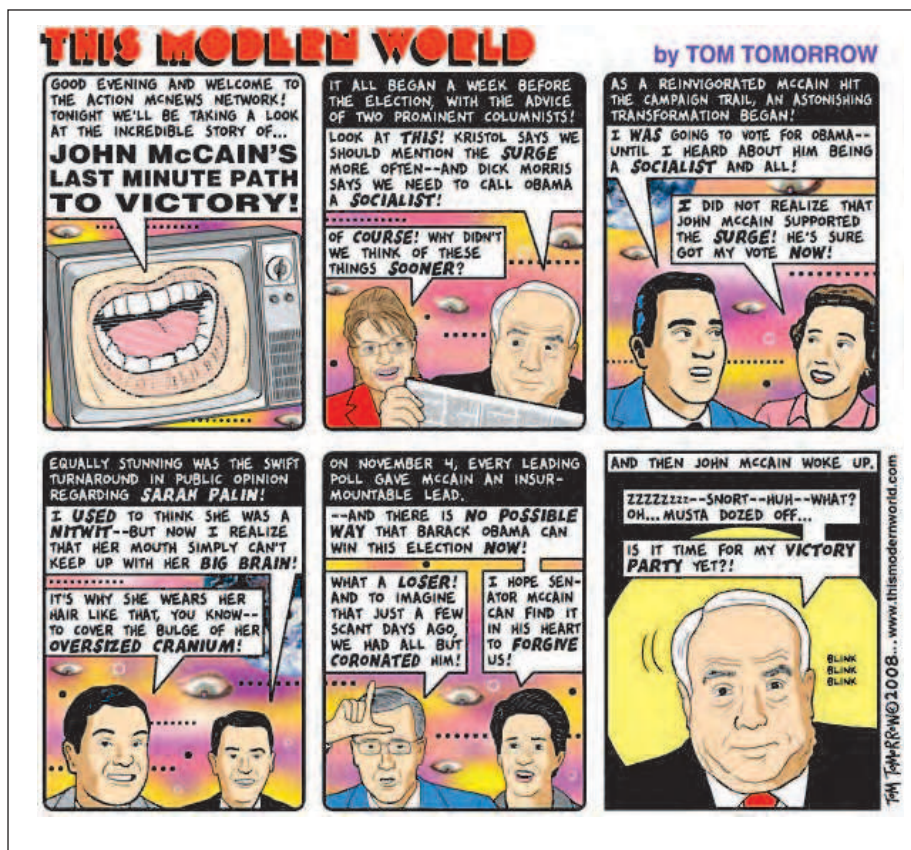




news Briefs

ECOHILLEL GREEN JUDAISM AT THE UO

It is 6:30 on a Friday night, and voices singing ancient songs fill the warm living room of the UO Hillel House where students in the Jewish community gather to socialize, share Shabbat (the Jewish name for Sabbath or day of rest) and get exposed to service opportunities.

Rows of students sit for weekly Shabbat services, which involve prayer and dinner, but this week comes with a twist. Tonight

is spotlighting ECOHillel, a committee of students focusing on environmental issues. "The environment and Judaism are my biggest passions," says Belinda Judelman, head of the committee.

After prayers, students are requested to read from pieces of 100 percent recycled paper left on top of reusable bags donated by Market of Choice. The students read quotes on sustainability from Deuteronomy, Jewish folktales about respecting the earth, tips on sustainability and statistics on energy consumption.

"I would like to make this the greenest Hillel possible," says Paul Bessemer, Hillel's executive director, addressing the room. "We should be a light unto nations, bright ... but only a 20 watt bulb." Everyone chuckles as they hurry to line up for the evening's completely organic menu of stuffed peppers, potatoes, orzo and butternut squash soup, purchased at the local Tuesday Market. Tonight the usual paper plates, plastic forks and cups are traded in for reusable plates and silverware.

"Our goal is to make baby steps," says Navit Parker. The committee is currently working to make some green changes in the Hillel building, like improving the lack of insulation from single paned windows. The committee started recycling practices last year, and when the weather improves, community gardens may be planted. ECOHillel also wants to see other students eating locally grown foods, especially in the dorms.

The committee looks forward to having more events that focus on the educational points. Parker would like to have short environmental discussions after services. For now, the committee is happy to have students attend the event.

After dinner several students make sure no food goes to waste by taking leftover orzo home. "It's delicious," says Maya Protter, who regularly attends Hillel. "The perfect mix of veggies and starch."

For information on future events contact ECOHillel at eco@oregonhillel.org

— Cali Bagby

SPREAD THE WEALTH IN OREGON

With Barack Obama popular in Oregon while calling for a tax increase on those earning more than \$250,000, could such a tax plan work here?

If Oregon state income taxes were raised 10 percent on those earning more than \$250,000 adjusted gross income, taxes on everyone else could be cut about 4 percent, according to an *EW* analysis of state tax return data. That's an average savings of \$86.

About 2 percent of people in Oregon make more than \$250,000 after deductions. The rest, 98 percent, make less and would get the tax break.

If somewhat similar to Obama's plan, taxes went up for those over \$250,000 and stayed the same for those earning \$100,000 to \$250,000, everyone else would save 6 percent or \$91 on average. About 90 percent of state taxpayers make less than \$100,000.

The state could, of course, decide to keep the money to unpack crowded classrooms. In that case the tax increase for the wealthiest 2 percent translates into \$143 million in new annual revenue.

Oregon's wealthiest could easily afford a tax increase. In the last three decades the income of the wealthiest 1 percent of Oregonians has doubled while the wage of the typical Oregon worker has dropped slightly after adjusting for inflation, according to the Oregon Center for Public Policy (OCPPI).

Lane County doesn't have an income tax. A regressive, flat tax on people at the same rate regardless of income was voted down last year. If the county imposed a 10 percent surcharge on state income taxes only for those making more than \$250,000 a year, the tax would generate about \$11 million per year.

The \$11 million could be used to reduce county property taxes on the poor. In Oregon, property taxes hit the poor about three times harder than the rich, according to studies of taxes as a percent of income by the Center for Tax Justice (CTJ).

The county could also keep the revenue. Lane County faces big deficits as federal timber payments are scheduled to ramp down over the next four years and may not be renewed.

The city of Eugene could also do an Obama-style tax on the rich. A surcharge on state income taxes for those earning more than \$100,000 a year (beginning at 2 percent and increasing to 4 percent for incomes over \$500,000) would generate roughly \$5 million per year, according to city tax studies.

The city could use the money to help 4J reduce class sizes. An earlier city effort using property taxes to help schools ran afoul of Measure 5. But Measure 5 does not restrict using income taxes to fund schools.

— Alan Pittman

WOPR PROTEST PERIOD REINSTATED

Local activists including Oregon Wild and Cascadia Wildlands Project were among five groups that filed a complaint in federal court last week against the BLM's Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR). The groups argued that by eliminating a 30-day public protest period, the BLM violated federal law. On Nov. 4, the BLM decided to reverse its decision and will allow the protest period after all.

Normally anyone who participated in a comment period is given the opportunity to protest the version of a plan that results from the agency's planning process. The BLM had argued that because the WOPR has caused such controversy, it won't be signed off on by BLM state director Ed Shepard; instead, Assistant Interior Secretary Stephen Allred will sign off. This meant, according to the BLM, that there was no need for a protest period since that applies only to documents approved by state directors or district managers.

The enviros begged to differ. Some 30,000 people commented on the BLM's controversial plan, which calls for a dramatic increase in public lands logging, and reduces protections for old-growth forests. Doug Heiken of Oregon Wild says, "the public has a right to comment on the government's proposal" and points out that there have been substantive changes to the WOPR since the original comment period.

According to CWP's legal director Dan Kruse, the BLM under the Bush administration tried to cut out that review period because "they want the final decision made while the Bush administration is still in office."

Kruse says that both the decision to move the decision up the administrative echelon and the decision to cut out the protest period violated federal law.

Kruse says of the decision to go forward with the protest period after all, "This is great news, so long as the BLM takes the protest period seriously and uses it as an opportunity to actually consider the input they receive. But if the BLM is just going to plow forward with their original schedule, without any meaningful response or review, then I don't think we've accomplished much."

The BLM is taking protests by mail only. For the address and other information go to <http://www.blm.gov/or/plans/wopr/protest.php> or call 202-208-5010. Protests must be filed by Dec. 8, 2008. — Camilla Mortensen

WAR DEAD

Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq began on March 20, 2003

(last week's numbers in parentheses):

- **4,189 U.S. troops killed*** (4,188)
- **30,764 U.S. troops injured*** (30,757)
- **145 U.S. military suicides*** (145)
- **314 coalition troops killed**** (314)
- **1,123 U.S. contractors killed** (accurate updates NA)

• **96,976 to 1.1 million civilians killed***** (96,766)

• **\$568.0 billion cost of war** (\$566.1 billion)

• **\$161.5 million cost to Eugene taxpayers** (\$161.0 million)

* through Nov. 3, 2008; source: icasualties.org;

some figures only updated monthly

** sources: icasualties.org, defenseink.mil

*** highest estimate; source: iraqbodycount.org; based on confirmed media reports; other groups calculate civilian deaths as high as 655,000 (Lancet survey, 2006) to 11 million (Opinion Research Business survey, 2008)