

Letter to the Editor: Oregon Education Endowment

Senate president's proposal promotes education

by Gordon H. Smith
Senate President

On January 9, I challenged this legislature to be bold. Before a joint session of your new Legislature, I proposed the creation of the Oregon Education Endowment. The idea is simple: by the end of this century, create a \$3 billion endowment and dedicate its interest income to education - kindergarten through college. I proposed that we begin to fund this endowment through the dedication of future lottery revenues, the sale of nonessential state assets and the retention of surplus income tax revenues paid by corporations.

For years, the Oregon Legislature has grappled with the question of how to adequately fund education with a stable source of revenue. Unfortunately, for the past 25 years, proposed solutions have focused on raising taxes -- a sales tax in particular. The creation of the Oregon Education Endowment can begin to move Oregon beyond this tired sales tax

conversation and serve as a starting point for a new discussion of stable funding for education.

Assuming a 10% annual rate of return on \$3 billion, the endowment could provide \$600 million each biennium dedicated to education kindergarten through college. Obviously, with schools (K-12) expected to receive a general fund allocation of \$3.5 billion in 1996-97 alone, \$600 million from an endowment will offer only a fraction of what is needed to adequately fund schools. However, if endowment income were targeted for a particular use such as capital construction, special education, technology improvements, college scholarships, or even lowering local property taxes to return an element of control to local school districts, the endowment could not only serve as a stabilizing funding influence, but have a positive, long-term impact on the quality of our entire education system.

Thanks to a robust economy and the popularity of state lottery

games, state government enjoys a healthy financial environment. The legislature no longer faces the dire budget crisis predicted by many within government. In the short-term, this is good news. Unfortunately, for those of us who want to downsize the cost and scope of state government, a healthy state revenue picture creates new challenges. Specifically, how to maintain future pressure to reverse or limit government's growth. The Oregon Education Endowment offers one solution. The constitutional dedication of a set percentage of future lottery proceeds to an education endowment would not only ensure a dedicated, stable source of education funds, but it would provide future lawmakers with a meaningful alternative to merely feeding the state bureaucracy.

In Oregon, as across the nation, the trend is away from centralized bureaucracy in favor of local, free enterprise solutions to public concerns. In Oregon, we should lead this movement by

placing unused and nonessential state property in private hands, returning them to local property tax rolls. The Audits Division of the Secretary of State has identified the following land-owning state agencies that could potentially liquidate property: Dept. of Administrative Services, Division of State Lands, Dept. of Forestry, Dept. of Fish & Wildlife, Dept. of Justice, Dept. of Higher Education, Dept. of Corrections, Dept. of Human Resources and the Military Department. The long term potential revenues from the sale of these lands could exceed \$1 billion. To make this a reality we must first develop an inventory of all state property (none currently exists), establish a process to value the properties, and finally establish a procedure for asset liquidation.

The retention of surplus corporate income tax revenues is possibly the most controversial element of the funding proposal. This is especially true because it comes from a Republican and

from one whose business would benefit from a refund. Looking long term, however, with this significant financial commitment (\$130 million), the business community has the opportunity to proactively demonstrate its collective commitment to education. Most business people will agree that in addition to a pro-growth, pro-investment tax structure and a balanced regulatory environment, an educated work force is the key to remaining competitive. If we do nothing, we will give the advocates of higher taxes unnecessary ammunition in their inevitable campaigns to reform the tax system and fund education by increasing taxes paid by employers. This is an opportunity to strengthen the bond between business and education.

If you like the idea of the Oregon Education Endowment, I need your help. Please call or write your legislator and ask him or her to support this plan. (800) 332-2313 or Sate Capitol, Salem, Oregon 97310.

Oregonians quake at shaking earth

Do we take precautionary measures to extremes?

by Jocelyn Gauthier
Features Editor

Why is it that every time someone else in the world has an earthquake, we Oregonians think we have to have one, too? Do we really not have a life to the point that we wish destruction on ourselves to get attention?

Seriously though, the time that our news covers an actual quake site is about equal to the time they prepare Oregonians for their own quake. "Japan just had a really bad earthquake, but don't worry, we'll get one soon, and we'll tell you how to prepare for it!" I can just see everyone rushing excitedly to get a pen and paper so they can get the survival list from Channel 8.

The truth is, people love to be scared. We love to get all wor-

ried about ourselves so that everyone else will feel sorry for us and give us attention. We also love it because it gives us a sense of urgency to get prepared.

I recently bought a car, and the previous owner had kept the trunk literally full of survival equipment. I think Oregonians are partly looking forward to an opportunity to go camping. Do we really have it so easy that we crave the opportunity to just barely survive? I admit that I fit into this category of weirdos, and I think it's sick. I was even jealous of a girl in first grade because she broke her arm and got so much attention that I wanted a broken arm, too!

Don't get me wrong though. We are very prone to earthquakes, and the possibility should be taken

very seriously, but not to the extent that secretly, deep down, we want one just to liven things up and give us something to make money off!

"I survived the quake" was a phrase we put on T-shirts and bumper stickers as a way to impress our out-of-town friends and family, as if it were some cool new ride at Disneyland.

Sure, we should be prepared for quakes, but not to the extent that we have "quakophobia." We'll never be mentally prepared unless we want to become extremely sick and twisted. So get your own life, Oregon, and get your attention some other way. The rest of the nation already sees Oregon as a place where lots of bad things happen, and a quake wouldn't change that.

RHAPSODY

Hope ya liked that last literary issue of, RHAPSODY. Much thanks to those of you who participated.

We plan to put out the next issue before the end of this term, so

ART, POETRY, PHOTOS, SHORT STORIES, etc.

are requested once again!!
THE SOONER THE BETTER!!

Direct inquiries to Cori Kargel or Chad Pattenon in room B104, or call us at ext 2578.

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Corrections

The Clackamas Print reserves this space to make corrections or clarifications on any previously printed material.

In the last issue of The Clackamas Print, we ran a story on page one in which we stated that all day classes would be cancelled Feb. 23 for the Skills Contest. We need to clarify that only day classes on the main campus will be cancelled that day. All other classes will be running as regularly scheduled.

ATTENTION WRITERS!

LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN
FEB. 1-3 10AM.-2PM. IN CCC MALL

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN EXPRESSING YOUR VIEWS TO THE OREGON LEGISLATURE REGARDING RADICAL CHANGES IN THE FUNDING FORMULA FOR THE OREGON NEED GRANT? IF YOU SUPPORT THE RE-INSTATEMENT OF THE FLAT RATE FORMULA BE THERE OR;

JOIN US IN SALEM ON FEB. 23RD. LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD