



# UNDA THE ROTUNDA

BY SEN. VICKI WALKER

## On a Roll

### Some lofty goals for the Legislature

**T**he 2007 Legislative Session is not your father's Oldsmobile. Democrats, in control of both chambers and the governor's office for the first time in 16 years, are in charge and

taking no prisoners. Like our national counterparts, Oregon's Democrats believe that we have been given a golden opportunity to reinvest in the people of our state and our nation. Look out Bill Sizemore, Lon Mabon, Kevin Mannix, Taxpayers United and George W. Bush.

We're on a roll to rethink the way we do business. No more slice and dice with our state budgets, siphoning off money to the rich and powerful and the out-of-state corporations who have their hands in Oregon's piggy bank. Democrats want to put an end to discrimination and to rethink our justice system that is more concerned about incarceration than facing the underlying causes of criminal behavior. We're willing to stand up to George W. Bush and this insane war by drafting resolutions to protest the escalation of further troops in Iraq. We're expanding health care to children, investing in our education system, establishing a Rainy Day Fund, cleaning up the environment and building a future on renewable energy.

It remains to be seen whether we can achieve these commonsense albeit lofty goals in six short months. But if we don't try, we'll slip further into mediocrity and hopelessness and end up thinking that humans can do nothing to change their destiny.

So, just what is the 74th Oregon Legislative Assembly up to anyway? I hope to answer that question for you in a sometimes humorous, sometimes serious look at what goes on "Unda the Rotunda," a phrase coined by retired Capitol librarian David Herrell. I've been asked to provide you a biweekly column of Capitol glimpses, but my workload may keep it to monthly. We'll see. It's 10 at night, I'm listening to Bob Dylan and Van Morrison on my laptop (I'm hopelessly stuck in the '60s) and I've not yet left the building, which is not an uncommon occurrence.

Your first responsibility as a reader of this column, however, is to show up at a public hearing to support Oregon's Clean Indoor Air Act to repeal the prohibition on local communities from passing stronger anti-smoking ordinances than state law. Our Senate Judiciary Committee will be coming to the UO Law School on Feb. 16 for a public hearing at 9:30 am. Please come share with the committee how you have enjoyed stepping into Eugene's night life, bingo halls and restaurants and not coming home smelling like a pack of Camel cigarettes on a bad hangover. Find out more about this agenda and others on-line at [www.leg.state.or.us](http://www.leg.state.or.us) - your link to the information highway about your state government.

And for those of you concerned about the Oregon School Activities Association redistricting plan that left Eugene schools split into different leagues, forcing students to travel hundreds of miles to compete, my Senate Education and General Government Committee will hold hearings in early March. I'm awaiting the final bill to be sent to the committee from Sen. Prozanski. Both Supt. Castillo and I have submitted SB 217 and SB 382 respectively. It promises to be an engaging hearing.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you in Salem. Please join me and Reps. Edwards and Nathanson as we host our first Town Hall from 1 to 3 pm Saturday, Feb. 17 at the Irving Grange, 1011 Irvington Dr. We'll be joined by Commissioner Bill Fleenor as our moderator. In the meantime, I'll see you on the front lines.

*Vicki L. Walker of Eugene is a state senator representing District 7.*



How to be Happy "Mirror Mirror" drawn by Shannon Wheeler written by Matt Speer



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### SEEKING FAIRNESS

By winning, many of the proponents of Measure 37 may live to regret their success ("Looming Sprawl," 1/25). Oregonians now face the dilemma of either tax increases to compensate property owners or lower property values. For those reasons alone, Measure 37 claims are likely to exaggerate the value of the losses, many to the point of having no basis in fact. Studies show that while zoning creates winners and losers, property values overall are enhanced by orderly development accompanied with adequate investments in infrastructure, public amenities such as parks, and private land preserved as open space.

A windfall profits tax on real estate speculation coupled with development fees levied for community investment in specific infrastructure, amenities and open space easements can fully compensate those who lose their property values and maintain Oregon's unique quality of life.

Measure 37 passed because it appealed to Oregonians' sense of fairness. Government handouts to the wealthy and unearned windfall profits are an affront to that sense.

*Brian Baker  
Eugene*

### FILLING THE WHOLE

So Whole Foods pulled out. Whether that's a good thing or not is a moot point and isn't worth debating; what is worth debating is how to spend the \$7 million we were going to spend on a parking lot.

We asked some folks to offer up their ideas. My personal two faves:

- Butterfly lot — make into park plus expanded farmer's market with covering.
- Make the Eugene Hotel a hotel again. If we are going to spend public dollars on anything, why not take this great historic landmark and turn it into the heart of a bustling downtown district?

*Dan Carol  
Eugene*

### SILENCE ABOUT SEX

Shame on KEZI-TV news for editing their Feb. 2 interview with *EW* Editor Ted Taylor

to suggest the "Savage Love" column is harmful to children. Neither KEZI nor previous *EW* letters have provided one example of a harmed child.

However, children have been hurt by a "community-imposed silence about sex" according to former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Joycelyn Elders in her foreword to the virtually banned book *Harmful to Minors* by Judith Levine. During the height of the AIDS crisis, President Clinton fired Elders for suggesting masturbation should be discussed in safe sex classes as one way to avoid HIV and pregnancy.

This sensationalistic KEZI report was probably broadcast to boost the February ratings used to determine how much advertisers will pay. But it and previous letters also reek of homophobia and misogyny because Dan Savage often answers questions on sexual orientation and gender.

*Thomas Kraemer  
Corvallis*

### ONE NEAT PACKAGE

A great opportunity has presented itself to our fair city, and as usual it knocks loudest on a closed door. Whole Foods will not be moving into downtown. This leaves the city with about \$7 million to \$10 million we had intended to spend in the name of revitalization on a dull and uninspiring parking garage. (Have you ever seen one which was inspirational?)

Coincidentally, the freshly completed U.S. Courthouse up the street is drawing many comments relating to its somewhat ominous facade. Well, we no longer have to build the garage, and we can't get rid of the courthouse, so why don't we apply those funds toward revitalizing downtown by better integrating the daring architecture of the Wayne Morse building into its surroundings?

I seem to recall a wise suggestion from a group of people who may know a bit about such things encouraging us to create a green-space connecting downtown to the river via the now available Whole Foods site. Not only could downtown be beautified, creating more appealing retail and dining space, a new and permanent home could be included for the

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