

The Bottom Line

Lane County can no longer rely on federal funds

In the good old days, federal policy makers, recognizing that about 60 percent of our county's land is owned by the federal government (which does not pay property taxes), provided federal funds that covered a generous portion of the costs of Lane County government.

In the good old days, even though our property taxes were among the lowest in the state, Lane County budgets were adequate to provide needed public programs and services.

Federal funds that enabled us to be a low-property tax county terminated in 2006. Despite efforts of Oregon's congressional delegation, chances for renewed funding are dim.

Ballot measures 20-129 and 20-130 are designed to address the gap caused by loss of federal funds. 20-129 proposes a 1.1 percent income tax. 20-130 would cap Lane County income tax rates at 2 percent. The League of Women Voters of Lane County urges a yes vote for both measures.

Our research indicates that, without this tax, there will be substantial, devastating reductions in public safety and social service programs.

The League recognizes that some voters are asking questions:

Why aren't other Oregon counties also having budget crises? Counties that don't have large areas of federally owned land did not get federal funds to lighten their tax loads and have had higher property tax rates for years. Some counties including Coos, Douglas and Jackson that once enjoyed lower tax rates because they received federal funds are also facing budget crises.

Ballot measures 20-129 and 20-130 both require spending the income taxes on public safety. Some say that jailing is like locking the barn door after the horse is stolen. What's wrong with closing jail beds? Public safety programs are not limited to jail beds. Public safety is broadly defined in both measures. It includes programs such as youth and adult corrections, crime prevention, mental health services, alcohol and drug treatment, crime victim services, drug court, interagency narcotics enforcement, parole and investigations and supervision of misdemeanor domestic violence offenders.

According to Dr. Sarah Hendrickson, Lane County Public Health officer, "Public safety is a critical arm for intervention with families at risk for the ravages of uncontrolled drug dependence, domestic violence, and crime, all of which are closely related to the well-being of our children."

Much of our county's general fund is spent on public safety. Approval of an income tax for public safety would free up general fund monies that would otherwise go for public safety. Those dollars could then pay for veterans' services, animal control and abuse services, the Extension Service, county parks, WIC (Women, Infants and Children health and nutrition services) and elderly and disabled services.

Why can't money from other programs pay for these public safety and social service programs? Much of the county's money must go for mandated services or is dedicated for special purposes.

How do these measures differ from the income tax voters narrowly defeated last year? The present proposal would provide revenue to maintain existing programs. The 2006 proposal would have raised additional revenue for expanded programs. The 2006 proposal included property tax credits advantageous to large landholders. Those credits have been eliminated from this proposal.

Why does this proposal exempt retirement incomes? State law prohibits counties from taxing Social Security and PERS income. Federal case law prohibits Oregon counties from taxing government pensions.

Responding to public complaints that it was unfair to tax private pensions when government pensions were exempt, the commissioners decided to treat all pensions alike.

"Let's face it," *Eugene Weekly* editors wrote in a recent Slant column referring to Commissioner Bobby Green's support of a county income tax, "All the choices currently available to the county are bad ones."

This is a time of transition. Hopefully, more choices will become available.

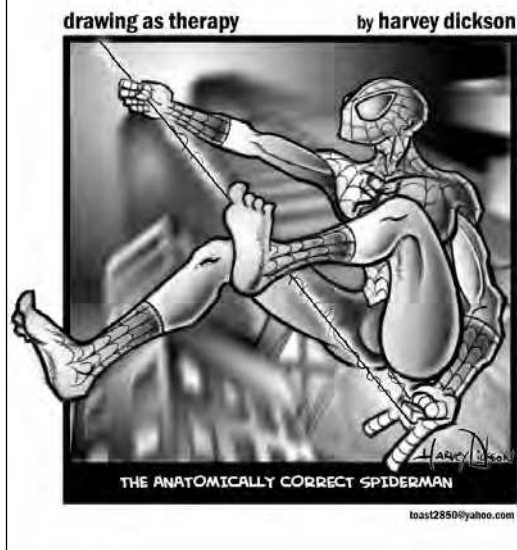
Lane County residents need to be able to count on help from the sheriff's office when they call for help; victims of crime need support; adult addicts need the treatment that will give them the chance to straighten out their lives and provide models for their children; young offenders need life-changing programs that will give them a second chance by helping them make better choices; many families coping with mental health issues desperately need life-saving services; and babies threatened by acts of methamphetamine users need the services of our health department.

But inflation marches on, and the population of Lane County continues to grow.

The bottom line is that Lane County cannot count on funding like the \$47 million that came from Washington, D.C., last year.

The League of Women Voters of Lane County believes that we cannot ignore the damage that loss could cause and urges approval of Ballot Measures 20-129 and 20-130.

Flo Alvergue and Nancie Fadeley are co-presidents of the League of Women Voters of Lane County. Kappy Eaton is the League's action chair. The LWV is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.



influence. These swindlers insist we must declare pre-emptive war on our forests with chainsaws to save the forest from itself.

As always, the simple truth dispels the myths of those who stand to profit from the continued plunder of our native forests. To learn to separate wildfire fact from fiction, please attend "Wildfire: A Century of Failed Forest Policy," a slideshow presentation by George Wuerthner, at 7 pm Tuesday, May 15, in 180 PLC on the UO campus.

*Josh Schlossberg
Eugene*

REVOKE PROLIFERATION

I am writing to express my grave concern and opposition to the National Nuclear Security Administration's plan to build new nuclear weapons. The Reliable Replacement Warhead program is dangerous, expensive and unnecessary.

The RRW will jeopardize U.S. national security by hindering international non-proliferation initiatives and crippling international nuclear disarmament efforts. Building new nuclear weapons will make it impossible to provide leadership in assisting North Korea in dismantling its nuclear weapons program, convincing Iran to halt uranium enrichment and discouraging new countries from developing nuclear weapons programs.

Maintaining the U.S. arsenal runs contrary to international law. The nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, of which the U.S. is a signatory and one of the chief architects, has helped to prevent the worldwide proliferation of nuclear weapons. Under Article VI of the NPT, the United States is obligated to dismantle its nuclear stockpile. The NNSA should adopt a curatorship program in which nuclear weapons are maintained, not augmented, while the nuclear stockpile awaits dismantlement.

The RRW is expensive and unnecessary. The NNSA already spends billions of dollars every year making sure our nuclear arsenal is reliable and will last for decades. The Government Accounting Office has estimated that simply building Complex 2030 will cost an additional \$150 billion.

According to a study conducted by the nuclear labs themselves, the nuclear weapons we have now could last as long as 100 years.

The Department of Energy has requested \$89 million for RRW in the fiscal year '08 budget. Please oppose funding for the dangerous, expensive and unnecessary RRW program.

*Guy Prouty
Eugene*

HELP SAVE THE ANIMALS

We really appreciate the extensive coverage *EW* gave last week (4/26) to the local effort to create a no-kill community in Lane County, utilizing nationally proven strategies at no net cost to the taxpayers, with the goal of ending the killing of adoptable and medically/behaviorally treatable companion animals and feral cats in our Lane County animal shelters.

In order to accomplish this as quickly as possible, we need the support and volunteer efforts of every caring "can-do" resi-

dent in this community! These are your shelters! Help make them safe for the animals entering their doors!

The No Kill Community Coalition (NKCC) meets on the second Monday of each month at 6:30 pm at Harris Hall in the Lane County Administration/County Court House building, located at the corner of 8th Avenue & Oak Street in Eugene. All people interested in helping Lane County become a no-kill community are urged to attend! The next meeting will be Monday, May 14. For more information, check out www.nokillcommunity.org

*Diana Robertson
Co-Chair, NKCC Steering Committee
Eugene*

NO-KILL NO WAY TO GO

As a shelter volunteer, I hate the idea of euthanizing animals, yet I can't support "no-kill" shelters (4/26).

Warehousing animals indefinitely, as many no-kill shelters do, is nothing short of cruelty. I think of Rusty, a formerly friendly golden retriever mix, and the many other dogs like him who turn into snarling, lunging maniacs who literally ricochet off the walls after just a few weeks in a cage.

What's more, storing animals away does nothing to prevent more from being born only to end up homeless. Even if we could house the 6 million to 8 million animals who will enter U.S. shelters this year, what would we do with the 6 to 8 million next year, and the year after that? It's impossible for most no-kills to keep up with the number of unwanted animals, so most turn animals away when they fill up, leaving animals at the mercy of people who don't want them, on the streets or in another shelter that does euthanize.

Reducing euthanasia rates is a goal toward which we should all strive, but we must do it by spaying and neutering to prevent more animals from being born — not by warehousing cats and dogs just to make ourselves feel better.

To learn more, visit www.helpinganimals.com

*Lindsay Pollard-Post
PETA staff writer
Norfolk, Va.*

SHAPE UP, LCARA

Camilla Mortensen and *EW* are to be congratulated for bringing the tragic plight of Lane County's shelter animals into a much clearer focus (4/26). Our overall community and our public shelter have shamefully failed what were once wonderful cats and dogs on a massive scale, and