

PERSPECTIVES

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Shakespeare was Right — Again



CAPTAIN SENSIBLE

PAT PAYNE

That Bill Shakespeare. Definitely a fount of good ideas. "The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers."

OK, maybe not all. It's not the profession that's the problem, but the people in it today.

Lawyers, at least in this country, used to have a heroic stature in the minds of the public. Abraham Lincoln was a well-respected lawyer before being elected president. Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan squared off in the celebrated "monkey trial" in Tennessee in the 1920s, debating humanity's right to question the way the world works. In the 1950s, Thurgood Marshall argued *Brown vs. Board of Education*, a case that finally put the first cracks in state-sponsored segregation. In fiction, too, lawyers were portrayed as champions: Erle Stanley Gardner's "Perry Mason" novels and the subsequent 1950s TV program showed ethical people defending the unjustly accused.

Now? Goodbye, Perry. Make way for Lionel Hutz, the incompetent, unethical attorney retained by Bart Simpson. Lawyers today are most-

ly seen as little more than lawsuit initiators or slick talkers who will do anything to win a case, and who seem to have all the compassion of a mercenary toward their clients.

A case in point is the proliferation of lawsuits today by people who make Forrest Gump look like Albert Einstein. Of course you remember in 1996, when McDonald's was sued by a woman charging that its coffee scalded her. Duh, if one puts a Styrofoam cup between one's legs while driving, there is a chance of liquid spilling out. And hot liquids do have a tendency to scald. But thanks to her lawyers, she won a multi-million dollar settlement.

Another payday for dimwits is in the offing, with a man in Atlanta suing the makers of "Liquid Fire" drain cleaner because he was burned by the stuff. How was he burned, you ask? Dimwit number two thought the original, spill-proof container was "too flimsy," and so decided to move it into a safer container. Guess what? It spilled. The Man With Less Common Sense Than a Lemming is taking the company to court, claiming that the original bottle design "forced" him to transfer the goop.

Finally, former Eagles frontman Don Henley is faced with not only a lawyer, but a lawyer with a thesaurus. According to the *Associated Press*, a fan at an Oct. 4 concert claims Henley whacked her with a maraca while she was taking a photograph. Her lawsuit alleges "high-

ly unpleasant mental reactions, including fright, horror, disappointment, chagrin, worry, disgrace, embarrassment (pause for breath), indignity, ridicule, shame, humiliation, anger and outrage."

Sounds more like she's suing over high ticket prices. Y'know, some celebs are touchy about having their pictures taken (for instance, Sean Penn), so perhaps a tap with a maraca just means "put the camera away." By the way, there were enough witnesses, so why not charge him with assault?

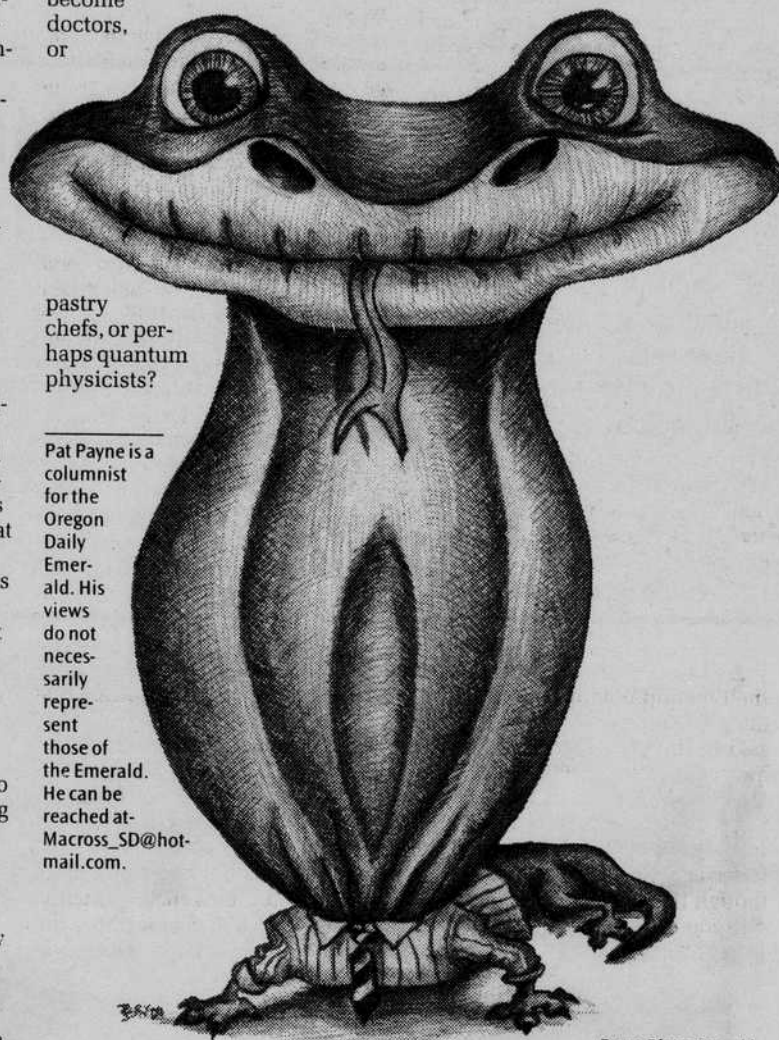
Why all the lawsuits today? Some say that it's just modern society — people looking for monetary satisfaction to soothe their injured egos — or that it's a "something-for-nothing" mindset. I don't think it's either. While there are lawsuits that need to be filed, such as lawsuits against patently defective products or wrongful deaths, or lawsuits seeking redress for atrocities, most of the "nimrod" lawsuits like the three above are, in my opinion, filed because there are too many lawyers. For every Erin Brockovich, there are 20 "whiplash lawyers." And they're all hungry to get work. They probably go looking for cases like *Dances-With-Drain-Cleaner* in Atlanta and convince the boob that he can cash in on his idiocy.

My solution? Close down all law schools for about 20 years. We've got too many lawyers today, and adding to that number isn't gonna help. Why don't you lawyers-to-be

become doctors, or

pastry chefs, or perhaps quantum physicists?

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Bryan Dixon Emerald

Young would bring bipartisan spirit to Legislature

State Representative, District 40 — William Young

Campus-area voters are fortunate to have two strong mainstream candidates and one longtime activist voice to choose from for their state representative. District 40 covers the residence halls and the campus proper, and the editorial board was divided on who to endorse.



WILLIAM YOUNG

Karl Sorg, as a Socialist candidate, may garner only meager support, but he seemed principled and heartfelt in his beliefs. His most intriguing idea was taxing the ex-

remely wealthy as much as 90 percent. Finance-reform enthusiasts take note — Sorg spent only his own money to campaign. He also wants health care made more equitable — poor people paying less and rich people paying more for medical care. We're pleased his voice was added to this race, and we hope the winner takes some of his ideas to Salem.

Phil Barnhart, chair of the Lane County Democratic Party, knows the district well — he's lived here for 51 years — and has been in politics since 1990. We agreed with Barnhart's ideas about education and health care, and he also made an important point about taxes that voters should remember when deciding the ballot measures: "Money coming in through the tax system equals programs that people say

they want."

Overall, however, Barnhart sounded a bit too partisan. Whatever party has the majority in the Oregon Legislature after the election, our representatives must work together. As chair of the local Democrats, how could Barnhart not have an eye on the partisan game?

Barnhart's Republican opponent, William Young, is a newcomer to the game who seems remarkably moderate. For a veterinarian who was a write-in candidate in the primary, he has learned about the issues quickly and spoke to them well.

Young expresses interest in kids and education at every step. He focused on early education programs, teaching life skills and computer literacy through high school, and

he prioritizes education funding in order to retain quality instructors. Young wants to provide prescriptions at a low cost through bulk purchases or state contracts. He emphasized conserving the environment and offering tax credits for alternative transportation and alternative energies, such as wind power. He's in favor of rehabilitation, especially for first-time offenders, instead of simple incarceration. And while he prioritizes education, health and public safety funding, he wants to save money as well as spend it by cutting the fat from contractors who bid for public jobs and by retaining departments' excess money at the end of the fiscal year.

Young also clarified his position on Measure 9, which *The Register-Guard* reported incorrectly (it did

run a correction): He is opposed to Measure 9.

Most important to us, however, was Young's sense of bipartisanship. If Democrats control the Legislature, Young will work with them. If the Republicans retain power, Young seems focused on working across the aisle to solve problems. And although there is concern about sending an relatively inexperienced representative to Salem, we liked the fact that he is not a veteran politician. As Young said, "Politicians focus too much on the party line and not enough on Oregon." Vote for Young, and you'll be voting for Oregon.

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

Tax-cutting measures would increase college tuition

GUEST COMMENTARY

Eric J. Bailey

What motivates Bill Sizemore and Don McIntire? What are they thinking? Why is it that they constantly insist on throwing bad tax break measures at us that only benefit the filthy, stinking rich? I don't know the answer to these questions, but I will tell you why I'm voting NO on Measure 8 and NO on Measure 91, and why I

think you should as well.

Who benefits from this tax break? Definitely NOT your average college student. It's a fact that TUITION PRICES WOULD RISE if either Measure 8 or Measure 91 passes. They would cut our state budget by more than \$1 billion (maybe \$2 billion) in a budget that has around \$10 billion. Every estimate that I have heard about how much our tuition would rise has been between 20 percent and 90 percent. Can you afford that? I know I can't. Want to know the only group that really benefits from these tax breaks? THE RICH.

You will not even see a penny of this tax break unless you earn \$81,000 or more. Moreover, you might actually feel a tax increase if you earn less than \$81,000, because of the fact that it will get rid of "the kicker," which reimburses Oregonians if all tax revenue was not used during the budget process.

Sizemore has said that the cuts in programs would be no worse if Measure 91 passes than they were after the infamous Measure 5 passed years ago ... NEWSFLASH: University tuition skyrocketed after that horrible measure. However,

this measure is different than Measure 5 ... IT'S WORSE. Measure 5 was a terrible tax cut that gutted many state programs and was a major setback to quality education in Oregon. K-12 class sizes went from being around the 4th best in the nation to about 25th. Measure 91 would make us even lower on that list, after we have to lay off thousands more teachers while enrollment increases.

I don't know about you, but I know I don't want to vote for measures that will just let a few millionaires buy an extra yacht or big-screen TV at the expense of quality

state programs and education. These measures mean less money for the Oregon Health Plan, police and fire services, road repairs, K-12 education, state university budgets and anything else you can think of that's funded by our state.

It's time we unite to say NO to Sizemore and McIntire. It's time to say that we've had enough of tax breaks that only benefit the rich and cut too far into good state programs and education. Vote NO on 8 and vote NO on 91.

Eric J. Bailey is the ASUO Student Senate vice president.