

his/her opponent wins. Put "boxing brain damage" into Google and find out how really hazardous boxing is. Every professional boxer who stays as a contender for many years suffers brain damage. Thus, the brain damage rate for this category equals 100 percent. If you think it's marvelous to get your brain scrambled, go ahead: Be a boxer.

Bob Saxton
Eugene

SLAPP ME SILLY

So many candidates for East Lane County Commissioner — how to choose? We think answering a couple questions can narrow the field. First, "Is a candidate more likely to represent the voters or special interests?" There was no better test of this than House Bill 2460 in the 2001 Oregon Legislature. We cosponsored HB 2460 to protect Oregonians against frivolous SLAPP (strategic lawsuits against public participation) suits. SLAPPs are groundless accusations meant solely to intimidate. They were primarily being used by developers to silence public opposition to their projects. Not surprisingly, the opposition to

HB-2460 came from development interests who wanted to preserve this despicable weapon of legal and financial terrorism.

But the bill was a no-brainer. It sailed through the Legislature and was signed into law by Gov. John Kitzhaber. The vote in the House was 49-4 in favor. Cedric Hayden's was one of the four "no" votes. Hayden answered question #1 loudly and clearly.

Second, "Does a candidate care enough to address issues raised by constituents?" Of the remaining candidates, only Mark Herbert and Faye Stewart responded to our questions.

These observations give us at least some idea of how well the various candidates would represent their constituents. Accordingly, we will be recommending to our East Lane members that there are only two candidates worthy of their consideration for East Lane Commissioner.

Jerry Ritter
Secretary, OCVA

BETTY'S BELIEF

I wonder how many Eugene citizens are aware of the key role that Betty Taylor played

in getting the \$17 million in redevelopment funds for the Eugene library. Throughout her first year on the City Council, in the face of major cuts in the city's budget, Betty asked over and over why redevelopment funds could not be used to make up the difference. Not getting a satisfactory answer, she requested a workshop on that issue. She refused to give up her belief that redevelopment funds could be used for more than traditional economic development programs. As a result, the council held a workshop. At that meeting, it became clear that significant funds were available, and that they could be used to build the library. The rest is history. If Betty hadn't been so determined, the new library might have had to wait many more years.

Vicki Elmer
Eugene

TRUE REFORM

Concrete tax reform in Oregon is still needed given the defeat of Measure 30. Now the out-of-state, anti-government group Citizens for a Sound Economy is pushing our legislators for a spending cap coupled with

kicker reform. These sound very appealing and oh-so-very prudent. But it is not the answer to this state's budgeting woes. Oregon already passed a reasonable spending limit in 2001, which limits spending to 8 percent of personal income. We do not need a more restrictive cap.

A spending cap does not allow the state to save or implement funding for disasters or emergencies. Nor will it take into consideration a rise in public health need and crime rate increases.

A spending cap makes it impossible to pay for schools and other programs if voters pass another unfunded mandate like Measure 5 or Measure 11. Services and programs already devastated by cuts in funding will continue to struggle during an economic down-turn.

Oregon needs true tax reform in order to break its dependence on the personal income tax and find a more stable funding source. Until this happens, true tax reform will be out of reach.

Valery Rylands
Chair, Lane County Stand for Children
Marcola

viewpoint BY GORDON DAVID KASWELL

Profiling America

What the government wants to know

By the time you read this, I will have broken a federal law. I will have withheld some of the personal information demanded by the U.S. Census Bureau's new American Community Survey (ACS). Some of you may recall the Census Bureau's "long form" sent during the last official Census. It asked a lot of questions about people's lives and lifestyles. While the long form has been around for decades and promises confidentiality, many Americans found the last edition (year 2000) to be intrusive — an invasion of their privacy. The ACS is a newly implemented annual update sent to a random sampling of American households, in order to keep the demographic data current, and to possibly eliminate the long form in the future.

More than a month ago, I received the ACS in the mail. Some of the questions were pretty nosy. Here's a partial list: Does our house have complete plumbing and flush toilets? How many bedrooms? Do we own or rent? What is the home's monetary value? Do we own it outright? What do we pay monthly for utilities, property tax, insurance, mortgage?

The questions about the *people* in our home are far more troubling. Here is a partial list of the information the survey demands regarding every member in our household: race; marital status; date of birth (not just age); citizenship status; level of education; what language(s) other than English is spoken; physical and neurological health status; childcare arrangements; employment status; method of transportation to work; time of day, *to the minute*, each person departs for work; income amount and sources; ancestry or ethnic origin

My concern over these questions goes beyond that of simple privacy. There is a chilling historical precedent for the misuse of census data — one not nearly as widely known as it deserves to be. That abuse was an integral part of the genocidal policies of Nazi Germany during World War II.

Edwin Black's extraordinary and meticulously documented book, *IBM and the Holocaust*, details how the Nazis used card-sorting machines (the nearest thing to computers in those days) leased from International Business Machines (and largely operated by that company) to sift through mountains of European census data in order to identify "undesirables" — Jews, Gypsies, physically and mentally handicapped people, and so on, and tag them for eventual destruction.

Survivors of that campaign of slaughter had no idea how the Nazis were able to so easily identify and locate their victims, for it was not just the active, practicing Jews who were shipped to extermination camps. Millions of culturally assimilated Jews, plus half-Jews and quarter-Jews (among others) were identified, marginalized, rounded up, starved, and ultimately murdered.

Black explains how it was done. The Nazis instituted a round-the-clock data-entry program that converted census data into encoded punch-cards that were then sorted in scores of machines, so that rosters of death could be compiled. Black's research indi-



cates that the Nazis could triple the number of people they rounded up and killed in a given area, through the use of the card sorting machines.

Could a comparable program be instituted in the U.S., in the near future? The wholesale roundup of descendants of Hitler's victims does not appear to be at all likely. But if Jews, Gypsies and disabled people are not probable targets, the potential for serious abuse still exists. Consider that the government has already incarcerated hundreds at the Guantanamo military base, apparently in violation of international law — and that efforts have been made by the Bush administration to strip certain Americans of their constitutional rights and citizenship.

It is also my understanding that the anti-drug Public Law 100-690 could be used as a pretext to incarcerate political dissidents. The current political climate of indeterminate, undeclared war and civil rights compromised in the name of national security makes such abuses more likely than would be the case in saner times.

Meanwhile, the ACS's stated intention is to assess demographic patterns, in order to ascertain the need for new schools, fire stations, road improvements and the like, and no doubt the Census Bureau's employees are acting in good faith in their efforts to secure this data. And they guarantee confidentiality. But in an age of the USA PATRIOT Act, Homeland Security Act, and Bill of Rights Defense Committees, the potential for abuse of this information is staggering.

Steven Spielberg's holocaust docudrama, *Schindler's List*, insightfully opens with a scene of Nazi officials gathering census data from cooperative Jews. The ACS's massive profiling of America dwarfs anything the Nazis could have dreamed of. And consider this: The ACS comes with a pamphlet entitled, *Your Guide for the American Community Survey*. The last page in the guide contains a section with the heading, "Why the Census Bureau Asks Certain Questions." The questions covered are: name, value or rent, complete plumbing, place of birth, job, income, education, disability, and journey to work. No mention is made of the questions regarding race, citizenship status, languages spoken, or ancestry/ethnic origin.

My delay in filling out either of the two copies of the ACS mailed to me prompted one of their agents to call me on the phone in order to secure the data. (Incredibly, the survey's guide states, "If anyone in the household, such as a roomer or boarder, does not want to give you his or her personal information, print at least the person's name [and relationship to you] ... *an interviewer will telephone to get the information from that person.*"

An agent will have called me back before you read this. Indeed, ACS personnel are authorized to go directly to people's homes to complete the survey.

I intend to answer any reasonable questions, including the homeowner information that is a matter of public record. I don't even mind telling them that my toilet flushes quite nicely. But my ethnicity and race, the languages I speak, my health status and the time I leave for work are none of their damn business. Perhaps my refusal to fully cooperate will "flag" me as a troublemaker, and they may fine me up to \$100. I'll send them a check.

The ACS is an issue that has managed to stay "under the radar" for quite some time now. Hopefully, that is about to change.