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COMMENTARY

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EDITORIAL

City council helps defend student voice

So the Eugene City Council heard arguments Monday night in favor of giving the Department of Public Safety more latitude in dealing with unruly college students. Are we the only ones who see major problems with this?

University officials touted new provisions that would enable DPS officers to issue drug- and alcohol-related citations, and Vice President of Administration Dan Williams even went so far as to say, "We would very much welcome the opportunity to accept this responsibility."

Students should be outraged. Who knows, maybe they would be outraged, were they informed about it. The proposal has been in the works for a year, and Vice President of Student Affairs Anne Leavitt said at the meeting that the University administration has been discussing the issue with ASUO since April, beginning with the outgoing ASUO Executive. Yet on Monday night, only two students showed up, and the one representing the student body couldn't even come to a polarized opinion on the matter.

So then, we ask, who is at fault? Should we blame the University for their apparent attempts to keep the issue behind closed doors until it could safely emerge when students left for the summer, or should we blame ASUO for not making some kind of effort to inform students beforehand?

Given that the incoming ASUO Executive was undergoing transition about the time the issue was brought up to student government—giving it much less of a chance to effectively inform students—we direct suspicion to the University. Would it really have hurt to take more steps beyond ASUO discussion to let students know about potential changes?

The ASUO Executive, however, is not completely out of hot water. Even now, when students desperately need to be defended by some kind of representative body, the Executive refused to take an official stance on the issue. At the City Council meeting, Campus Outreach Coordinator Shannon Tarvin said the lack of student input has put ASUO in a position not to take a position. This weak argument provoked a lecture from Ward 1 Councilor Bonny Bettman, who chastised Tarvin for not voicing some kind of argument against the proposal. While we applaud ASUO for trying to make a statement about the lack of student involvement, it effectively lost its chance to officially decry the efforts to the very people who will later decide the issue.

In light of the situation, which clearly shows that students are lacking a voice in the discussion, we only hope that Ward 3 Councilor David Kelly's efforts to delay an official vote until fall will be successful. The Emerald editorial board has said it before and we'll say it again: Every stakeholder in the campus community needs to be involved in the discussion. Such discussion can't happen when officials wait until the end of the year to bring up an issue—which gives us little confidence in the system or the likely outcome.

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. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

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Peter Utsey for the Emerald

Legislature should prioritize schools

How is it the Oregon Legislature is passing tax breaks for Enron before passing out an education budget?

Let's start at the beginning.

In 1967, the Legislature passed a tax incentive designed to help timber mills and other manufacturers comply with the newly passed federal Clean Air Act and the Clean Water Act. This incentive allowed businesses to lower their state tax bill to compensate for costs of the new equipment these laws required.

During the 1990s, critics wondered whether taxpayers should continue paying for this ever-growing subsidy. After all, the new environmental regulations were a quarter-century old. Many questioned whether taxpayers should continue to pay businesses for simply doing what the law required.

In 2001, then-Gov. John Kitzhaber said the time had come to let this subsidy expire. But the leaders of the Legislature wanted to extend it. In a rare spirit of bipartisanship, the two sides agreed to a compromise that called for higher

standards and a gradual phase-out of this credit by 2007.

I supported the compromise.

That's why I so strongly oppose the new measure that some House members forced through some weeks ago, without debate—a measure that would relax the environmental standards and extend this expensive tax break another 11 years to 2014. The fact that this bill passed the House before the Legislature has addressed education funding is a slap in the face to every person in Oregon.

Taxpayers should be alarmed for another, even more compelling reason, however. We all know Enron managed to escape Oregon taxes last year, paying only the minimum payment of \$10. What many people don't know is Enron received a tax break of \$1.1 million because of the Pollution Control Tax Credit.

Even worse, Enron has applied for \$18 million in similar tax credits next year for work associated with the decommissioning of the Trojan Nuclear Plant—\$18 million!

In addition to padding the bottom line for huge multi-nationals like Enron, the Pollution Control Tax Credit

enables individuals to take a credit for buying wood chippers. Wood chippers? Yes. More than 500 state certificates last year went to people who bought wood chippers, because chipping wood creates less pollution than burning wood to dispose of it.

That may be true, but in most instances the law already prohibits open burning. Whether this is a valid application of the tax break misses the point: Does anyone really believe that buying a wood chipper creates new jobs in Oregon? Does anyone believe we should cut school days while subsidizing wood chippers?

Oregon needs to be smart in crafting strategies for the new century. We need to build our economy on real products and services that pull their weight in the world's markets—not on wood chippers and disgraced corporations like Enron.

Let's do what Oregonians do best when managing environmental standards against economics: Let's recycle this 30-year-old law and turn it into something that actually helps us move forward.

Mark Hass, D-Beaverton, is a member of the Oregon House of Representatives.

ONLINE POLL

Each week, the Emerald publishes the previous week's poll results and the coming week's poll question. Visit www.dailyemerald.com to vote.

Last week: How do you respond to telemarketing phone calls?

Results: 36 total votes

Politely listen and buy nothing—36.1 percent or 13 votes

Hang up—27.8 percent or 10 votes

Say something rude and hang up—13.9 percent or 5 votes

I screen my calls—13.9 percent or 5 votes

Leave me alone—8.3 percent or 3 votes

Politely listen and buy something—0 percent or 0 votes

Ask for their home phone number—0 percent or 0 votes

This week: Should Department of Public Safety officers have the power to issue certain drug- and alcohol-related citations?

Choices: Yes, it will improve campus safety; Yes, and they should get guns, too; No, they aren't real cops; No, they lack the training to do so; No, in fact, DPS should be altogether dissolved; Leave me alone!