

EDITORIAL

Amendment on local tax option
a bad idea for Oregon

Oregon has a vibrant tradition of democracy through our ballot initiative process. We, the people, can put a plan to the test in the public domain with petitions, and if they pass muster, carry them forward to a vote in the general election to decide the direction of our government.

It's a tradition of people power over special interests steering the ship. Is it perfect? What is in government? But it is one of the best examples in this country of people wielding their say from the ground up.

And it works, in most cases, depending on where you sit. Currently there is a petition circulating to support a ballot measure to amend the Oregon Constitution to prohibit local

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governments and the state from establishing a real estate transfer tax, or RETT. It is an initiative backed by the Oregon Association of Realtors, and it's part of a nationwide campaign by the National Association of

Realtors to ban these assessments on the sale of homes and other real estate.

The argument is that homebuyers and sellers can neither afford nor should have to pay a tax, in addition to property taxes, on a transfer of ownership. Currently, Oregon has preemption, a legislative prohibition, on any local entity or the state from imposing such a tax. The proposal by the Realtors would remove any legislative option: It would be banned in the state's constitution.

This isn't about to be an argument for or against a transfer tax. To be clear, Street Roots in the past has supported efforts to repeal the preemption with the expressed purpose of applying the revenue toward preserving and creating low-income housing and alleviating homelessness.

This is about local control: the authority of counties and cities to levy funds for the benefit of all; the premise behind taxation being that if you invest wisely in the common good, society benefits — socially and economically. The measure of investing wisely has always been governed by representatives, elected by the people. It is why, for years, Multnomah County has called for the repeal of preemptions against local governments raising money. The RETT is one example; the authority to impose a tobacco tax is another.

Oregon's tax system is a patchwork of voter initiatives and legislative manipulation — both stuck in constant reactionary mode. In our own communities, where people are hurting, there is little leeway to invest. The Realtors association is raising \$1 million in Oregon alone from its 14,000 members to put this on the statewide ballot in 2012. This year, more than 22,000 Oregonians were experiencing homelessness in a single one-night count across the state. The number of homeless families with children increased 33 percent from the previous year. We've got to find better means to reverse this course — with all options wide open, not slammed shut before we even begin.

Referendum upon referendum has proven a lousy way to create forward-thinking and stable tax policy. Likewise, amending the constitution on the RETT would sever another connection between voters, their representatives, and the local control necessary to take care of our diverse communities.

Season of fun events starts today

Back by popular demand and better than ever, it's the Street Roots online auction! We have 10 days of fun and fundraising for Portland's award-winning

street newspaper. Let the bidding begin!

We have some great gifts for you this holiday season — for yourself or someone close to you. Trying to figure out exactly what to get your family or friends?

Head over to the online auction site at www.streetrootsauction.org. It's a great way to support SR and do some holiday shopping for family and friends. If you have never tried it out, it's a blast. Did I mention it helps SR out tremendously? It does.

In partnership with more than 100

businesses, Street Roots has some of the coolest items in the city, both large and small. If you're on a fixed budget, we have something for you. If you want to splurge and give SR some love, we have that too.

The bidding began yesterday on Oct 27, and ends at 3pm PST on Sunday, Nov 6. Check out the back page for more information. Let the bidding begin!

Also, join us for a Street Roots photography exhibit on First Thursday, Nov. 3 at Albina Community Bank in the Pearl (430 NW 10th Ave.) from 6-9pm. The show highlights the best of SR photojournalism over the past three years along with portraits of SR vendors. Vendors will be holding signs expressing in one word what SR means to them. You won't want to miss it. Come one, come all. We would love to see you there.



DIRECTOR'S DESK

By Israel Bayer

Israel Bayer is the executive director of Street Roots. You can reach him at israel@streetroots.org

LETTERS

Occupations stir memories of PSU protest 30 years ago

I had not yet been down to Occupy Portland, so I picked up a five-pound bag of apples for a food donation and headed down there. The weather was very warm for October 18th, like a summer day. I was surprised by the number of tents, they were wall to wall with an over-covering of tarps.

The encampment, a modern day Hooverville, is very professionally organized: information, kitchen, medical, legal contacts, recycling, even a place to do art. On the north side of the park next to the Spanish American War Memorial, a young man is playing Jimi Hendrix on an electric guitar with a portable speaker attached to his belt. I find myself surrounded by familiarity with a flood of memories from another occupation, the May 6-11, 1970 occupation of Portland State University. I was there.

On May 6, 1970, we moved into Smith Memorial Center and began to build barricades around the campus. Portland State University was soon shut down. We too were dispossessed, young people being sent off to yet another corporate war.

I did not get sent off to war because I was resisting the draft, and at some point the Draft Board determined that I was more trouble than I was worth. I showed up for my pre-induction physical while on an LSD trip and told them I was a communist; just like Jesus! After raising a little more hell with them they finally gave up on me. Yet my relatives and friends continued to be sent off to the Vietnam War and two of them were killed in action. Some of the barricades at the PSU Student Strike were built into shelters,

but most of us camped inside the campus buildings. Much of the time was spent manning the barricades. A large, white plastic-covered geodesic dome was constructed in front of Smith Memorial Center as a first aid station. This eventually came to symbolize the PSU Student Strike.

In the late afternoon on May 11, 1970, in an action that was later determined to be a police riot, helmeted Portland Police Tactical Squad moved in wielding four feet long riot batons and beat up a group of unarmed,

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peaceful anti-war protesters. Many of them had to be taken to local hospitals for treatment. We held a City Parks Permit for our Geodesic Dome Medical Center, but the police said it was

not valid.

So why did they not just arrest us on that day that came to be known as "Bloody Monday?" The community became outraged by this action and on the following day, May 12, 5,000 of us marched on City Hall and surrounded the police station. Under then-Mayor Terry Shrunken and City Parks Commissioner Frank Ivancie, no policeman was ever charged for what happened that day. As I sit on a park bench at Occupy Portland reflecting on these events past and present, I wonder what the fate of this encampment will be. Will Mayor Sam Adams and the Portland Police handle this situation in an adult manner? Given the history of this town, I fear for Occupy Portland.

— DAVID DUMAS
Portland

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Send letters to the editor to the Street Roots office, 211 NW Davis St., Portland, OR 97209, or e-mail to joanne@streetroots.org.

Our mission

Street Roots creates income opportunities for people experiencing homelessness and poverty by producing a newspaper and other media that are catalysts for individual and social change.

Street Roots publishes every two weeks, launching on Fridays, and is available exclusively through our street vendors or by subscription. We are proud members of the North American Street Newspaper Association and the International Network of Street Papers.

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Street Roots Rose City Resource

Street Roots publishes the Rose City Resource, a comprehensive booklet of services for people experiencing homelessness and poverty. To inquire about getting an order of the Rose City Resource for distribution, please write to pdxrosecityresource@gmail.com. Resources are also available online at www.rosecityresource.org.

Vendors

Street Roots vendors buy the newspapers for 25 cents each and sell them for \$1, keeping the 75 cents in profit for themselves. In order to keep the cost low to our vendors, we receive additional support from donations and in-kind contributions.



75¢
goes directly to the vendor who sold you the paper

25¢
goes toward printing costs

Vendor orientations are at 1 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at the Street Roots office.