

hold the GOP has over the mass media, including, apparently, the R-G, when a major address by a major leader of the opposition gets zero coverage.

Mark Mitchell
Eugene

EDITOR'S NOTE: See Slant item on Gore's talk and web link to the complete text in last week's EW.

QWEST RESPONDS

Qwest is committed to providing outstanding customer service and doing what's right on behalf of our customers. For that reason, I am compelled to comment on your article "City receives \$9.1 million windfall" (5/20).

Your article correctly outlines that Eugene received \$9.1 million resulting from an Oregon Supreme Court ruling in the city's favor ordering Qwest to pay the city's 2 percent telecommunications tax. You also state that Qwest "had balked at paying the tax since 1997." But your article fails to tell the whole story.

In the spring of 1997, the city of Eugene passed an ordinance imposing a tax on certain telecommunications services. Because these local taxes are a direct pass-through to Qwest customers, and Eugene citizens are already paying a 7 percent franchise fee to the city on their local phone bills, we tried to avoid having customers incur this additional tax by litigating the issue. In March of 1999, the Circuit Court declared the tax invalid.

However, the city of Eugene appealed the ruling to the Supreme Court. Unfortunately, this time the court ruled against consumers and declared that the 2 percent tax on telecommunications services could be im-

posed on citizens living in Eugene. As a direct result of the city's actions, Eugene customers can expect this additional tax to show up as a line item on their June phone bills this year, on top of the city's current franchise fee.

While Eugene City Council members certainly have every right to raise revenue for the city, Qwest believes raising revenue through a tax on telecommunications services should require a vote by the citizens. Accordingly, Qwest is working to place a measure on the November ballot to ask citizens in Eugene if they want to repeal this tax and to require that any future taxes of this type go to a vote of the people.

In the spirit of service, Qwest is willing to pursue the ballot measure in order to protect Eugene customers from these additional taxes and fees on their phone bills.

Judy Pepler
Qwest state president for Oregon

PASSIONATE ACTIVIST

June marks the fourth year that Jeff "Free" Luers has been imprisoned. Sentenced to 22 years and eight months for burning three sport utility vehicles (SUVs) to protest ecological destruction, Jeff has continued to be active in prison and fight oppression with his words and inspiration.

Jeff has been labeled an "eco-terrorist" but many consider him to be a committed "eco-defender" who acted in desperation. I don't think what he did was admirable, but I do think his punishment is excessive, especially when compared to the light sentences given to rapist cops, corrupt government agents and others who pose more of a threat

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