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COMMENTARY

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Wednesday, September 26, 2001

Campus area recall petition reflects misguided purpose

GUEST COMMENTARY

Bonny Bettman

I'd like to extend a warm welcome to new and returning University students, faculty and staff. While you were away, Eugene ambivalently enjoyed the longest stretch of sunny, dry weather we've witnessed in the 30 years I've lived here. We've also experienced a major municipal controversy regarding the siting of Sacred Heart hospital.

Last March, after years of planning to expand Sacred Heart at its present site on Hilyard, the hospital's chief executive officer announced a move to Eugene's northern city limits.

As the city councilor representing Ward 3, which encompasses

the present hospital, downtown, and substantial student housing, I was involved in discussions with Sacred Heart's CEO, along with another councilor and city staff. My objectives were to:

- Ensure the availability and accessibility of hospital services to residents in my ward, especially the continued provision of full emergency room services. That meant keeping the hospital in the downtown area so residents wouldn't have to travel halfway to Coburg for emergency medical attention.

- Protect downtown vitality by keeping the county's largest private employer in the city center.

- Preserve the viability of the small business community that serves students as well as hospital employees, patients and visitors.

- Prevent costly and environmentally destructive sprawl. As a result of my participation in those

discussions, a disgruntled constituent decided to file a recall petition against me. He is currently attempting to collect the required signatures to force a recall election. The petitioner's complaint stems from one specific option emerging from our discussions with Sacred Heart which would have resulted in the hospital expanding on the six blocks due west of its current location. (Originally the hospital wanted to be given eight blocks, partially extending south of 13th Avenue, in addition to their current four-block site.)

In his statement in the Sept. 17 Emerald, the petitioner failed to acknowledge certain facts:

- There was no conspiracy to conduct discussions with hospital officials during summer term. The timeline was predicated on the hospital's announcement in March and their stated need to

start building a new facility as soon as possible.

- When the Sacred Heart proposal became public, the city and the hospital had reached *no* agreement. Serious incompatibilities had surfaced over provisions in the proposal. As a result, the city council — myself included — voted to take the six-block option off the table.

- If the city had been able to reach agreement with the hospital on any of the proposals, it would have been just the beginning of a 14-month-long process with ample opportunities for public involvement.

The hospital's relocation is fraught with complexities, variables and competing interests. Even so, it is apparent that the recall process is being misused in this case.

The recall is intended as a remedy for Oregon's citizens in

cases where elected officials have failed to carry out their duties or have engaged in criminal misconduct. Neither is the case here; this recall is simply an instance of a constituent finding fault with my efforts concerning the hospital siting. Many of my constituents have been strongly and vocally supportive of my efforts to keep a hospital in the city center.

I intend to continue working to ensure that there are the full range of medical services accessible in the city center, as well as ongoing efforts to preserve housing and improve livability, especially in University neighborhoods.

I urge you *not* to sign a Ward 3 recall petition, and encourage you to contact me if you have questions about any issue, including this one.

Bonny Bettman is the city councilor for Ward 3.

Energy plan will obliterate Alaskan refuge

GUEST COMMENTARY

Paul Helstrom

In light of current events, it is more important than ever that our nation unites. Not only do we need to be aware of issues on an international level, but also on a national and even statewide level. Speaking Sunday in the Ben Linder Forum on an issue of national concern was Princess Peter-Raboff, a member of the Gwich'in Nation, and Melissa Waage from the Alaska Coalition of Oregon. They brought forth a message of urgency for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Senate is preparing to vote on President George W. Bush's energy plan, which includes opening the refuge to oil drilling. Peter-Raboff is concerned that the nation will turn its back on the refuge for a small and distant benefit for the destruction of her tribes' subsistence lifestyles.

The Gwich'in Nation consists of 15 villages in the northeast corner of the northern slope of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The Gwich'in have subsisted in the refuge for millennia. The wildlife refuge is the last 5 percent of the Arctic that is not protected from resource extraction. The Gwich'in, which means "caribou people," depend on the refuge for their food, shelter, clothing and traditions. It is home to the ancestral birthing grounds of 130,000 porcupine caribou, the nesting ground for hundreds of thousands of migratory birds and the only polar-bear den sites in our nation.

This is an issue of national concern because it has been argued that drilling in the Arctic would rid the United States of its dependence on foreign oil. Especially in consideration of the events Sept. 11, it is more pressing than ever that we do not open up the Arctic to the oil industry. Sacrificing any part of this wilderness would not drill the United States out of energy dependence.

U.S. Sen. Gordon Smith is a crucial swing vote, and Oregonians have a special duty to let their opinions be known to him so he can vote responsibly on this bill. I urge everyone to voice their opinions with letters, phone calls and petitions.

Paul Helstrom works for OSPIRG's "Riverwatch" campaign and Johanna Voss is OSPIRG's campus organizer.

Letters to the editor

Duck fans rock

A couple of weeks ago, some friends and I traveled to Eugene to watch the University of Utah play the Ducks. We had been to Eugene before and enjoyed the trip, so we thought we'd come up again.

What we found this year in Oregon really surprised us.

As friendly, respectful and fun as the Duck fans were the first time we were there, they were even more so this time. I just have to say, your town and your school rock. I travel extensively with the Utes, and never have I received a warmer welcome than at Oregon.

We spent two evenings enjoying some "adult beverages" at the Wild Duck Brewery, where we found the fans from your school to be courteous, friendly, cheerful ... you know, all that boy scout stuff. Everywhere we went, fans wanted to talk to us about Utah, our school and what the state is like. They were gracious and accommodating.

On game day, I was extremely impressed with your fans and your stadium — those are some diehard football lovers if I have ever seen them. You have a great tradition there.

I hope you'll publish this letter to thank the student body, fans and staff of the University. Your school and your town are definitely a class act.

Thanks again!

Darren Tucker
 West Valley City, Utah

Emerald offers inconsistent advice

Last year, I remember the Oregon Daily Emerald running at least one feature article attempting to reduce excessive or underage drinking on campus by asserting that fewer of their peers got drunk than students thought.

Imagine my confusion when I opened up the "Back to the Books" Sept. 17 issue and find a "The Inquiring Photographer" article asking, "What's the craziest thing you did this summer?" Two of the five students featured said that getting drunk was the highlight of their summers and another couldn't decide between scoring pot or taking acid as the craziest thing. I am amazed at the decision to feature these students, especially given the Emerald's stance on drinking and drugs as evidenced by last year's article.

Which message are you going to back? You'd better decide soon to tell incoming freshmen whether many of their peers drink or few do.

Dave W. Reed
 senior, physics

Editorial Policy

These editorials represent the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. The editorial board members are editor in chief Jessica Blanchard, managing editor Michael J. Kleckner, editorial editor Julie Lauderbaugh, assistant editorial editor Jacquelyn Lewis, community representative Gabe Shaughnessy and community representative Jessica Southwick. Responses can be sent to editor@dailymerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Please include contact information. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

CORRECTION

The text that accompanied a front-page story on Tuesday ("Jewish holy days end Thursday with Yom Kippur") incorrectly identified the Jewish New Year. The Jewish New Year, or Rosh Hashanah, was Sept. 17.

The Emerald regrets the error.

Steve Baggs

Emerald

