

Ripped Safety Net

A way to mend it is finally available

For the past three decades, I have loved living in Lane County. I've been a family doctor, a consultant for drug court and for the jail medical services, and I'm now Lane County's public health officer. I know how troubled some lives can be, and I understand the mistakes some people make. But Lane County's public safety system is broken, and I am ashamed of us. The voiceless victims of the drug abuse underbelly of our community pass through my work at Public Health every day.



There are great rips, not just holes, in our local safety net. Starvation of our government is affecting women, families and young people. Domestic violence programs are over-full and have lost much federal and state support. Drug treatment waiting lists are months long. Most of the area's property crimes involve drugs, and Lane County has a worse property crimes rate than 92 percent of comparable counties. Lane County has the lowest tax rate in Oregon. County budgets have been cut for 12 of the last 15 years. Lane County jail cannot hold prisoners. Parole officers, who supervise offenders on their way to productive lives, have unsafe case loads; they cannot safely supervise. Programs for domestic violence offenders go unused and drug courts are often ineffective since there is no jail "stick" to enforce attendance and compliance. More than 100 juvenile offenders are released early every year, often without needed drug treatment or adequate supervision. Intervention at this point could help hundreds of young people live satisfying and productive lives, affecting them, their families and friends, and their children yet to come. These programs can work, and do work elsewhere, but we have to give them a chance.

Lane County's Public Safety Tax Amendment is the most bipartisan effort that I have seen in decades of living amid local politics. I support Measure 20-114 because it is the way democracy should work.

Concerned citizens and local elected officials of widely different political groups and philosophies have worked hard together over the last three years. They have struggled to find and forward to you, the voters, a proposal that we all can support, a proposal that will begin to make a difference in the very real public safety problems facing Lane County. That in itself is a miracle, given the partisan conflict that "politics" has meant in Lane County.

There's been a huge effort from government and from citizen volunteers. The County Citizen Service Stabilization Task Force looked at public safety in 2004 and identified the same problems. The City-County Public Safety Task Force made recommendations in 2005. In 2006, Lane County Commissioners responded with the proposal that we have on the ballot, a proposal that they all felt could be passed, and a proposal that responded to the testimony they heard from service providers and even more concerned citizens.

Each of these bodies contained political conservatives and progressives, pro- and anti-human services folks, growth and no-growth advocates. All of these folks care about our community, whatever their political philosophy.

Across the political spectrum, these folks, our neighbors, believe that doing nothing is not a possible choice. If we do nothing, we can expect more of the same: more lives ruined by meth, more drug-fueled property crimes, more children taken to foster care from drug-riddled homes. More of the same is not acceptable.

The proposed income tax measure is a direct outcome of dogged, citizen effort, exactly the kind of citizen involvement that is essential to the healthy functioning of our whole community.

And our community is not only the city of Eugene, or Springfield, or Junction City or Lowell. We are all part of a larger public safety system that depends on coordination with County resources for Human Services, for prevention, for treatment and for enforcement.

If the county piece of the system doesn't work, the entire system doesn't work. Eugene Police say their greatest frustration is the "revolving door" for drug-related arrests. There is nowhere to put the drug-using offender whom neither you nor I want behaving inappropriately and offensively in our neighborhood parks, on our alleys and sidewalks or on our doorsteps, breaking into our cars or stealing our bicycles. The jail cannot keep them. Mental health treatment is unavailable. Drug detox is full.

There are many ways to second guess and to find fault with any public proposal. The nature of the process is that not everyone gets everything they want. "Better" is far too often the enemy of "good enough," and our search for perfection and political correctness too often results in inaction. If I can't get the perfect proposal that I can support, I won't support yours, either. That is a sure way to stagnation and to community decline. If we let this measure fail, there will be more abused children, more abused spouses, more untreated addicts on our streets.

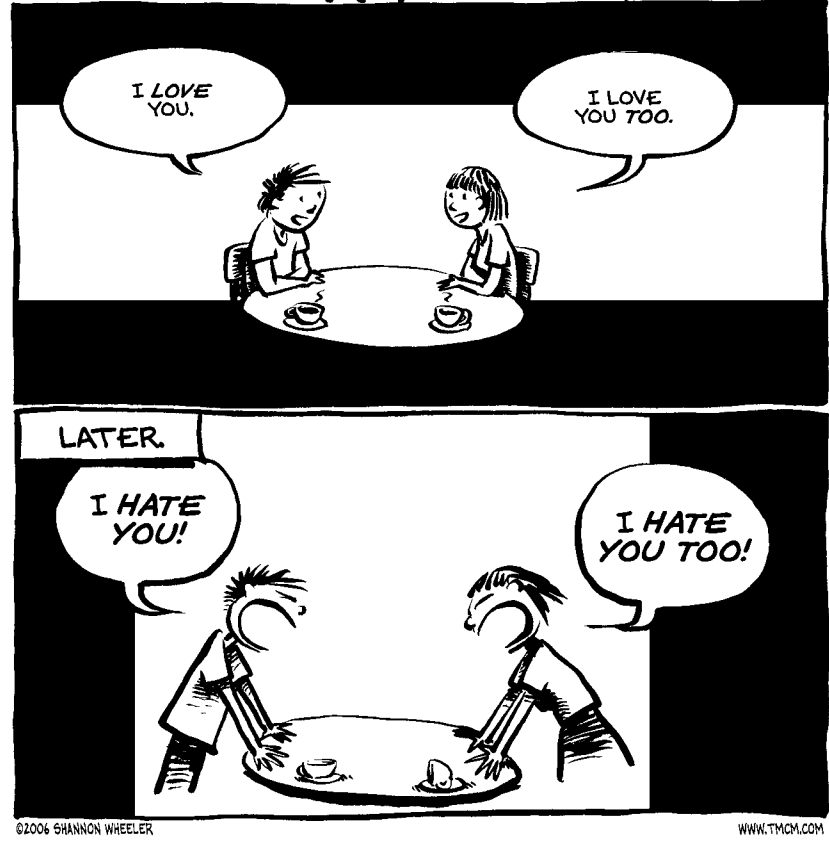
Ballot Measure 20-114 would expand Lane County's Public Safety system, not only to expand the criminal justice system, but to add both residential and outpatient substance abuse treatment.

We need all of this. We need far more. Let us begin together.

Sarah Hendrickson, M.D. has lived in westside downtown for more than 30 years.

How to Be Happy

by Shannon Wheeler



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NOT FOR ROOKIES

I just read the *EW* election issue (10/19) endorsement of Jack Roberts for Supreme Court. After reading the reasons given for the endorsement, I checked the cover to see if this was this years' April Fools issue.

EW writes "Roberts is a problem solver in the public realm, best demonstrated by his lead in negotiating a settlement in the Lane Transit district dispute. ... The Oregon Supreme Court needs the diversity Roberts will bring to it."

Roberts is an able political negotiator. But that is not what a Supreme Court justice does. That job, one not suitable for rookies, is to know the law and to apply the law. Roberts has not practiced law since 1989. He was not authorized to do so for 10 years before this spring. If he would be applying for a law clerk position with that court, he would not make the interview cut due to his inexperience.

How Roberts' election would bring diversity to the court is curious. I'll bet the *EW* editorial board has not argued a case before that court. In fact, I'll bet Roberts hasn't. I have, and it's not under-represented as to Caucasian middle-aged men.

I urge your readers to compare the credentials of Judge Virginia Linder, accessible at www.judgevirginalinder.com

David Jensen
Eugene attorney

EDITOR'S NOTE: We see Roberts as bringing a diversity of experience and background to the court.

NO ON 40

Oregon has an outstanding court system which is admired throughout the country for its fairness and efficiency. The approval of Measure 40 would seriously harm our court system. I strongly urge you to vote against this measure.

Our current court system works and shouldn't be tampered with by out-of-state special interest money. Constitutional Amendment 40 doesn't affect our local trial judges; it impacts only the judges on the statewide Court of Appeals and state Supreme Court. For nearly a century,

Oregonians have been electing appellate judges in nonpartisan, statewide elections. The job of these appellate judges is to apply the laws of Oregon in a neutral and consistent way. Regional politics and special interest influence should play no part in the decisions of our appellate judges.

Today, we select our judges based on their qualifications, not their addresses. We expect our judges to be the most qualified people we can find, not just someone who lives in a specific area. Constitutional Amendment 40 changes all of that.

With regional districts, the election of judges becomes *more* political, not less. It's much easier for a special interest group or two to fund a campaign against a judge who rules against them, especially if they don't have to run a statewide campaign.

Our initiative system is an important part of Oregon's political system. But Oregonians should not be asked the same thing over and over again. Four years ago, we said no to these same special interests that want to politicize our judicial elections. We should tell them no again.

Oregonians will lose out when we stop looking at the merits of a judicial candidate and start paying attention only to where they happen to live.

Join me in voting no on Constitutional Amendment 40.

Robert Rocklin
Eugene

THE BIG FIX

Thanks for the great column by Spruce Houser (10/12) explaining why campaign finance reform Measures 46 and 47 are so urgently needed in Oregon. Our state and local governments are literally being run by special interests.

In Lane County, 42 percent of all political contributions greater than \$50 came from the land development industry from 1998 to 2003. Another 22 percent came from the timber industry. That's 64 percent of all identifiable donations from two business interests with a clear agenda! Is it any wonder why local government seems so unresponsive to