

COMMENTARY

Editor in Chief:
 Michael J. Kleckner
 Managing Editor:
 Jessica Richelderfer
 Editorial Editor:
 Pat Payne

Thursday, January 23, 2003

Editorial

Measure 28 isn't perfect, but it is needed right now

Despite all of the cuts-are-coming media coverage of Measure 28 in the past few weeks, opponents of the measure have offered some rational-sounding arguments. None of them outweigh the necessity of the added revenue the income tax increase would produce, but we'll walk through them anyway.

• *Oregonians are already taxed too much.*

Actually, no. Oregon ranks 41st among the 50 states in state and local taxes as a percentage of income, according to the Tax Foundation, which uses federal data. At the same time, the National Conference of State Legislatures shows that Oregon ranks 8th among the 50 states in total budget gaps. Clearly, taxpayers are not paying enough to fund state services.

• *Increasing income taxes isn't a stable way to fund state government.*

We agree. As the previous rankings show, our legislators need to find a new budget solution. And Oregonians should demand that from their legislators. But a quick solution is not in the offing (despite recent reports of a "secret plan" to save services); if there was some "funding pixie dust," the Legislature had plenty of time last summer to sprinkle it on the state. Lawmakers didn't do that because state funding is a fundamental problem that needs a long-term, comprehensive solution.

• *Even though the increase is only for three years, the Legislature could find a sneaky way to make it permanent.*

Yes, theoretically, Oregon lawmakers could do that. They could also find a fair, stable, balanced form of funding for state government, but given how unlikely either scenario is for our weak-willed elected officials, vote yes on 28.

• *This income tax increase hits individuals harder than businesses.*

This is true; the tax rate for individuals would rise to 9.5 percent from 9 percent, while the tax rate for businesses would rise to 6.93 percent from 6.6 percent. But this argument, too, calls for fundamental change.

In the late 1970s, the tax burden was nearly evenly split between individuals and businesses. According to state sources, individuals now carry nearly 70 percent of the burden. This shift was slow, although a good portion of it occurred with Measure 5's property tax limitation in 1990 and Measure 50's locking of property tax values and rates in 1997.

Combined, the two measures dramatically reduced the value and tax rate of business property while slightly increasing household property taxes. Shifting the burden back will depend on individual taxpayers demanding equity, but it won't happen overnight. In the meantime, the state will hemorrhage vital services.

• *Higher income taxes will further hurt a recession-damaged economy.*

Actually, not funding state services will hurt all Oregonians even more. Cutting funds to help juvenile offenders will create more hardened criminals. Cutting education will make Oregon workers less able to compete for high-paying jobs. Cutting medical, housing and drug services will cost the state's infrastructure. Cutting public safety will shift costs onto crime victims. In the short-term, Oregon needs Measure 28's slight relief.

• *Everyone could provide services for themselves if they would work harder.*

This argument comes from greed and the basest parts of humanity. As civilized human beings, we need to reject this argument; however, a better reason to reject it is that it's not true. The most vulnerable parts of Oregon's population — our neighbors who weren't given the equal footing to provide for themselves — will be hurt if Measure 28 fails. As a wealthy, civilized society, we have not only the means but also the rational duty to provide some basics for those people.

Measure 28 is a necessary, short-term investment in Oregon, despite the fact that it's not perfect. Demand long-term solutions from legislators, but vote yes on Measure 28 right now.

Editorial policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words.

Title IX's fighting power

Last fall, a group of five law students won their third consecutive intramural women's volleyball title. Like other intramural championships, this one happened with little fanfare — but it deserves closer attention.

The team included two former Division-I volleyball players as well as a former state champion in track. Perhaps their team's success was preordained. Less obvious is the connection to their success beyond the athletic field. These women are known among their peers as star students, editors of the Law Review and leaders in student government.

I spoke with my classmate Jodee Scott, who played volleyball at the University of Tennessee and Northern Michigan. She believes that playing sports taught her a wide variety of skills. Sports allowed her "to be good at something" and gave her "the confidence to stand out." Speaking up in class came more easily.

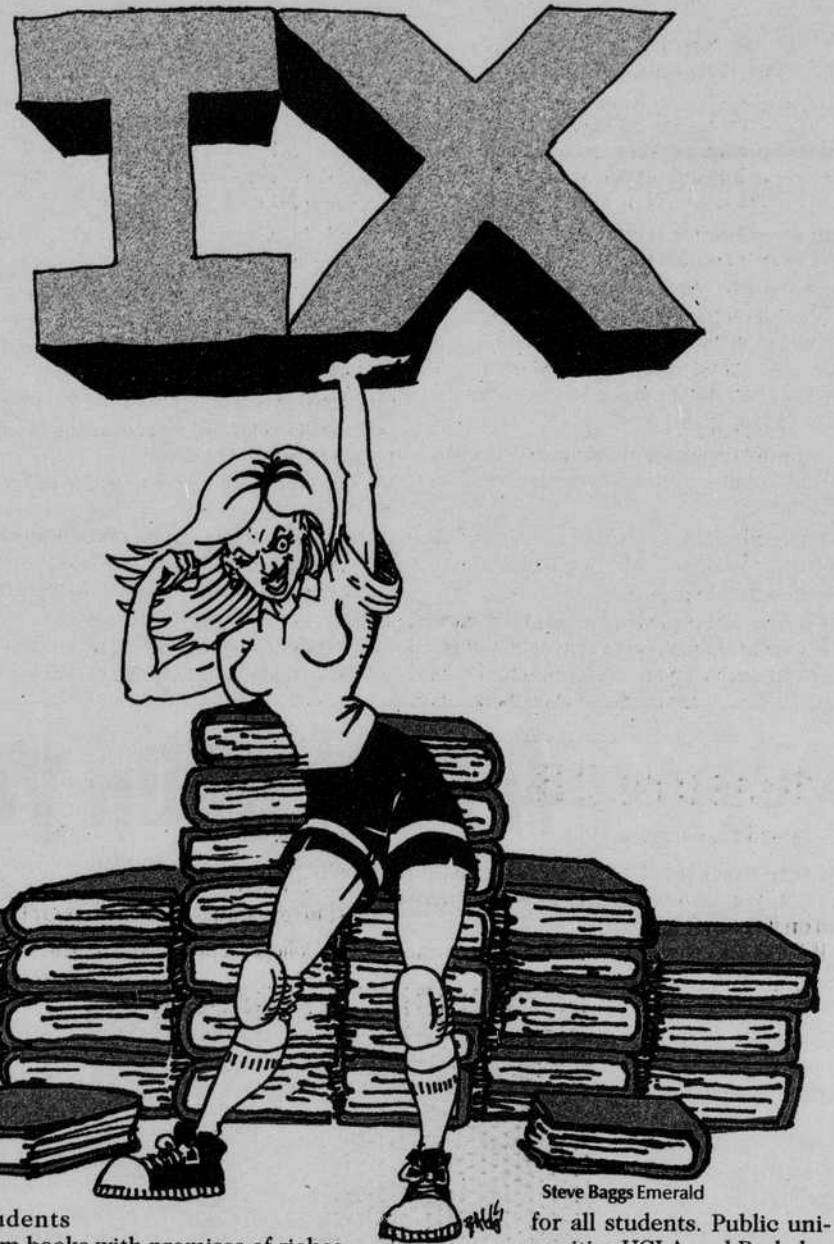
The varied demands of college athletics "teaches you discipline and time management," she said. As a college athlete, Scott did volunteer work with her teammates. She spoke to wealthy, blue-blooded benefactors. She won and lost games in front of 1,500 people. These experiences built character and "made me look at success in a different way."

Despite her multiple injuries, Scott wouldn't trade her volleyball days for anything. Dedication and goal setting, abilities honed in athletics, are vital for law school success. So is the ability to work with people, which she does frequently as president of the Student Bar Association.

For Scott, the term "student athlete" is not an oxymoron. Athletics helped her, and thousands like her, become better students and more dynamic citizens. One major reason is Title IX.

Title IX, passed by Congress in 1972, prohibits sex discrimination in federally-aided education programs. Women now make up a majority of college students, and are no longer rarities at medical, law and business schools. Because of Title IX, America has become a more equal, educated and prosperous nation.

Title IX applies to college athletics, to the dismay of some male sports fans. To reach parity, many colleges have cut men's sports rather than increase women's scholarships. The real culprit is football, which hogs an inordinate amount of men's scholarships and diverts



Steve Baggs Emerald

students from books with promises of riches. College women's sports seem compatible with academics in a way some men's sports are not.

According to a recent NCAA report, 69 percent of female athletes graduate in six years, compared to 54 percent for their male counterparts. But at the University, the rate is 67 and 66 percent, respectively. Not only do we graduate most of our football players, but athletes graduate at a higher rate than all students.

But success is relative. The University has graduated just 59 percent of all freshmen from the 1995-1996 class, which puts it above only Oregon State, Arizona and Arizona State in the Pacific-10 Conference, according to the report.

Those schools are hardly academic powerhouses. It's great that our athletes graduate at higher-than-average rates, a testament to their time management skills and the school's support system. But we need to raise the educational bar

for all students. Public universities UCLA and Berkeley graduate 82 percent of their students. For the University to graduate less than 3 out of 5 students is beyond laughable. It's sad.

The situation won't get better soon. The University is not spending money needed to keep up with the Pac-10 in academics. Instead, the University receives less and less support from Salem. Boosters spend millions in distant cities to promote star athletes who won't graduate. And the Bush administration formed a commission last summer to "review" Title IX. Will they practice good sportsmanship, or will they change the rules of the game?

Supporting Title IX doesn't just level the playing field, it also invites young women to excel on that field and beyond.

Contact the columnist at philiphuang@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily reflect those of the Emerald.

Letter to the editor

King wouldn't support anti-war protesters

Monday's nationwide anti-Americanism orgy was timed to coincide with Martin Luther King Jr. day. This was supposedly to honor King, who was organizing a Vietnam protest when he was assassinated. However, it is a stretch of liberal fantasy to assume that MLK would appreciate such a dubious distinction. Would he join in defending the murderous Saddam Hussein? Would he approve of signs labeling Colin Powell a

"House Negro — Fakes Left, Moves Right," or claiming Condoleezza Rice "Will Kill Africans for Oil?"

Doubtful. These were not crowds Dr. King would condone or join. Yes — unions, families, teachers, church leaders and little old ladies were all there. But don't pretend that these rallies represent a diverse cross-section of Americana. More accurately a perverse cross-section of race-baiters and anti-Semites who have found the media a willing participant in the manipulative charade of "dissent is patriotic."

The Emerald, The Register-Guard, The Oregonian, and The New York Times all gushed at the organizing abilities of In-

ternational ANSWER. But not one of them ever mentions the organization's past triumphs, including their defenses of Ayatollah Khomeini, Kim Jong Il and Slobodan Milosevic.

After all, as one truly daring sign put it, "The difference between Bush and Hussein is that Hussein won the election."

When Iraq is liberated, its people freed, and the images of the starving and tortured masses revealed, history will remember these protesters as idle witnesses to a crime.

Happy birthday, Dr. King!

Pete R. Hunt
 editor in chief
 Oregon Commentator