

hold the weight of all the pressing national needs deserving of center stage. An anti-Bush platform only serves to confirm the negative nature of politics, and harden the assumptions of powerlessness many feel to change what is. An anti-Bush platform presumes the president as the cause of all our problems rather than, as is more likely, the result of them.

As we begin what will certainly prove a bitterly divisive political new year, I caution fellow Democrats to take great care not to descend to the same low levels we are opposing. Demonstrate instead the strength of our national spirit, which far surpasses that of any one man to suppress it.

*Todd Huffman, M.D.
Eugene*

NOT VERY LIBERAL

Liberal readers of *EW* should be aware that the mainstream media has been painting Howard Dean to be a liberal, but he is not. His positions are available at www.deanforamerica.com Note that he is not against the death penalty ("I believe the death penalty should be available for extreme and heinous crimes, such as terrorism or the killing of police officers or young children. But it must be carried out with scrupulous fairness."); nor is he for substantially stricter gun control ("I don't think we need a lot of new federal laws. But we do need to do a few things at the federal level, like requiring Insta-Check on all retail and gun show sales. We also must do a better job of enforcing the laws on the books."). He has considered reducing benefits or extending the age of eligibility for Medicare and Social Security under the guise of making these programs fiscally sound. ("Assure that Social Security and Medicare are adequately funded to meet the needs of the next generation of retirees." Obvious code words for these benefit reductions.) He supports a strong military. The list goes on and on.

Although it is true that he has an excellent record on the environment, civil unions, and women's rights, liberals who think they support Dean should take note: Dean is no run-of-the-mill liberal; rather, he is a social centrist and fiscal conservative in the mold of a "Rockefeller Republican" or Clinton. McGovernites will have to look elsewhere.

*James McClelland
Eugene*

RED FLAGS

Money continues to be the driving force in Eugene, even when misused; even when grossly misused, as in the boondoggles of expanding Autzen Stadium and replacing Mac Court for a multi-million dollar figure that continues to mushroom.

Alan Pittman (cover story, 12/24) was dealing with a lesser amount — "just" \$25 million for community sports and recreation. I have no answers for the debate over how much should go for each deserving area. But when money goes to sports facilities, red flags should go up.

A case in point is the spending of \$1.7 million for four new high school stadia. Money probably was well spent — except it should not have had to be spent. The decision to spend came because the use of Autzen Stadium for weekly prep games was to end since Autzen was to replace artificial grass with the real stuff. Fear was the living blades might lose some of their luster if Autzen had more than six games a year. So, goodbye high schools.

But wait, the Ducks still play on artificial

turf. They changed their minds about real grass. Only the rush to build a separate tiny stadium for each high school already was under way. So money was unnecessarily spent, and Autzen sits empty on what used to be high school game nights.

We may go hungry in other areas. But, heck, we still have games to play.

*George Beres
Eugene*

UNFAIR TAX

Please contact the Board of Commissioners at 682-4203. This is the main line to get individual emails or extensions. They are considering a tax on pet food and requiring vets to open private records to ensure registration of pets to raise money for the impoverished LCARA.

A tax on food is always unfair to the poor who cannot choose whether or not they should indulge in nutrition. Veterinarians say most of the very poor take excellent care of their pets (sometimes their only companions in life), already spending much more than the wealthier sector proportionate to income. Those who welcome a tax could choose to send a donation to LCARA instead! Opening (private) pet records to public officials would only create yet another bureaucracy of auditors whom would require a salary as well as require more paperwork from vets, thus raising consumer costs. This would also increase the chance that unregistered owners would choose to not get rabies shots.

Compared to the many places I've lived, we restrictively limit the number of dogs one can legally own. Increasing that number would encourage many people to register who haven't out of fear.

Perhaps some of the financial burden of caring for unwanted pets should fall on the people creating them.

I've ties to the rescue community and there are actually a handful of irresponsible backyard breeders who create a surprising amount of shelter animals. Maybe selling animals could be taxed with a credit system for responsible breeding.

*Sondra Arrache
Eugene*

CORRUPTED TALE

Being a strong admirer of J.R.R. Tolkien, I was saddened by the recent recreation of *Lord of the Rings*. The grandeur of Tolkien's original work lay its portrayal of true goodness and noble courage in the face of great darkness. All of this is lost in the film, because the characters have been corrupted from their original spirit.

For instance, for those who have seen the films, none of the following events actually happened in the books upon which the films were based: Gandalf the "white" wizard beats up another he disagrees with, later murders him, and ignobly wears mud on his face. Frodo the pure-hearted is tricked and rejects his only true friend. Eowyn the brave and valorous wears her helm lopsided, making her look foolish right at the moment of her triumph. Sam the humble hobbit gets morbid satisfaction from killing and delivers one of the many one-liners in the film ala Arnold Schwarzenegger. Elrond the noble elf king shows his contempt for his daughter by scoffing at her love for a human man. The film is wholly infected with these subtle but profound corruptions.

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