

May Endorsements

Turnouts in the important May school board elections tend to be light and it's possible for special interests to mobilize behind the scenes to elect candidates who would not be elected otherwise. This scenario does not appear to be happening in Eugene, but Springfield is another tale (see our news story this week).

Last week in Slant we raised the question, How important is it to elect progressives to school boards? Well, it depends. School boards need financial, legal and education expertise, along with gender and cultural balance, and conservatives can provide that. Many important issues are non-partisan, such as the debate over school equity in 4J.

On the other hand, we lean toward well-qualified progressives over conservatives when it comes to school funding. Progressives are not afraid of paying for education, tend to be more open to new funding ideas, and are more likely to lobby Salem to reform the state tax system. They recognize the impact of sprawl and pollution on the health of children. Lefties also get stars for social issues, such as sex education, diversity and tolerance, arts education and keeping religious ideology out of the curriculum.

With these things in mind, we make the following selected endorsements in contested races, and we urge everyone who can vote to vote.

Charles R. Martinez Jr. has proven to be a great appointment to the 4J board in Position 2 and deserves a full term. He has academic expertise in dealing with at-risk children and the achievement gap, and he is connected to our growing local Hispanic community.

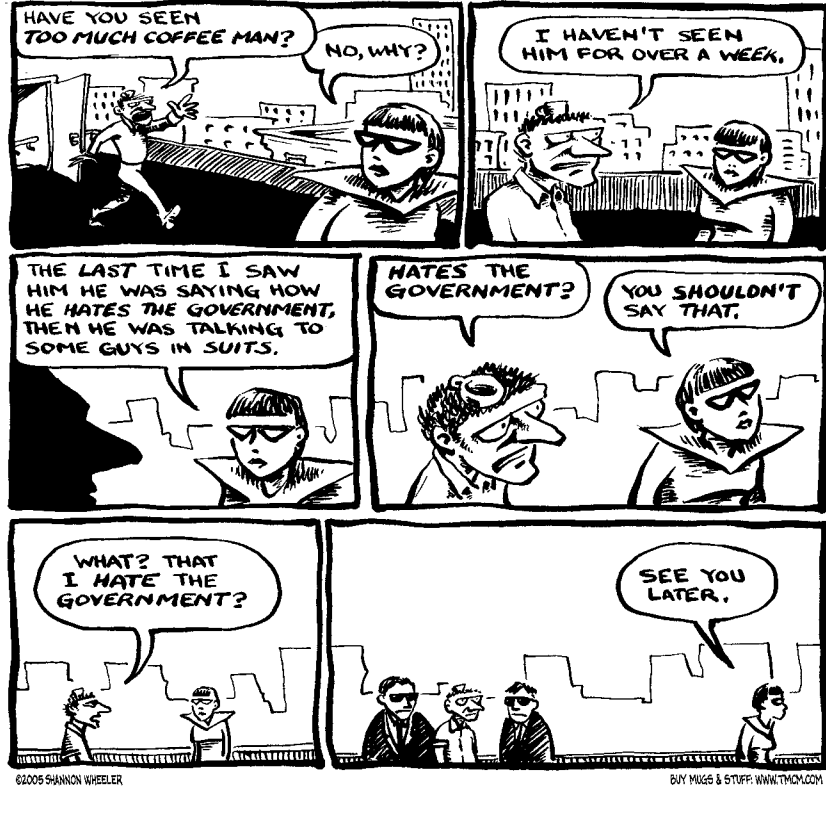
Of the three candidates for Position 6, we know **Aria Seligmann** best. She was on the editorial staff at *EW* for many years, covering education, social issues and politics, but she was not automatically assured our nod. Anyone we endorse needs to pass the I-like-George-Russell's-school-choice-plan test. All three appear to be more or less on board with the super's critical ideas for school equity. The incumbent Eric Forrest is conservative in most regards (sprawl, West Eugene Parkway, etc.), but did back the local option levy, to his credit. We endorsed Nadia Sindi for the LCC Board a few years ago when she ran against Jay Bozievich, but we see Seligmann as a stronger team player, and she has been racking up impressive endorsements from both her Green Party and Democrats in her energetic campaign. Hopefully, progressives will not split their votes between Sindi and Seligmann and hand a default victory to Forrest.

In the LCC Board race for Position 1, we're looking at a repeat of the race of two years ago when conservative Paul Holman was elected over Richard Cunningham and Rob Spooner. We favored **Rich Cunningham** then, and we endorse him again. Cunningham has a strong background as a school board member in Rhode Island and has been trying to plug into public service locally for several years, despite heart problems. He's now back in action following surgery. We like his politics and his ambitious vision for bolstering LCC's health care programs.

Lane ESD has a big line-up of candidates and we're pleased to see that **Tom Lininger** has enthusiastically jumped into the race for the at-large Position 6. The law professor and former county commissioner has a lot to offer ESD, from knowledge of special education issues to expertise in the workings of state bureaucracy. The race for the Springfield ESD Position 2 is a tougher call. Incumbent **Don Kimball** has 12 years of effective experience on the board, and he's facing a challenge from a younger and also highly qualified **Tom Atkinson**. The district wins either way.

Springfield schools are blessed with an exceptional superintendent and a stable board, but are vulnerable to takeover by religious conservatives. We see no reason to replace incumbents **Jonathan Light** in Position 2, **Al King** in Position 3, and **Bill Medford** in Position 5. Medford's opponent Wade Richardson has been particularly obstinate and combative in our attempts to interview him. We can only imagine what he would be like on the School Board. — TJT

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ACHIEVEMENT GAP?

Now that tempers have cooled on the alternative schools issue, I hope I can be forgiven for summarizing it, lest we forget that the causes are still out there.

Color is one of them, sort of. Superintendent George Russell is African American, chief parent instigator Nancy Willard is a single mother of three children adopted out of third-world countries, raising them in the south hills, and the editors of *EW* are aging hippies self-exiled in a sleepy liberal college town in an ignored corner of the country. All are desperate to fabricate a cause to match their personal frustrations. The younger, whiter school board quite predictably didn't sign on to their fantasy revolution.

What about the achievement gap? It's minuscule compared to what existed in Detroit or Atlanta in the '60s and its real cause is the economic gap of the various Eugene neighborhoods. Two-thirds of the families who drive their children to other schools drive them to other neighborhood schools, not to alternative schools. In the school board's survey, only a tiny fraction of parents said that they would take advantage of busing if it were offered. Clearly, having one's children walk to school is more important to some people, while slightly better grades is more important to others. What really bothers George and Nancy is the choice system itself — and parents having the audacity to have varied priorities.

If there is any real injustice, it's the enrollment cap, but it's important to remember what removing it would mean: more alternative schools, not less. Alternative schools represent a product whose manufacturer can't meet the public's demand. If the flood-gates were released, what would their share really be? Maybe the Don Quixotes of this town should be careful what they wish for.

Twenty years ago, Chrysler Chairman Lee Iacocca was on televisions telling us that *where* a car was made is more important than *how well* it was made. Some people believed him. Some people still believe him. But the quality of American cars has risen remarkably in those two decades and the future of

education in Eugene will follow the same course, no matter how dramatically some people resist it.

Steve Downey
Eugene

IT'S BACK

What is back is referring to or labeling females as "chicks." It seems to me many women worked many years educating men, boys, the media, image makers, authors, that women are mothers, daughters, sisters, lovers, friends and employees, but not "chicks."

Unfortunately, the label is now in a movie title and put on one of the most sacred of activities — reading.

That's right, "chick lit." Local Progressive Talk KOPT 1600 AM Edition host Liz Kelly stated she's reading "chick lit."

Trying to be more progressive myself, I've come up with "babe books," and for men of course, "rooster reading."

And when you aren't busy reading, be sure to tune into the regressive language and labeling on the local progressive talk show.

Sheila Sheldon
Eugene

WHOSE STANDARDS

Both Eugene and Springfield residents will recognize this scenario: A committee works long hours preparing recommendations to improve equity in their school district. The school board is expected to pass the plan. A large group of like-minded citizens storms a meeting. They state essentially that everyone needs to think and be like them, and offer to be part of a solution that translates to: People who are not like them need fixing. The board lets them stop the process.

Springfield right-wing Christians indicated that they set the standard for morality for all students and families. They wanted to participate in finding a solution only if it included changing the bottom of their hierarchy — silencing the voices of queer youth.

Eugene alternative school parents indicated that they set the standard for education for all schools. Now, the only solutions that everyone can agree on involve changing the