

• **The county income tax** took a big hit at the ballot box this week. We recommended a no vote, but we're not celebrating. Some Lane County voters automatically thumb-down any tax proposal, but that's not what killed the income tax. We think people will back a different proposal in the fall, but county commissioners need to draft a tax that makes more sense. What would that look like? Dump the flat tax; make the tax more graduated like the existing federal income tax brackets. Increase the burden on businesses and corporations that operate in Lane County, and include income they make as businesses, not just on Lane County sales. Earmark money for social services as well as public safety. It's a lot cheaper to prevent crime and homelessness than to deal with it later. It costs taxpayers \$350 a night for a prisoner in the Lane County jail, and we all pick up the \$860 a night tab for an uninsured stay at the Johnson Unit mental health floor at Sacred Heart. As one Eugene city official recently told us, "When basic needs are not being met, it's a huge public safety cost."

• **U.S. Attorney Stephen Peifer** offended many in Judge Anne Aiken's courtroom Tuesday, May 15, when he tried to compare the Operation Backfire eco-saboteurs' defense that they never physically hurt anyone to the Klu Klux Klan "burning empty churches." He then went on to compare their possible motivations to a person who commits a race crime "because you hate all blacks." But that person he said, may also hate "an individual black person." Defense attorney Amanda Lee was quick to point out such comparisons were "appalling" and "historically inaccurate – an insult to African Americans." Also of interest in the court, Peifer made repeated references to the supposed "Family," the name the FBI and the media have seized upon to refer to the defendants. Sources say that "The Family" was rarely used among the saboteurs, mainly by Daniel McGowan, whose taped discussions with wire-wearing Jake Ferguson provided much of the FBI's information. We wonder what the FBI made of references in the tapes to something called "The Weekly"?

• **Could Oregon handle an Eliot Spitzer**, the New York firebrand, for attorney general? That's not exactly the Oregon tradition, but the rumor is around that Hardy Myers will announce after the session that he's not going to run in 2008. Wide open race. On the D side, Greg McPherson, Portland lawyer and legislator, is most mentioned. Not exactly Eliot. Consider another D, John Kroger, Lewis and Clark law professor with quite a resume: Marine Corps, Harvard, Yale, Mafia prosecutor in New York City, Enron prosecutor in D.C. Could be Eliot-West. One more oft-mentioned name is Floyd Prozanski, our own excellent legislator and prosecutor, but why don't we persuade him to skip the state contest and run for Lane County district attorney, post-Harclerod? Isn't that great to contemplate! The only R name we've heard is Kevin Mannix, who doesn't seem to have much traction. He'd be an anti-Eliot for sure.

• **Federal funding** for Oregon counties? That's one of the issues complicating this week's vote on the county income tax, but we heard last week from Oregon Congresswoman Darlene Hooley (D-West Linn), that she thinks the continued federal funding to Oregon counties has a "good chance" of passing. She offers "no guarantees," and says it's "not a done deal," but both one- and five-year extensions are in the budget bill which has passed the House. Bush has threatened a second veto, but the details are still shaking out as we go to press. Hopefully, Hooley is making the right call.

• **The topic of journalism ethics** always gets us fired up, and last week several prominent journalists were in town and on the UO campus thanks to the Ruhl Lecture and the Payne Awards for Ethics in Journalism. We applaud journalists who stand up for the First Amendment and their code of ethics, particularly when it requires personal sacrifice, but nobody wants to talk about the bigger issues of media ethics. Most media claim to be fair and balanced, but in fact they are not. Our local daily and broadcast newsrooms, for example, never investigate the shady sales tactics of some local car dealers who happen to be their biggest advertisers. Then there's the ethics of omission. The national media did not bother adequately to investigate the White House build-up to the war in Iraq, and big media devote endless time and ink to celebrity gossip while giving token attention to social injustice and environmental catastrophe. Likewise, the local media give only superficial attention to the inner workings of our institutions and businesses and even local government. When was the last time the *R-G* seriously probed our outrageously expensive city attorney who also represents businesses that do business with the city, our unresponsive city manager, our distant district attorney, contractors who get the bulk of city bids, shady developers in the city and county, unbalanced collegiate sports funding, etc.? Journalism ethics? Let's salute the bedraggled reporter who goes to jail rather than reveal his or her sources; but more importantly, let's demand from our local publishers and station owners that they tell us what's really going on in our communities. Democracy relies on an informed public, and reporters, editors and owners take on an occupational burden of public trust. That's what journalism ethics is really all about.

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



news Briefs

BIG RAISE FOR CITY MANAGER?

The Eugene City Council may give City Manager Dennis Taylor a big raise a month before it evaluates his performance.

Taylor, whose annual salary is about \$142,000, has scheduled a council meeting for June 13 to discuss a raise. His performance evaluation isn't scheduled until July 18.

Mayor Kitty Piercy advocated for a meeting on the raise before the evaluation in an email to city councilors. She said she met with other council officers who agreed "it would be good to discuss the compensation level for the city manager position in Eugene, no matter who is holding that position. We want

to sure that the compensation level is an appropriate one for a city manager of Eugene. Right now our city manager receives a lower compensation than the Springfield City Manager."

Councilor Bonny Bettman objected in an email reply: "I absolutely disagree with the recommendation to consider the manager's compensation before evaluating his performance. That recommendation is absurd since the compensation SHOULD be based on performance, not on other manager's salaries."

Taylor's past evaluations from the council have been mixed. Conservative councilors have generally praised him, but three progressive councilors gave critical reviews.

Taylor has been criticized for: failing to fully investigate the police department's failure to stop a long sex crime spree by officers against women; withholding information from elected officials; putting the city bureaucracy's interests over the community's; and setting policy instead of following council direction on policy. Last year, Taylor clashed with the council when he opposed an independent police auditor.

Taylor applied for a city manager job in Lawrence, Kan., last year but didn't get the position. Taylor, who's been through five jobs in 16 years, has been in Eugene for four years. — Alan Pittman

WHEN MONEY MATTERS

A chronic underfunding of the humanities leaves some UO students and faculty wondering about institutional commitment to cultivating diversity. Loss of funds to recruit and retain faculty members from diverse backgrounds also means decreased diversity in the Eugene area as talented instructors search for employment elsewhere.

Due to severe budget cuts, the

