

# COMMENTARY

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## Letters to the editor

### Voters must hold Salem fiscally responsible

I am an Oregon resident who voted against Measure 28. I am also a student at the University who will feel the impact of Measure 28's defeat. What baffles me is the absolute blindness of both sides on the real issue behind the measure.

Liberals make the assumption that those who voted against the measure are selfish "rich" folk who will not be affected, while conservatives hail the defeat as victory against higher taxes. What both sides miss is the fact that the Oregon Legislature, Republican and Democrat alike, has wasted money.

The facts show that Oregon does have enough money to be both a fiscally safe and socially nurturing society. With adjustments in the PERS mortality tables — saving \$200 million — and cutting "pet" projects, legislators can cut the budget while leaving untouched the issues that determine our state's health.

While the state constantly spends thousands of dollars on these tax measures, nobody says anything against the politicians in Salem who allow themselves raises as others go unemployed. When do we acknowledge a collective need to stand together and hold the real culprits responsible? We do still have a vote, and while we will always have our political differences, the basic needs of every Oregonian can be met.

We must use the same resources and passion displayed in the recent election to hold Salem responsible. This has nothing to do with politics. This money should be administered as a sacred trust to provide for all of our state's needs.

Kelly Flynn  
 sophomore  
 political science

### Less military spending will help the nation

How can the most powerful nation in the world have such a person as George W. Bush for its leader? Was it not less than four years ago that the budget was balanced for the first time since the Nixon administration?

How can we go from being in the black and having a surplus, to being so far in the red that just about every state is being affected by a lack of jobs and by a lack of funding for some of our most important programs? Why is it that we have to boost money for schools and medical care? Heck, the government has most of the money right now — correct?

My simple question is: Where is the money going? I know that I don't know the whole story, and I doubt that we will ever know everything. What I do believe, however, is that something is wrong. I have a simple solution for our problems. The government has spent \$343 billion on defense for 2002, or 50.5 percent of the total budget. The combination of spending by the government in education, health, social security and Medicare, veterans benefits, and finally, natural resources and environment totaled only \$143 million.

This is just an idea — don't build all of your attack subs. Hold one off and give that money to the schools and Medicare and such so that you don't have a bunch of uneducated sick people to defend.

Daniel Burbach  
 junior  
 pre-journalism

### Keep oil companies out of the Arctic

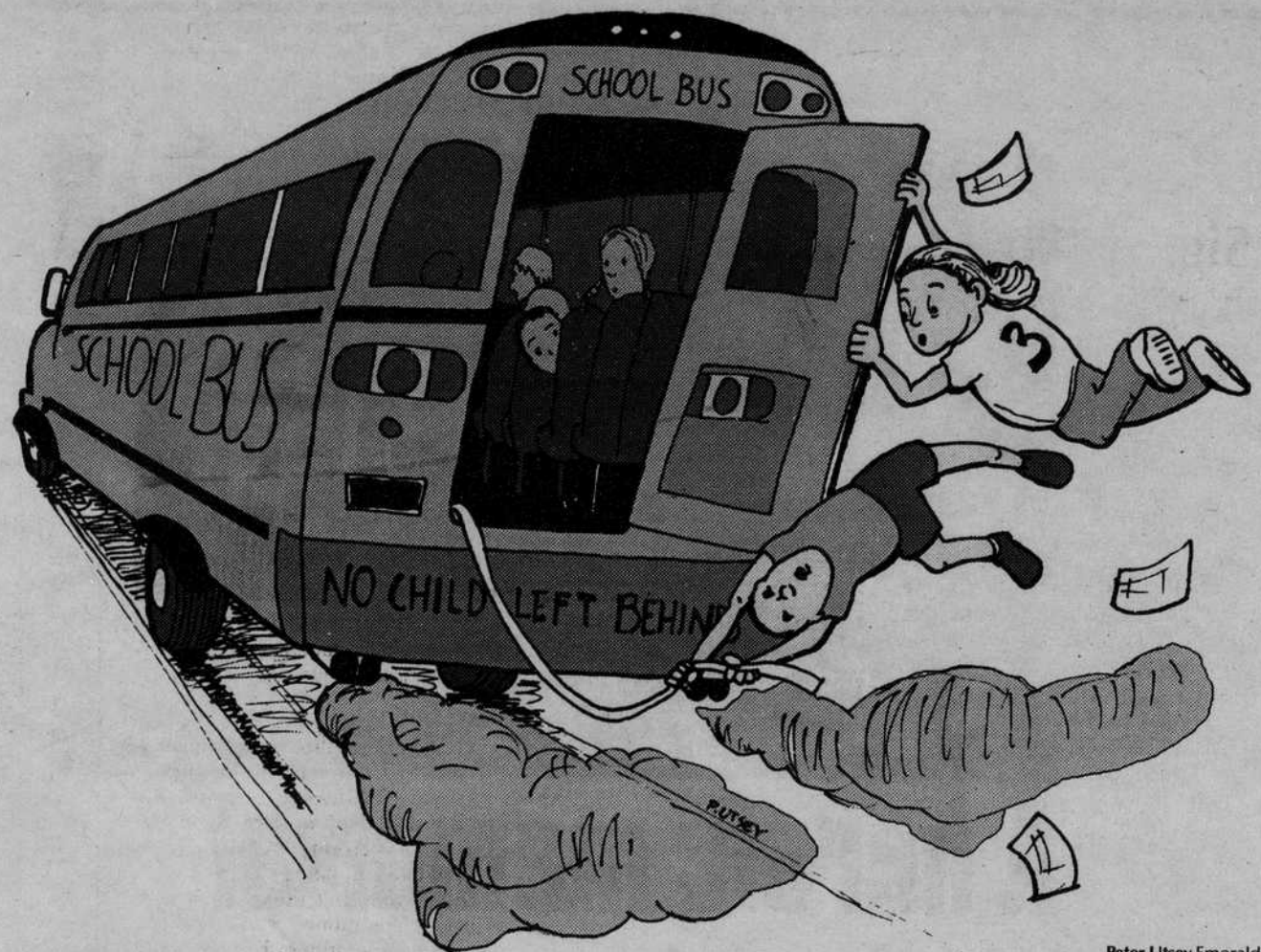
Once again, the oil companies and the Bush administration are looking to destroy the Arctic. A place we fought for just yesterday is again under attack today.

The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is one of the nation's last remaining pristine places. It is home to many rare species, including polar bears, caribou, musk oxen and hundreds of species of birds. Drilling in this area would do nothing but hinder the wildlife and beauty of the north slope of Alaska.

In addition, drilling in the refuge is completely unnecessary. Energy efficiency and renewable energy policies would easily save far more energy than could ever be drilled out of the refuge. The U.S. Geological Survey estimates that the refuge contains less than a six-month supply of oil for our nation, and oil industry executives estimate that the oil there wouldn't be available for at least 10 years.

Drilling in Alaska is not the answer. The public has shown interest in this area before on behalf of the wildlife and against drilling. Just when we thought we had won on the public's ideas, the corporations are attacking it once more. Legislatures are our voice in this matter and they need to effectively represent our standpoint. Destroying the arctic is not the way out of our dependence on oil and it should stop now!

Kelly Huckestein  
 sophomore  
 undeclared



Peter Utsey Emerald

## Leaving children behind

I am very glad I have no children in grades K-12 in Oregon. Thanks to President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind Act, Oregon is scurrying to meet educational standards so that every child can receive a proper education and advance to the next grade level, and that includes minorities and children from low-income families.

Well, Oregon just isn't making the grade. According to the recent report card given by the Oregon Department of Education, 247 schools earned an "unsatisfactory" grade. This could potentially make Oregon school districts nervous about another provision in No Child Left Behind — parents being given vouchers to move children out of underperforming public schools and into "charter schools," which are publicly funded on five-year grants but have higher accountability than regular schools.

Success in schools will be measured by whether every child is learning, according to documents on [www.nochildleftbehind.gov](http://www.nochildleftbehind.gov). Under the No Child Left Behind Act, billions of dollars in new money are being thrust into struggling schools so they won't feel forced to advance students who aren't

reading past the ABCs.

On the 2000 National Assessment of Educational Progress reading assessment, 40 percent of white fourth-graders in America scored proficient while only 12 percent of black students and 16 percent of Hispanics scored well. In math, 35 percent of white fourth-graders scored acceptably while five percent of blacks scored satisfactory and 10 percent of Hispanics scored soundly.

The state wants to temporarily pretend students are earning a C+ instead of an F. This isn't really a stated policy but something that will gradually be played with in Oregon schools, according to reports by Fox News. If this had been in effect when I was in school, I would have protested. I may not have received any F's, but damn it, they would have been mine. I wouldn't want a grade for my achievements that I had not earned.

Lowering the educational standards will definitely have an effect, but I doubt it's the one the state is looking for. I think many parents will pull their children out of school and either home-school them or send them to private schools, and the self-esteem of these students will sink lower — or these students will take advantage of the situation and deliberately slack off. If parents don't pull their children out because of this, what are they really saying?

In doing this, the state thinks it will be able to equally comply with other states by 2014 and perform equally. Children who can barely comprehend

"Dick and Jane" and have yet to learn the alphabet will pass, and no one will ever know they needed the extra help because their grades will reflect their supposed "achievements."

In Oregon schools' defense, the state just raised the educational standards, which is to say that schools rated "excellent" last year have been found merely "satisfactory" this year.

Pretending students are grasping everything they learn and advancing them without the reports to prove that they have learned it is a mistake. If they get a free ride through elementary school and high school and can't make it in college, who will society have to blame but itself?

Oregon has received a failing grade in education for three years, as stated by the Oregon Department of Education on its report cards. It is time to fix the problem instead of making it worse. We may not want a child to be left behind, but wouldn't that be better than letting them believe they earned it, even if they never really made the grade?

Rather than hindering the process, Oregon, why not do what the No Child Left Behind Act says — honestly meet those standards and help the children who are struggling with tutors, individual attention and special classes. In short, let the teachers do their job — that is what they are there for.

Contact the columnist at [salenadelacruz@dailyemerald.com](mailto:salenadelacruz@dailyemerald.com). Her views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

### CLARIFICATION

The graph accompanying Monday's story about athletic scholarships ("Given a sporting chance," ODE, Feb. 3) should have said the scale was students receiving scholarships as a percentage of that demographic group's total population. While it could have been read that only 35 total athletic scholarships were given to black men, for example, the graph was showing that 35 percent of all black male undergraduates receive athletic scholarships.