregon Daily
Emerald



THE THUMBS TELL THE WHOLE STORY



With summertime in full swing, it's time for the Emerald editorial board to sit back and do what everyone else in town seems to be doing: take a break

Normally on Thursdays — during the summer term at least — the Emerald runs down the right side of its Perspectives page a feature called "The week in thumbs." Regular readers know that this section is filled with blurbs about various ups and downs on the University campus or beyond.

More than just a gimmick to fill space, it usually takes on the important issues of the past seven days, those issues that affect us all and go deeper than just the cursory glance. OK, we're lying: It really is used just to fill space.

Which brings us to this particular editorial. As some of you may have noticed, the Emerald is being printed just twice a week this summer. (The rest of you might be saying to yourself, "You've been printing this summer?") Usually the three-month period between spring and fall terms provides little in the way of interesting news items.

The consensus among the ODE editorial board, however — determined in a very official way, with the editor sticking his head out of his office and asking for feedback from the rest of the board — is that each thumb needs more than just a small blurb. So, to reflect the Emerald's by-laws, which in part state that this opinion page "shall strive to enlighten and educate its readers by examining current issues carefully," we are offering up an entire editorial of "thumbs."

Oh yeah, and we're also filling space — seven inches of copy to this point — in case you hadn't figured that out yet.



Thumbs up to the Multicultural Center for finding a new director:

Just when it looked as if this group might have to go another year without a director, student leaders and University staff got a break when Erica Fuller-Schindler accepted the position after originally turning it down in May.

Fuller-Schindler brings an impressive set of credentials to the job. She spent the past five years at the University of Florida working with students in a multicultural setting, while pursuing a doctorate degree in anthropology. Her research focused on women of culture, development of non-governmental agencies and non-profit corporations, and formulating initiatives that aid women and children, particularly in residential communities and program housing.

She's a welcome addition to a campus that strives for diversity but doesn't always reach its goals.



Thumbs down to Bill Sizemore:

The Oregon Taxpayers United spokesperson is back with another ballot initiative, one that could be devastating to the state's public school system.

that Sizemore has on the Nov. 7 ballot, would eliminate about \$1 billion a year from revenues that pay for schools, universities, the prison system and human services. For university students, the most severe damage caused by Measure 91 if passed would be a 36 percent increase in tuition. Students on the Oregon Health Plan could also be adversely impacted.

Can someone come up with a ballot measure that kicks Sizemore out of the state, a la "Survivor"?



Thumbs up to Marla Runyan:

Eugene's newest Olympian is causing commotion in more places than just on the track, thanks to her third place finish on Sunday in the women's 1,500 meters at the U.S. Olympic Track and Field Trials in Sacramento, Calif.

Runyan is the first legally blind athlete to make a U.S. Olympic team, summer or winter, and she has become an international story. Yes, Maurice Green, Michael Johnson and Marion Jones are still draining ink wells with their overwhelming publicity, but the 31-year-old Runyan will no doubt be a hot commodity for interviews as the 2000 Olympics in Sydney draw near.

When the international press does get in contact with her, they'll discover that Runyan doesn't consider her blindness — she is limited to peripheral vision — to be all that much of an issue.

"I never said to myself 'I want to be the first legally blind Olympian.' I just said 'I want to be on an Olympic team, me, Marla,'" Runyan told reporters after her historic finish.

You accomplished your goal Marla, now go kick ass this September.



Thumbs down to bus rage:

In what no doubt is a ho-hum news item to anyone who has ever had to travel a long distance on a Greyhound bus, a bus passenger went ballistic Monday in Arkansas when he was asked by another passenger to put out his cigarette.

The 44-year-old man — from Oakland, Ore. — tried to commandeer the steering wheel, causing the bus to crash. One passenger suffered minor injuries, and the man was arrested without further incident.

OK, despite the fact that any Greyhound rider has probably felt the same emotions this guy did, let's just chill people. We all know about road rage and air rage — travelers angry with the nation's airlines — made it into the headlines a few weeks ago. Now bus rage. What's next? Scooter rage?

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

Lawsuit illustrates the danger of overzealous regulations

The Register-Guard began its July 18 editorial on the huge tobacco company verdict with the sarcastic, "Pity the poor tobacco industry." But instead of this arrogantly sardonic view, how about a more sincere concern for all citizens who knowingly make unhealthy choices?

It may be easy for many to throw their endorsements behind the punitive verdict, if it stands, that would cost the widely unpopular tobacco companies about \$145 billion. The logic here appears to be that tobacco is a dangerous product that costs Americans billions in health care costs.

But the problem with the tobacco verdict lies in the fact that it will bankrupt companies selling legal products that are populist targets tagged as evil big business, and that trend could continue into every facet of life

if the logic remains the same.

After all, fast food is ridiculously unhealthy and the fat, grease and cholesterol inflicted upon the body is hyperbolically — at least for now — a crime. Just look at that double bacon cheeseburger next time you pop one into your mouth. Tastes great, but what if the lady in the next booth with a Cobb salad doesn't want to pay higher insurance premiums because you eat red meat and are a potential risk?

And what about that after-dinner drink? (Well, for college students, make that eight shots of tequila and a boilermaker for good measure.) Alcohol definitely isn't a health food, and it costs society billions in rotten livers, drunk driving accidents and unwanted pregnancies borne of cloudy judg-



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ment.

You may think all of this is a bit far-fetched, but this tactic of imposing de facto regulations, if not prohibitions, on unpopular industries has already begun.

The same populist punishment is already being meted out to the gun industry. The Clinton administration earlier this year attempted to force gun manufacturers into a set of behaviors — including background checks and a clause that distributors can only sell to other distributors or dealers that agree to abide by the agreement's other facets — by awarding contracts to companies that followed government guidelines.

And there are some who want to tax fast food. Tax a legal product simply because it's not good for the consumer? Why not, it's already happening with tobacco.

The very valid concern that needs to be

dealt with is that government, with its arrogant belief that it knows best for its citizens, has found its way around the politically costly battles of banning substances and moved onto de facto prohibition methods. Taxation, awarding contracts to compliant companies and suing companies for making and selling legal products are very effective tactics and wholly dangerous.

So next time you read the sarcastic sentiments denouncing big businesses, even though you may not like the industries being attacked, just ponder what it might mean for you next time you want to barbecue some ribs and grab a cold one. Unpopular businesses are now fair game, and you're the one who loses their rights.

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