

# news Briefs

## TAX CUT WILL BITE SCHOOLS

A broad coalition of Oregon parent, senior, teacher, business, union and good government groups have joined to get an early jump on defeating a tax cut measure that they say could decimate the state.

The Defend Oregon Coalition expects the "Tax Payer Bill of Rights" (TABOR) constitutional amendment to have enough signatures to qualify for the November ballot. If passed, the measure would limit tax increases to inflation plus population growth.

The simple formula could appear reasonable to tax opponents, but the coalition argues that it will force deep cuts to schools, public safety and other government services. The formula is "bad math" that fails to account for the fact that the government's huge health care costs are rising faster than inflation, as are the demands of the growing prison and senior populations, the coalition says. If TABOR had been in effect since 1990, it would have cut state funding for schools and other public services by 25 percent, according to a state analysis.

A similar measure in Colorado resulted in that state dropping in rank to near last for K-12 and higher education spending and high school graduation rates, according to a study by the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities. After 13 years, Colorado voters voted last year to suspend the tax limit.

— Alan Pittman

## PEACE PEDALERS

They are veterans from five wars, ranging in age from their 20s to their 60s, and they're fed up with America's oil addiction, which they feel is driving the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They say that we need to make personal and community choices — like shifting away from cars and toward bikes, and localizing our economies — to reduce our dependence on oil and contribute to world peace. And they plan to do something fun about it.

On July 25, about 20 veterans will begin a two-week, 350-mile bicycle journey from Eugene to Seattle, where they will attend the National Veterans for Peace Convention Aug. 10-13.

**Veteran Brian Willson on his three-wheeled handcycle**



Local veteran Gordon Sturrock, 48, says that the ride is buoyed by a spirit of cooperation that veterans share. "In the military, you're taught to depend on your partners," he said. "We are very determined to do this, and we work together and support each other. We're trying to change the world."

Disabled Vietnam War veterans Brian Willson and Lane Anderson, both California peace activists, initiated the idea for the ride. Willson, a double-amputee, will power a three-wheeled handcycle; Anderson, who has arthritic knees, will ride a bicycle that provides extra bursts of hand-generated power. Several bio-fueled vehicles will accompany the ride.

The vets will participate in community events at 15 stops along the way. The kick-off will be a peace conference at the mini-amphitheater at the end of North Adams Street in Eugene at 6 pm July 24. Guest speakers will include World War II veteran Edgar Pears, local environmental activist Josh Schlossberg, Pfc. Suzanne Swift's mother Sara Rich, Vietnam veteran Dr. Jack Dresser, Willson and Sturrock.

For more information, visit [www.vfp56.org/seattle.html](http://www.vfp56.org/seattle.html) — Kera Abraham

## BIKE HYBRID

Seen the Al Gore PowerPoint movie and want a vehicle that gets even better mileage than a Prius?

How about a hybrid electric/human powered recumbent bike? Last week at the Oregon Country Fair, EcoSpeed, a small Portland company, was showing off light-weight kits to transform a Burley or other recumbent into a high performance human/electric hybrid that gets the energy equivalent of about 1,500 to 3,000 miles per gallon.

The kits add about 20 pounds and \$2,000 to the weight and cost of a recumbent. The electric motor, powered by a small but powerful lithium ion battery, takes advantage of the bike's full range of gearing and can power uphill with minimal pedaling for 16 miles before recharging. Use the electric power assist just for shorter hills and acceleration and the battery has a 60 mile range, according to the company's website, [ecospeed.net](http://ecospeed.net).

Of course, you could just pedal and burn more doughnuts while taking advantage of Eugene's extensive off-road system of bike trails, where such powered vehicles are banned. But EcoSpeed does offer a cool, practical option for those who have a longer road commute and could lure a few people out of their spewing gas guzzlers. — Alan Pittman

## GREEN CITY BUILDINGS

On July 10, the Eugene City Council unanimously adopted a "green building" policy. Effective immediately, all city-owned and occupied buildings must be constructed and maintained in environmentally and economically sustainable ways, in compliance with the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. Eugene now joins the cities of Chicago, Portland and Seattle, as well as the state of Washington, in making the green



building commitment.

Under the resolution, all new city buildings 10,000 sq. ft. or bigger must earn a "silver" certification from the U.S. Green Building Council and aim for a higher rating — gold or platinum — when funding is available. "We're looking at this as a developmental stage where we implement this, learn about it, and hopefully upgrade later," said Facilities Division Manager Glen Svendsen.

For smaller new buildings and maintenance of existing buildings, LEED standards will serve as a guideline. "We keep trying to stress the importance of the existing buildings as having the most environmental benefits," Svendsen said. "The challenge will be to get them into compliance. We may build a new building every five years, but the existing buildings are there, giving off greenhouse gases and not being fun to work in, all the time."

The resolution won't compel private and state builders to comply with LEED standards, but some have chosen to do just that. The Lillis Business Complex on the UO campus has a silver certificate, the Royal Caribbean building in Springfield earned a gold, and the new Slocum Orthopedic Center is going for silver. The Green Building Advisory Group, which makes recommendations to the council, is mulling over the idea of offering incentives to private builders for getting LEED certified, said city planner Keli Osborn.

Under the LEED criteria, builders get points for buying locally, siting in dense areas, reducing waste water, maximizing energy efficiency and using non-toxic materials, among other factors. But a silver certification only requires compliance with 40 to 47 of the 85 criteria, so the city won't be under much pressured to, say, build in a high density area — which only earns one point.

The green building resolution will immediately apply to two city projects, the publicly funded Whole Foods parking lot and the renovation or reconstruction of City Hall. Svendsen admitted that the parking lot may not be LEED certifiable "for technical reasons," and may need a waiver which, thanks to an amendment from Councilor David Kelly, the council — rather than the city manager — would have to approve.

— Kera Abraham

## UO HOUSING QUESTIONS STILL LINGER

The Oregon State Board of Higher Education, in a 10-1 vote, approved the UO's sale of Westmoreland Family Housing to private developer Michael O'Connell on July 14. Board members also asked the university to create a housing plan to accommodate more students, including non-traditional students, and report back to the board on that effort in early 2007.

But some questions about the UO's motives, the state board's process and city zoning laws remain, and at least one nonprofit plans to challenge the sale in court.

Eugeneans for Affordable Housing's David Zupan argues that the state board didn't properly involve the public in the process, as required by state law. "There's a breakdown in the democratic process here," he said, noting that hundreds of UO students and alumni, the UO Senate, members of four Eugene neighborhood associations and a half-dozen local politicians opposed the sale. "It's pretty ironic, given the amount of feedback to the board, that they would basically ignore it."

Another legal battleground is zoning. Because the Westmoreland property is currently zoned for nonprofit use, its conversion to a for-profit use will be subject to a City Council vote. "We intend to lobby the city to oppose this rezoning, particularly in regards to the adverse impact that this will have on the city's low-cost housing stock," Zupan said.

Last November, UO administrators announced that two local affordable housing nonprofits, the Metropolitan Affordable Housing Corp. and St. Vincent de Paul Society of Lane County, were interested in buying Westmoreland. That never happened, said St. Vincent Director Terry McDonald, because the UO held firm to a selling price of at least \$18 million — which virtually guaranteed that rents would not remain affordable. "It was sticker shock," McDonald said. "The university wasn't willing to accept anything lower than \$18 million. They made it clear from the get-go that their primary interest was in getting the money ... The concern I have is that we will have more pressure on the bottom for affordable housing."

On July 18, Gov. Ted Kulongoski visited