

GROUPS WANT ECO STIMULUS, NOT OILY PORK

President Barack Obama warned last week that if state and local government officials use the stimulus on wasteful projects, "I will call them out on it."

A coalition of Oregon environmental groups sent a letter to Gov. Ted Kulongoski last week to avoid that from happening. The letter urges the governor to direct the \$260 million in transportation stimulus money he controls to bike, walking and transit projects to reduce oil addiction, sprawl and global warming.

"We urge Governor Kulongoski to invest in the long list of ready-to-go transit, bike and pedestrian projects that will create jobs and make our communities stronger," Bob Stacey, executive director of 1000 Friends of Oregon, said in a statement. "As we rebuild the economy, let's invest in a 21st century transportation system that gives Oregonians better transportation choices, saves them money and helps reduce global warming pollution from cars and trucks."

The letter from the nine environmental groups points to research by the Surface Transportation Policy Project finding that investment in transit projects creates about 19 percent more jobs than new road or bridge projects.

The environmental groups argue that spending the flexible stimulus money on green transportation is needed to rebalance Oregon's skewed transportation spending. The state constitution prohibits spending state gas tax money on anything but roads, and the state transportation trust fund focuses mostly on highways.

The letter also urges Kulongoski to encourage Oregon local governments, who will control \$90 million of the federal stimulus, to focus on bike, pedestrian and transit projects.

The Oregon Environmental Council, 1000 Friends of Oregon, Environment Oregon, Coalition for a Livable Future, Bicycle Transportation Alliance, Willamette

• Wow, Lane County Sheriff Russ Burger must have a lot of extra time and money on his hands. Burger reportedly has sent letters to more than 10,000 **concealed gun nuts** to stir up support for his opposition to public records laws and create a problem that did not exist. What's next, mass mailings to concealed hairdresser permit holders? This expenditure of untold tens of thousands of dollars and staff time comes while Burger complains he doesn't have the money to stop burglaries. If this is a mass mailing for a NRA-backed re-election campaign, the sheriff should have paid for it himself.

• It's time for the state to **raise taxes** on the rich. Teetering at the edge of a gaping budget "pit" billions of dollars deep, there's no time to waste. Rainy day and federal stimulus money may hold back brutal cuts to services this year, but without new revenue the state will soon have to radically slash school and human service funding during a deep recession when it's most needed. To raise revenue, Oregon should overhaul its largely flat state income tax rates, some of the most regressive in the nation. Higher taxes on the wealthy will help, not hurt, the economy. Instead of letting the rich hoard the money, the state can liberate it and spend it on teachers and caregivers, stimulating job creation.

• Eugene, Springfield and the state should heed **Obama's warning** that anyone wasting the stimulus money will be publicly held accountable. We don't need more or bigger oil-addicted, climate-changing freeways. We need public transportation, bike paths and other truly green infrastructure that invest in the future, not throw money in cement. We'll be watching closely.

• Dan Carol of Eugene and Steve Hildebrand from Sioux Falls, Iowa, talked at the UO last week about the same issue that Obama organizer Nancy Webber highlights in this week's *EW* cover story: how to hold together and effectively deploy probably the greatest political organi-

zation ever assembled. They were keynoters at a forum sponsored by the Wayne Morse Center called "**Mobilizing New Constituencies**, the 2008 Elections." Carol, who was content and issues director for the Obama campaign, said the president is committed to appearing outside Washington. The strategy is part of "Organizing for Change" and "Organizing for America," which are new initiatives by the Democratic party.

Hildebrand, deputy national campaign manager for Obama '08, was identified by Carol as the "soul of the campaign." He gave fascinating details of the winning strategies. He emphasized that Barack Obama himself made all the critical calls such as whether to give the speech on race, how to deal with his minister, etc. Here are a few Hildebrand numbers and facts we had not heard before: 13 million names made up the Obama email list, and in a poll after the election, 55,000 said they would consider running for office; registration of new voters was a key strategic decision, and since 2004, new voter registrations increased 28 percent; in every battleground state, voters under 30 turned out at a higher rate than voters over 65; and Obama's huge win of the Hispanic vote disproved the Clinton line that Hispanics would not vote for an African-American. Barack Obama believes the voice of the people needs to drown out the lobbyists. Is that possible?

• Since Feb. 1, **Judge Ann Aiken** has been the chief judge for the federal District Court of Oregon. This is the first time in the 150 years of this court that a woman has been the chief. That was cause for celebration by friends and colleagues who filled a UO law school party space last Tuesday evening. Justice Martha Walters of the Oregon Supreme Court, another prominent woman jurist from Eugene, spoke and Judge Aiken responded. Dean Margie Paris, first woman dean of the UO law school, also praised the new chief. So much for the glass ceiling covering this corner of the legal profession! It's cracking wide open.

Pedestrian Coalition, Community Health Partnership, Upstream Public Health and the Oregon Transit Association signed the letter.

The lobbying effort appears to be having some effect. BikePortland.org reported that the Oregon Transportation Commission delayed a vote last week to quickly devote the stimulus to highway projects. 1000 Friends is organizing a grassroots lobbying effort at the tinyurl.com/greenstimulus website. — Alan Pittman

TALE OF TWO BRIDGES

In Eugene, boosting global warming, sprawl and oil addiction by widening the I-5 bridge was decided by highway bureaucrats meeting in secret years ago.

But in Portland, a proposed I-5 bridge widening is a major topic of public hearing and political debate.

"The issue has been contentious for months," the *Oregonian* reported, announcing another public hearing by elected officials on widening the Columbia River bridge.

Willamette Week reported that for Portland Mayor Sam Adams, the bridge widening decision is "the biggest deal on his desk."

In Eugene, the City Council and other elected officials have never held a public vote or a public hearing on the question of whether or not the I-5 bridge over the

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