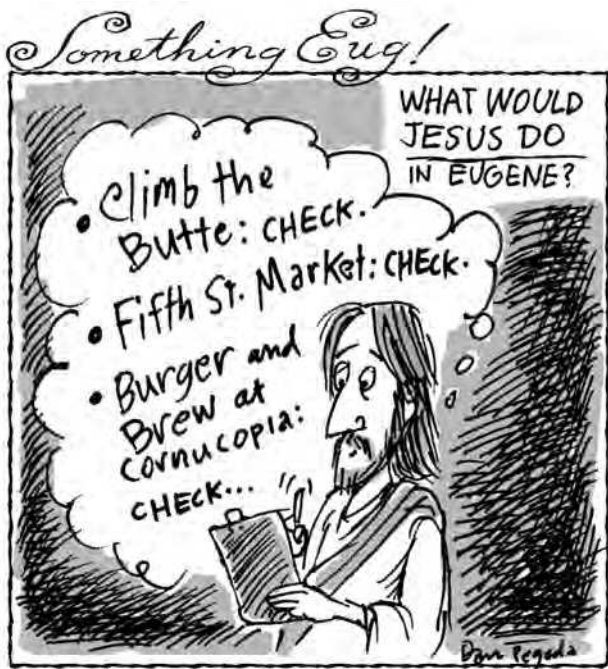




communicate with a person who would rather offend your sense of smell than kill a few bugs? Or a person who thinks squalor is a logical alternative to cleanliness? If they like living in third-world conditions, that's their prerogative; they can deal with the repercussions when they try to sell their homes. But don't drag your neighbors down with you.

*Matt Brockway
Springfield*

DEAL WITH ROOT CAUSES

Jeff Merkley, Democratic Party primary candidate for U.S. Senate, appears to be yet another supposed environmental candidate like Wyden and Blumenauer who favor any number of symbolic and "feel good" laws, programs and fixes that might retard environmental and livability degradation, but who won't deal with the root cause of environmental and livability losses: ever more heavy consuming Americans needing ever more goods, services and housing.

In the 20th century, the U.S. added 200 million people with almost 100 million people added from 1970 to 2000. But Merkley, while acknowledging that all our growth comes from immigration, refuses to say how many Oregonians or Americans will be enough.

He dodged the question by focusing on technological fixes for global warming and on his work on Measure 49. While his work on Measure 49 is laudable, we never would have needed Measure 49 (or Senate Bill 100

which Measure 49 reinstated) if we hadn't been faced with the specter of endless U.S. and Oregon population growth. After witnessing a lifetime of environmental, livability and freedom losses, symbolic fixes for and the evasion of our biggest environmental problem — ever more Americans continuing to consume 25 percent of the world's resources — are not tolerable.

We need candidates who deal with the cause of environmental and livability degeneration, not with more ways of dealing with its symptoms.

*Brent Thompson
Ashland*

CUT WHERE IT COUNTS

All the talk in Washington now is about how to stimulate the economy and avoid a deep recession. Now, I think, is our chance to really make a significant change.

If we want to put money into the economy at the bottom and have it bubble up to the rest of the economy, the best and quickest way to do it is to cut taxes where it really counts. At the present time we tax every dime that is earned in wages — up to \$75,000 per year — for Social Security and Medicare. Then we require that the employer match that amount of taxes in further taxes.

If we were to exempt annual wages of under \$25,000 from these taxes, it would give an instant boost to the workers in their wages and not cost the employer anything. Not only that, but it would reduce the taxes for the small businesses who hire most of these low-income people.

The federal and state taxes that low-income people pay are only a small fraction of what they pay for Social Security and Medicare. Increasing the cap on higher wages from \$75,000 to a higher level could easily make up the loss of income to the government. There is no need to have only the lower income people pay for the whole Social Security program. That program is a benefit to all of us.

*Bob Cassidy
Eugene*

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