

MAY ELECTION ENDORSEMENTS

Lane County Measure 20-129: NO

We value highly the services provided by social service agencies that are backing the county income tax measure, but philosophically we just can't get behind a permanent flat tax that guarantees support for public safety while social services and crime prevention get the leftovers. This measure would only increase the growing gap between rich and poor. We can do better with a completely new measure before the voters in September or November. Delaying funding will eat up county reserves, but we'll have a clearer sense by then regarding the status of federal payments. What would a better tax look like? See our cover story this week.

Lane County Measure 20-130: NO

This companion measure to 20-129 would cap the income tax at 2 percent. No on the tax; no on the cap.

LCC Board At-Large Position: ROGER HALL

Roger Hall has served on the board for 16 years and has earned the respect of his peers and the broader community. We need his experience, dedication and wisdom in facing LCC's challenges. His opponent is Rob Spooner, an outspoken critic of the board and administration. We like people who have the guts to shake up our local institutions, but LCC at this time needs support more than reinvention.

LCC Board Zone 2: STEFAN OSTRACH

Stefen Ostrach has built a strong reputation as a tough and dedicated advocate for working people and their families. And as a member of LCC's Budget Committee, he has a clear understanding of the financial challenges facing LCC. His opponent is Tony McCown, an impressive young LCC graduate and former student body president who has lots of good ideas. But he does not have Ostrach's experience on the ground.

• **We might be surprised**, but based on the mood of the voters, we don't expect approval for the Lane County income tax measure May 15. So what will happen next? Speculation abounds that the county commissioners will go ahead and impose the tax anyway, but that seems highly unlikely. Commissioners Green, Dwyer and Stewart are still reeling from response to their earlier decision to impose the tax. We expect them to let things cool down and try again. These commissioners have always had the public interest in mind and do not deserve wrath upon their heads.

• Will the **city options** for acquiring property downtown expire without a deal with developers? Looking at the big profit margins downtown property owners have negotiated (see news story last week), it's probably best that the options expire and be renegotiated when a development plan is finally nailed down. Also, last week's story on the options included a graph listing properties, their true market value and their option price. Most of the properties are identified by the businesses that occupy them, not their owners. John Henry's, for example, is in a building owned by the Davis family.

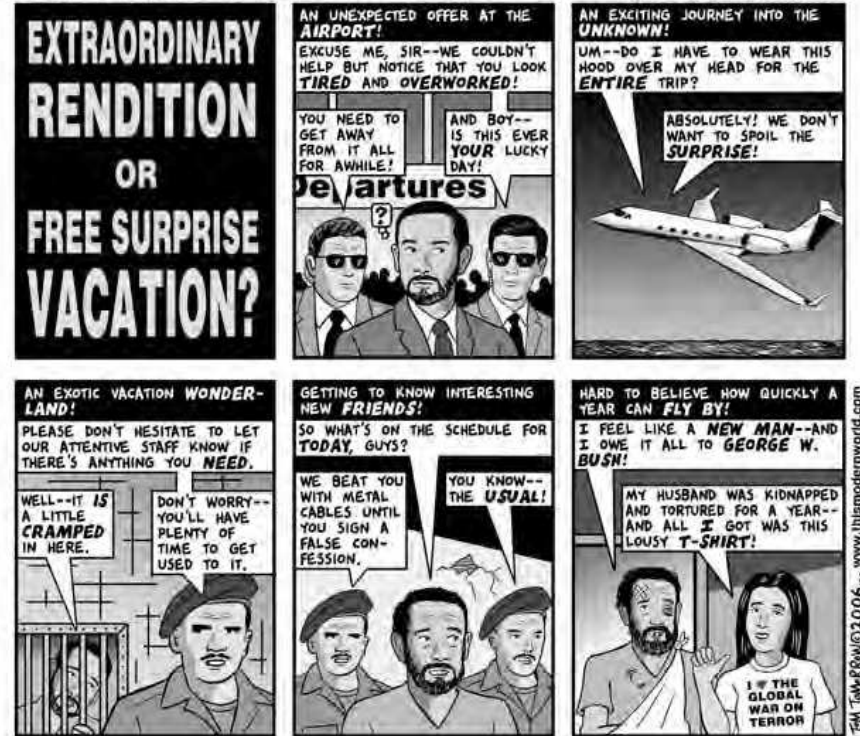
• In response to last week's story on the four LCC Board candidates we heard from **Rob Spooner** who said he was quoted accurately about Mary Spilde's "Neverland list of budget adjustments," but not in full context. "There is nothing Neverland about the cuts themselves," he said. "When they happen, they will be real. The Neverland aspect is supposing that all this slashing and burning will encourage more students to attend. The official plan is to cut sections, cut support staff, cut supplies, defer computer replacements, defer maintenance and raise tuition by 5 percent. All of this is expected to lead to 1 percent more students attending classes. This is unlikely."

• We're hearing from local "bridgeophiles" that the first round of open houses on the **I-5 Willamette Bridge project** in early May was disappointing. Back in 2003 when the temporary I-5 bridge was being built, ODOT's Dean Fuller talked to a local citizens' group about ODOT building a permanent "signature bridge" at the entry to Eugene. But the designs being rolled out at open houses are "uninspiring and resemble freeway overpasses," according to one observer. Another ODOT open house is planned for July and a public hearing in December or January. Construction is due to begin in 2009. Want to comment on the project or suggest a bridge name? Send an email to ann.i.sanders@odot.state.or.us To read a public comment log on the project, Google "Willamette River Bridge" to find the ODOT site.

• **Boycott all gas stations May 15?** Emails are circulating claiming this grassroots action will send a powerful message to the oil industry that Americans are fed up with high gas prices and aren't going to take it anymore. Well, the intention is good, but the oil industry will just laugh it off. The industry tracks sales each week and month, and those numbers are not going to drop until people change their consumption habits. Want to really scare the crap out of the oil giants? Get a few million people to carpool or ride bicycles for a month. Fight for urban infill. Elect candidates whose careers are not lubricated by the oil cartels.

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



news Briefs

BATTLING OVER CANS, BOTTLES

There is a reason those big redemption machines at the grocery store spit back many of the bottles Eugeneans try to recycle for store credit. Current bottle legislation only requires Oregon grocery stores to accept the brands of beer and carbonated beverage containers they sell in the store.

A bill before the Oregon House Committee on Energy and the Environment would require beverage distributors to include a 5-cent deposit on all "water and flavored water" containers in addition to beer and soft drinks. This means all those bottles of Evian and Aquafina drunk in Eugene would require a redeemable nickel deposit. It would also demand that stores redeem brands of beverages they don't sell.

The number of beverages such as bottled water, smoothies, teas and juices have risen dramatically since the original "Oregon Bottle Bill" was passed. The 1971 bill was the first of its kind in the country. Since it passed, the rate of bottle return has been about 90 percent according to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ).

On the other hand, the DEQ also says the tonnage of rigid plastic containers that was collected through curbside between 1993 and

2005 has increased by more than 250 percent. Oregonians are recycling less than 25 percent of the plastic containers we use.

The update to Oregon's 1971 bottle bill faces opposition from two sides. The strongest opposition comes from the Northwest Grocery Association — which has also lobbied against enviro-friendly legislation such as the proposed grocery bag tax. It has also successfully lobbied against previous changes to the bottle bill. And some environmentalists feel the 5-cent return is not enough of an incentive to recycle.

The proposed bill has passed in the Senate. If it passes in the House, grocers will have to accept nearly all beverage containers that customers return. The original bill caused drastic improvements in recycling and litter reduction in Oregon, and supporters hope this bill will do the same.

— Camilla Mortensen

WUERTHNER ON WILDFIRES

Fire season may start early this year. According to a report released by the National Interagency Fire Center, there is "significant fire potential" across the West. But not everyone sees wildfire as something to fear.

Fire season in Oregon will be affected by below-average rain and snowfall during the past winter and spring. This sort of news worries many in the Northwest. Last year a record 9.8 million acres burned in the U.S. and over \$1 billion was spent trying to put out those fires.

Author, photographer and conservationist George Wuerthner doesn't see putting out fires as the best thing for the environment. His upcoming talk — titled for the book he recently edited and photographed, *Wildfire: A*



George Wuerthner