

COMMENTARY

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Monday, April 15, 2002

Editorial

UO students, administrators must team up on safety issues

The campus safety forum sponsored by the Office of Student Life on April 11 was an important first step in creating an open channel of communication between administrators and students. Students and top administrators converged at the Knight Library with the same mission: To exchange concerns about campus safety. But it was clear many students did not trust how the administration has been conducting itself, and repairing that confidence will be one of the University's greatest challenges in creating a safer environment.

It was encouraging to see high-level administrators willing to listen to student voices on this issue at the forum. All views were taken into account, and the forum broke off into four groups to discuss sexual assault prevention and response, involvement in campus safety, ongoing communication about safety issues and ways to protect the campus after dark.

Many groups generated some potential solutions to their topics, and now that the initial discussion has concluded, it is time for the University to put some of those ideas into action.

One idea was to create a communication loop for the campus that would allow departments, such as the Department of Public Safety, to send out e-mails to administrators, student groups, campus media and residence hall assistants to keep them updated on campus incidents and safety concerns. It's an excellent idea: By sharing the same information with everyone at the University, people will have a clear idea of what is happening and what DPS is doing about it.

Administrators from DPS and the Office of Student Life maintain that they want to create a safer campus for everyone. But to achieve this they need to be as forthcoming as possible with their information and prove to students they are acting with our best interests in mind. The idea of the e-mail loop is a good start.

To their credit, DPS implemented a few of its latest safety ideas, such as the Yellowjackets student patrol group and the department's hotline that gives full information about recent DPS responses. Students can call 346-5692 to hear details.

Now, students need to take the initiative to find out how they can work with the University to combat campus safety problems. The most obvious step is to attend the Campus Community Relations Task Force forum, April 24 at the Heritage Room in the Bowerman Building, to help brainstorm more solutions. The University is making an effort to share its ideas and generate feedback. Students should take advantage of that opportunity, and together we can start rebuilding our relationship.

Editorial Policy

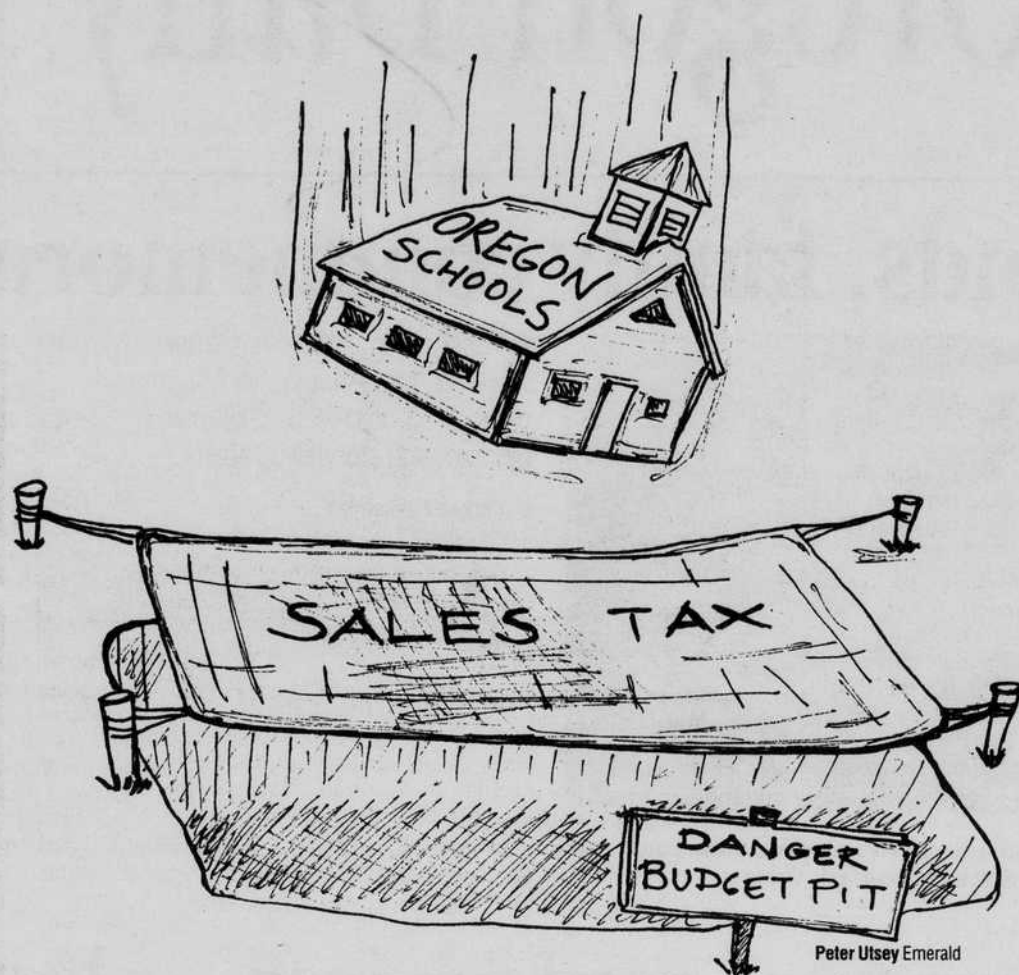
This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged.

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

In the article "Campus greek chapters turn alcohol-free" (ODE, April 12), Kappa Sigma fraternity president Jordan Fezler's name was misspelled.

The Emerald regrets the error.



Back-to-school sales tax

The state of Oregon has long formed a nationwide identity of being progressive. Our "forward thinking" ideas include having attendants pump our gas, allowing people to legally commit suicide and having a coastline entirely open for public use. While the objective behind being progressive is to advance the general welfare of the state, there is one long-standing characteristic in Oregon that is doing just the opposite. It is time we scrounge up all those pennies and implement a sales tax.



Jeff
 Oliver
 Columnist

Oregon is facing one of the worst budget shortfalls in state history. The University alone is looking at a cut between \$12 million and \$13 million. Legislators scurried to prevent an even deeper cut, and now University administrators must find ways to tighten already constricted resources. An ideal solution would be to prevent these cuts. With a sales tax, that is exactly what could happen.

The last time a sales tax proposal was brought in front of Oregon voters was in 1993. Only 25 percent of votes cast were in favor, and the sales tax was soundly defeated. The common argument against the sales tax is that it places the same burden on both the rich and the poor. Granted that rate charged to rich people and poor people will be the same, but when people have more money they spend more money. Because the rich buy more, they will pay more in taxes, making this an illogical argument.

The other, much more understandable reason as to why the concept of a sales tax is frowned upon in Oregon is simply because it is different. As Oregonians, we are used to going down to the store and paying the exact price listed on the loaf of bread. Nothing more and nothing less. We are accustomed to this and are afraid of change.

I'd be the first person to say I enjoy the convenience of having no sales tax, but our state needs it. During my frequent travels to states such as Michigan, with its 6 percent sales tax, and California, with its 5.75 percent sales tax, I find it annoying when the 99-cent item from the value menu costs \$1.05. It isn't the fact that I can't afford the extra 6 cents; it is the hassle of either find-

ing some loose change or dealing with the loose change when you have to break a bill. A little hassle, though, can create a steady revenue stream the state of Oregon can depend on.

In our minds, adapting to a sales tax may be difficult, but it is also what our mind thinks that makes a sales tax so attractive. Nobody likes handing money over to the government, but it is much easier to do it a few pennies at a time than it is to write a big tax check every April. A few cents — or a few dollars on larger purchases — isn't going to create a mentality that you're breaking the bank.

There is no guarantee that a sales tax will immediately improve our schools. Just look at Mississippi, where despite having one of the largest sales taxes in the nation — 7 percent — the state has some of the nation's poorest schools. It is up to our leaders in Salem where the money goes; but then again, maybe it isn't. Why can't our new sales tax be the first in the nation earmarked for education? In Oregon, we pride ourselves on being the first to do things, and this seems just as good a time as any to again do just that.

E-mail columnist Jeff Oliver at jeffoliver@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.

Poll Results:

Every week, the Emerald prints the results of our online poll and the poll question for next week. The poll can be accessed from the main page of our Web site, www.dailyemerald.com. We encourage you to send us feedback about the poll questions and results.

This week's poll question: Should the University schedule athletic games with teams that have American Indian mascots?

The choices:

- Yes
- No
- Don't care
- Don't know

Letter to the editor

New DPS truck wastes our money

Well, I just saw the Department of Public Safety's new truck the other day — a big, shiny Dodge Dakota, I believe. Cool. Then I noticed the word "parking" in big, bold letters on the side of the truck. I had to laugh.

Does this seem slightly ridiculous to anyone else? I mean, when was the last time you saw DPS take off four-wheeling

through the mud after someone who let the meter run out?

Is it really necessary to spend my money and yours on a big truck anyway? Is it for the intimidation factor? All I can say is that I'm deathly afraid of those little (not to mention economically and environmentally friendly) three-wheeled vehicles the Eugene Police Department uses to enforce parking. "Nooo, that's my car!"

Brian Stutzman
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