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The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co. Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Ore. The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices in Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union. The Emerald is private property. Unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.

■ Guest commentary

PFC violates neutrality laws

My name is Jeremy Berrington, and I am a writer for the Oregon Commentator. As many of you probably know, the Programs Finance Committee has decided to strip the Oregon Commentator of its funding and essentially shut our newspaper down. The decision is not final yet; but if the PFC succeeds in shutting the Commentator down, they will be violating one of the few decent principles left in contemporary American society — the right to free speech and freedom of the press.

The PFC has no right to tell the Oregon Commentator (or any other campus publication) what it can and cannot print. The PFC is supposed to be viewpoint-neutral, and any violation of that stance is tantamount to censorship. Mason Quiroz, PFC vice chair, has justified the PFC's decision on the basis that the Commentator spreads "hate speech" and "incites violence." Quiroz based this assertion on a complaint made to him by Toby Hill-Meyer, ASUO senator, who believed the Commentator maliciously targeted him/her because of his/her transgender identity and made him/her feel unsafe.

I cannot believe such accusations would be made against the Commentator. I am not a conservative Libertarian, and I do not agree with many of the articles we print, yet I would never contend that we write "hateful"

pieces, and I could never claim that anything we do has ever seriously advocated violence. Quiroz's accusations are offensive to my work, degrading to our publication and completely unfounded in reality.

We have undoubtedly run some tasteless articles and offended people. However, we are a satire magazine, and our content is supposed to contain elements of humor. Sometimes we miss our mark. It should be recognized that people are offended every day by journalism (with more or less validity). People are angered by the content of The New York Times, The Washington Post, the Onion and USA TODAY. This does not mean these publications should be shut down or censored.

Situations like Hill-Meyer's are best solved by letters to the editor, followed by apologies and statements of retraction — not by censorship.

Another aspect of our current predicament that I find completely distasteful is that Hill-Meyer is an ASUO senator. He/she is a public figure and, therefore, not subject to any protection from satire under the current communication laws. That is part of the tradeoff Hill-Meyer's responsibility for shaping public policies and regulations. He/she has the right to complain, to file grievances, to write opposing editorials, etc. He/she can

even advocate for our removal from the University, but he/she cannot be granted such a request.

If Hill-Meyer is looking to run for office outside the University, he/she should keep that in mind. In the real world, the law will be against him/her.

I must ask the PFC and the ASUO to reconsider their position regarding the Oregon Commentator. The essence of free speech is tolerance of ideas we consider the most offensive. It is wrong to classify the content of the Oregon Commentator as "violent hate speech" in order to provide an insufficient legal justification for discontinuing our publication. We are a valuable contribution to the marketplace of ideas, particularly on this campus. Like all publications, we make mistakes, and we are not perfect. Nonetheless, I must contend that we are more worthy of student fees than the majority of endeavors these monies go to fund (read: liquor and drug binges in Sun River). I am hopeful the ASUO and the PFC will deem the First Amendment of our Constitution to be as important as it was to our founding fathers who worked so hard to ensure America would not fall victim to the tyranny of majority opinion.

Jeremy Berrington is a contributor to the Oregon Commentator

■ Guest commentary

Biased speech hurts communities

The UO student community is engaged in difficult and controversial discussions around the content of recent editions of the Oregon Commentator and the ASUO Programs Finance Committee's budget recommendation for that publication. Some focus on the offensive and objectionable nature of material that they feel targeted an individual student leader and the community the student represents. Others focus on principles of protection for speech that may be offensive and hurtful but is not illegal.

We write to recognize the significance of these discussions to the quality of life in our campus community. There are individuals who feel less welcome, less respected and less safe because of these dialogues. There are individuals who find some material in the journal, and the Commentator staff's convictions that it is entitled to publish speech that may be offensive, almost unbearable.

We write at this time to acknowledge how hurtful biased speech can be to our community. We have as a campus community committed to a culture of respect that honors the rights, safety, dignity and worth of every individual. We have affirmed that respect for the

rights and well-being of all members is essential to promoting the diversity of opinions, ideas and backgrounds that is the lifeblood of the University. We have recognized, as a core value, our commitment to cultural diversity, and we have recently affirmed the protections we afford gender identity in the UO's non-discrimination statement.

This community must preserve the freedom of thought and expression of all its members. It is important at the same time to speak out, forcefully and directly, when members of our community feel targeted by speech that is racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise biased, whether in words or in images.

We applaud the leaders of the ASUO for supporting a vigorous dialogue, for recognizing that the Commentator's subject matter has deeply concerned a number of students and for encouraging PFC members to preserve our right to speech and properly fund the Commentator. We support student leaders who have expressed their concerns about this subject matter and its chilling impact on our campus climate. We support students, both from the Commentator and others, who have reminded us of important protections to free speech, even

as we react to speech that offends us.

Our offices are supporting a number of individual students and student groups participating in these difficult dialogues. The Bias Response Team has provided educational programs on civility and free speech, and offers "QAC: Queer Ally Coalition" training.

We propose that the University's Bias Response Team, in conjunction with the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity, Student Affairs, ASUO and the Program Finance Committee, sponsor a forum or town meeting later this term so we can discuss how bias incidents and hate speech can divide our community. We will work with student leaders to design a meeting with structure to ensure inclusive, respectful and productive dialogue.

In the interim, we urge all participants in these student government discussions to recognize the importance of a safe community that is respectful and protective of diverse points of view and life style.

*Dr. Anne Leavitt is the Vice President for Student Affairs
Dr. Greg Vincent is Vice Provost Institutional Equity and Diversity*

INBOX

House needs to act before Measure 37 creates 'bumps'

Last Thursday, Yamhill County approved the first claims under Measure 37. If our neighbors to the north are any indication, the next few years will be a bumpy road. County commissioners voted to shut the public out of the process by not requiring public hearings or notice for claims filed under Measure 37. This is wrong. State and local governments must provide notice to neighbors and the community.

Constitutional "due process" requires notice if your neighbor's land use change devalues your property.

Oregonians voted for fairness in our land use laws. Instead, Measure 37 will allow senior land owner protections that the rest of us do not have. It will be implemented unevenly throughout the state as owners in similar circumstances, but different counties, receive unequal benefits.

Our elected officials in Salem need to step up to the challenge and act on this issue. The legislature needs to include

fairness and equality in Measure 37. SB 406 is a step in the right direction. It establishes a fair funding mechanism so Oregon taxpayers are not left holding the bag. It also creates a uniform system to process claims so that landowners are treated equally. Eugene House member Robert Ackerman should support similar legislation to provide fair, equal compensation in Oregon. The Senate started the discussion. It is time for House of Representatives to act.

*Jonathan Evans
Eugene*

■ Out loud

"Your school finished second in RecycleMania in 2003 and won the National Recycling Coalition's award for Best Campus Recycling Program in the nation a few years ago. We hope you aren't getting cocky, though. We here in the east have some tricks up our sleeves that are going to make it quite a chase for you," — Harvard University Campus Recycling Coordinator **Rob Gogan** in an e-mail to the University's Housing Recycling Coordinator.

"I think the administration put too much faith in student government," — Oregon Commentator Editor in Chief **Tyler Graf** on Tuesday regarding the PFC's attempts to defund the publication.

"We're not going away until we are sure the buses are going to run and the drivers are going to smile," — LTD/ATU Community Committee member **Joan Pierson** at a meeting with the Lane Transit District Board on Tuesday.

"I was expecting them to give us at least some more concrete answers than 'It's on the Web site,'" — LTD/ATU Community Committee co-organizer **Claire Syrett** on Tuesday, referring to the Lane Transit District Board's suggestion that anyone with questions about the negotiations visit the LTD Web site.

"(Guantanamo Bay) was intended to be a legal black hole, where detainees would be beyond the reach of U.S. law," — University student and Forensics Team member **Jason Lear**, arguing that terrorists should be treated as criminals and have access to the U.S. Justice System during a debate.

"If we're going to build a new arena, that will certainly be the site of it, but there's no connection between buying the bakery and saying that we're ready to do the arena," — **Allan Price**, vice president for University Advancement, at an announcement of the University's purchase of the Williams' Bakery site, the likely spot of a future basketball arena.

"I think that there are both men and women who are not interested in science, and that's not bad," — **Geri Richmond**, the University's Richard M. and Patricia H. Noyes professor of chemistry.

"I have five kids, and we bicker and argue all the time, but we love each other. We're going to have squabbles and resentments, but we have to remember that we're a family," Athletic Director **Bill Moos**, on the relationship between the Athletics Department and the rest of the University administration during Wednesday's University Senate meeting.

"I'm trying to now focus on getting my committee back and working on my budget," — Programs Finance Committee Chairwoman **Persis Pohowalla**, discussing the current actions of the temporarily disabled PFC on Tuesday.

"You know, people don't have to give up things during Lent, they can also take something. I'm going to pick up something good this year," — Sophomore **Pat Ferguson**, who was still wondering what to give up for Lent when the St. Thomas More Newman Center's early-evening ceremony began on Ash Wednesday.

— From Daily Emerald news reports

OREGON DAILY EMERALD LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged, and should be sent to letters@dailymerald.com or submitted at the Oregon Daily Emerald office, EMU Suite 300. Electronic submissions are preferred. Letters are limited to 250 words, and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submissions should include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style. Guest submissions are published at the discretion of the Emerald.