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COMMENTARY

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EDITORIAL

Postponing new arena is prudent

The basketball has, only tentatively, burst. It happened Wednesday, when University President Dave Frohnmayer announced that plans to build a new arena have been placed indefinitely on hold.

Money, more than anything else, can be attributed to why the arena project — or at least this arena project — is dead. Back in April 2003, costs for a new arena were estimated between \$90 million and \$130 million. By December, two months after Howe Field was chosen as the project's site, estimated costs had risen to more than \$160 million. And in January, after taking a hard look at what needed to be done to build a top-tier arena — a must, according to the donors who were reportedly going to chip in \$130 million — costs had spiraled to more than \$180 million.

The Athletics Department clearly didn't want to incur large amounts of debt to fund the remainder of the project, or Frohnmayer wouldn't let it happen, so the arena has been delayed.

The decision should be applauded because it's the fiscally responsible thing to do: The University will likely raise tuition next academic year after the failure of Measure 30; The University may have to cut classes after the failure of Measure 30; and Oregon has been regarded as one of the worst states in the country in terms of higher-education affordability.

While these financial woes should be irrelevant when considering construction of a new arena because the Athletics Department is self-supporting and separate from academics, Frohnmayer has wisely realized that the two cannot be separated.

In the minds of many, no matter how distant the Athletics Department is from the University as an academic institution, a certain distaste brews when one considers the struggling educational system compared to the thriving athletics establishment.

The Athletics Department spent \$250,000 to publicize a Heisman Trophy campaign for Joey Harrington in 2001. The following year Autzen Stadium received a \$100 million overhaul. This past year the newly revamped locker room at Autzen received praise and criticism for its many amenities.

Perhaps Frohnmayer recognized that going forth and building the arena would push the University into an even more unfavorable national spotlight.

University faculty members are nationally recognized as being some of the founding fathers against what is known as the athletics "arms race." Trying to outdo other sports programs by building the biggest and most extravagant facilities is the name of the game, and that's what so many academics across the country are warning against.

Building the best comes at a cost, they say. Whether it's the reputation of the University, its integrity or the sentiment on campus, building a new arena will have an effect.

So now, perhaps in some way to prevent such ramifications, the project is on hold. But, really, so what?

The University will still build a new arena to replace McArthur Court, it just won't do it on the schedule it set forth.

The arena will still be a multi-million-dollar building, almost certainly far more millions than the current figure.

And donors will still contribute to the project, most likely in a more substantial way.

The University has opened itself up to saying that \$180 million is too much because it can't currently be funded. So, if in a few years, donors are willing to pay for a \$225 million arena, it just may be funded.

The University hasn't imposed any sort of self-restraint on what is necessary. Instead it has taken the philosophy that, "If we build it, you must fund."

And just watch. When has delaying a project ever resulted in lower costs?

The University may have put plans for a new arena indefinitely on hold. But judging from what has been seen thus far, there is no such moratorium against the extravagant and the excessive.



Steve Baggs Illustrator

We've come a long way, baby

From time to time, I am ashamed to be an American. My shame has many sources — sometimes it's our pride, sometimes it's our astounding levels of greed and consumption, and other times, it is our seemingly boundless ability to justify the absurd, the invidious and the hateful. Nowhere is our capacity for rationalizing the irrational more frustrating than when you find it in the words of our own U.S. Supreme Court justices.

I could, if I wished, bring forth examples numerous enough to fill up all the gigs on my hard drive. However, I think I can make my point a bit more succinctly with the following gems:

Scott v. Sandford, 1857

"Free negroes and mulattoes are not such citizens as were contemplated by the federal or state constitution." "Courts have nothing to do with the justice, wisdom, policy, or expediency of a law."

Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896

"Laws permitting, and even requiring, (racial) separation, in places where they are liable to be brought into contact, do not necessarily imply the inferiority of either race to the other, and have been generally, if not universally, recognized as within the competency of the state legislatures ..."

"We consider the underlying fallacy of the ... argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it."

Buck v. Bell, 1927

"It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring



Jessica Cole-Hodgkinson
 Huh? What? Really.

for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind. The principle that sustains compulsory vaccination is broad enough to cover cutting the Fallopian tubes. Three generations of imbeciles are enough."

Hirabayashi v. United States, 1943

"Whatever views we may entertain regarding the loyalty to this country of the citizens of Japanese ancestry, we cannot reject as unfounded the judgment of the military authorities and of Congress that there were disloyal members of that population, whose number and strength could not be precisely and quickly ascertained. We cannot say that the war-making branches of the Government did not have ground for believing that in a critical hour such persons could not readily be isolated and separately dealt with, and constituted a menace to the national defense and safety, which demanded that prompt and adequate measures be taken to guard against it."

"We cannot close our eyes to the fact, demonstrated by experience, that in time of war residents having ethnic affiliations with an invading enemy may be a greater source of danger than those of a different ancestry."

Bowers v. Hardwick, 1986

"... to claim that a right to engage in (con-

sensual homosexual sex in the privacy of one's home) is 'deeply rooted in this Nation's history and tradition' or 'implicit in the concept of ordered liberty' is, at best, facetious."

"... if respondent's submission is limited to the voluntary sexual conduct between consenting adults, it would be difficult, except by fiat, to limit the claimed right to homosexual conduct while leaving exposed to prosecution adultery, incest, and other sexual crimes even though they are committed in the home."

Slavery, segregation, sterilization, concentration, homosexuality — these are just a few areas where the Court's majority opinions have left us a legacy to be ashamed of.

Or perhaps not. When we look back upon these statements — uttered so earnestly at the time — it's easy to see how fundamentally flawed the beliefs behind them are. They represent the worst of our culture: bigotry, ignorance and hypocrisy.

The easiest option is to cringe and then condemn the authors who wrote such nonsense and made it the law of the land. There is, however, a better solution. Look at how far we've come.

We still have unresolved racial tension; the new war on terror has created some serious questions about our treatment of those suspected of terrorist activities, and homosexuals are far from having all the rights and protections of their heterosexual neighbors. But it could, and has, been worse.

For today — and maybe tomorrow — I think I'll cheer myself with the notion of how far we've come and quit fretting over how far we've left to go.

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

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ONLINE POLL

Each week, the Emerald publishes the results of the previous poll and the coming week's poll question.

Visit <http://www.dailyemerald.com> to vote.

Last week's question: How will you celebrate Valentine's Day this year?

Results: 48 votes.

- Spending time with my significant other: 43.8 percent or 21 votes.
- Spending time alone ... again: 25.0 percent or 12 votes.
- I don't celebrate Valentine's Day: 16.7 percent or eight votes.
- Spending time with friends: 14.6 percent or seven votes.

This week: Do you feel the University should have postponed building a new sports arena?
Choices: Yes — It's the fiscally responsible thing to do; Yes — The University is doing fine with Mac Court; No — We're wasting donor allocations; No — Building a new court is in the best interest of the campus.