

COMMENTARY

Tuesday, November 5, 2002

Editorial

Communities should pressure richest citizens to help homeless

Homelessness has come back on the public radar screen in a number of cities in a big way, and now is the time to stop the current treatment of homeless people.

In Philadelphia, public officials have started urging tourists not to give change to panhandlers. In New Orleans, all the benches in Jackson Square have been removed to keep people from sleeping on them. In San Francisco, a small welfare stipend to keep homeless people fed and clothed is on the chopping block in today's election.

Even here in Eugene, a battle against homeless people is being waged. It's illegal to camp in the city limits, and homeless protesters have been rallying in downtown for the city to address the problem. Some of these people have moved into the West University neighborhood seeking shelter.

We think society should be blamed for not doing enough, and society may have an answer. Some people are homeless because they need a job, while others may be without an address because of mental problems or drug addiction. Neither can be helped by being thrown into jail or being driven out of the city.

Instead, communities need to expand programs offering treatment or job retraining. We need more facilities, more outreach workers, more food and blankets and medicine. Habitat for Humanity, well known for building single-family homes for low-income families, should build apartment complexes in cities with homeless problems.

With something as ambitious as trying to reduce homelessness, the question always exists: How will it be funded? The solution we offer, as modest as it is, might be a way of making such a program fiscally solvent without raising most people's taxes: We propose an excise on the ultra-rich.

If homelessness is so troublesome to big-city dwellers and so worrisome to those of us who believe in a social safety net, then communities should put pressure on those who have benefited the most from our society to help out.

We're sure that a Ted Turner, or a Kenneth Lay, or, say, a Phil Knight can easily spare \$30 million to fund a massive expansion of athletic facilities, er, homeless programs.

CLARIFICATION

The article "Accidents at UO intersection raise concerns," (ODE, Nov. 4) should have stated that Oregon Department of Transportation reports show that at the intersection of Onyx Street and Franklin Boulevard from 1999 to 2001, four accidents have occurred involving only vehicles, three accidents have occurred involving vehicles and bicycles or pedestrians, and nine people total have been injured.

No joy in Mudville

I am excited that sometime before today is over the votes will have been counted and the state will have a new governor and new or re-elected senator in office.

I am not heartened by this fact because of any belief that the previously elected officials were doing a poor job. In all honesty, I think that they did a fine job. The reason I am so happy is because it means I no longer have to deal with the advertisements. I'm so damn sick of the ads that run on television, on radio and in newspapers. They attack my senses and leave nothing substantial that I would want to take with me into the voting booth.

With increasing frequency in the last few months, I have found myself inundated with ads for one political candidate or another. More often than not, these ads are in place purely to shed a negative light on the candidate's opponent.

"Mudslinging," as these ad campaigns are often called, is irritating and diverts the public's attention away from real issues going on.

I know these ads are just part of the game politicians play, but that fact doesn't make me any less sick and tired of them.

This year's senate and gubernatorial race reminds me of high school and the race for student body president. For weeks before the election, signs would be posted throughout school for one candidate or another.

Instead of outlining the said candidate's stance on issues important to the school, the signs were funny rhymes and colorful adaptations of the other candidate — a more humorous and clever way to sling some mud. State candidates could at least introduce humor to these commercials to keep me entertained.

The campaigns were just glorified personal attacks that left most of the student body indifferent and neutral when it came time to vote.

I think the negative ad campaigns each of the candidates have been running are doing something similar, but on a larger scale. The advertisements are leaving the voters with a bad taste in their mouth, potentially fostering apathy about who becomes the next governor or senator. I'd guess that, like me, the voting public is going to be glad when the advertisements are no longer being run.



Kate Petersen
In other words



Steve Baggs Emerald

Excessive amounts of negative ads are common but leave a lot to be desired in the way of information. In a majority of the advertisements that I have seen, heard or read, a candidate's credentials are left unstated and instead, the opposition's inadequacies are accentuated.

This is an especially important election year, seeing how we are in the midst of an economic crisis and the possibility of war is looming in the near future. Through the ad campaigns, what has the public truly heard on any of these topics?

Voting shouldn't be about whose

smear campaign is best. It should be about taking a stance on issues that could potentially affect you — about choosing an elected official that best represents you and your ideals in government.

Unless a debate is being held, there should be little or no commentary from one candidate about another candidate. The mudslinging needs to stop, and real issues need to be addressed.

Contact the columnist at kathrynpetersen@dailyemerald.com. Her opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Letters to the editor

Mannix campaign clearly shows Kulongoski is more fit

With last week's death of Minnesota Sen. Paul Wellstone, the average working people of America have lost one of their most important representatives. This makes it even more important that we do everything possible in Oregon to keep right-wing corporate lackeys like Kevin Mannix out of office.

Mannix currently has several convincing ads on television that make use of an effective manner of reach-

ing people: lying. You've all seen the poor lady in the grocery store who won't be able to buy groceries with Ted Kulongoski as governor. The ad talks about all of the legislation for the sales tax he has pushed. The fact is Kulongoski never has proposed any sales tax legislation. When Kulongoski's campaign approached his opponent's camp, Mannix said, in effect, "Oh, yeah, that's true. Sorry." Yet he still runs the ads.

The Republican candidate is promising increases and improvements in social and educational programs across the board while simultaneously promising tax cuts. How he will do both without plunging Oregon further into enormous

debt is a mystery.

Mannix plans to raid the Education Endowment Fund and the Common School Fund. Rather than provide an actual answer to Oregon's budget shortfalls, he proposes to immediately use money meant for the long term. A more poorly thought-out attempt to provide funding would be hard to devise.

Labor, the environment, education — all democratic strengths that make Kulongoski the obvious choice. Republicans tout themselves as authorities on the economy. Kevin Mannix has proved them wrong.

Jared Mason-Gere
junior
undecided

Measure 23 infuses saved dollars into schools, agencies

Nonsense! Tim Dreier ("Measure 23 hurts Oregon's economy," ODE, Oct. 31) of the conservative Oregon Commentator was all wrong about Measure 23. It would save state agencies and schools millions of dollars with its 11.5 percent cap on payroll taxes. They are now paying health care insurance premiums of 15 to 20 percent.

The following schools figured they would save the following amounts if we had Measure 23 in place this year: Eugene 4J: \$2,272,481; Corvallis: \$496,627; N.

Clackamas: \$3,359,712; and Portland: \$9,475,000.

The elected Oregon Comprehensive Health Care Finance Board will be responsible for the \$20 billion budget and make adjustments to require efficiency and will not allow the funds to be part of the general state budget. If Measure 23 fails, we will still have a medical care budget in Oregon of \$20 billion, but it will only serve the insurance companies and only those who can pay the rising costs of their premiums.

All Oregonians deserve better. Vote yes on 23.

Kevin Franken
second year
law