

A Tale of Two Pens

Triumph over discrimination

In the first photo, six flags (for the second trimester of pregnancy?) and nine men form a phalanx behind President George W. Bush who is sitting at a small writing desk on what looks to be a stage. The nine men have arranged themselves in a tidy line, with the three tallest in the center. They're all dressed in black suits and shiny black shoes and they're all looking at their president. George W., meanwhile, is concentrating pretty hard. He's signing the Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003 to make illegal the procedure that was being used in 0.12 percent of all abortions.



Because the act doesn't provide any "health exception" for pregnant women facing a medical emergency, three federal district courts and three federal appeal courts had ruled the act unconstitutional. The Supreme Court, by a one-vote margin, overrode them, declaring the act constitutional.

The day that two of President Bush's Supreme Court nominees joined three others to protect discrimination against Lily, Bush declared that the great thing the Court had showed was that the Constitution "does not stand in the way of the people's representatives enacting laws reflecting the compassion and humanity of America."

Speaking of reflecting compassion and humanity, there's a second photo. Four women in bright red suits and one in a purple suit are crowded around President Barack Obama. He's holding the hand of Lily Ledbetter, who has her hand on his shoulder. With his other hand, he's passing to another woman in a green jacket one of the pens he has just used to sign the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. Everyone is looking at the pen-receiving woman, not Barack Obama, and Obama appears to be having a good time. And he's wearing an American flag pin.

The law he's just signed says that the 180-day statute of limitations for challenging unequal pay for equal work starts anew with every discriminatory paycheck. Initially, in 1979, Lily Ledbetter's salary as a Goodyear area manager was similar to the salaries of male area managers. By the end of 1997, when she retired, she was the only female area manager and was being paid \$3,727 per month. Her male area manager colleagues, no matter how new, were being paid \$4,286 to \$5,236 a month. In 2007, the Supreme Court, again exercising its compassion and humanity, ruled that Goodyear wasn't liable for its decade-plus payday discrimination against Lily Ledbetter because Lily hadn't initiated her suit within 180 days of the first discriminatory pay check.

In January 2009, the House passed the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act by 250-177. In the Senate, every Republican male except Pennsylvania's Arlen Specter voted *against* the Fair Pay Act. Every Democratic male senator voted *for* it, except Sen. Edward Kennedy, who was absent due to illness. Every female senator, including the four female Republican senators, voted *for* it.

The first photo is chilling for its display of cold male power against women. The second photo is inspiring for the women's enjoyment of the defeat of cold male power against women. The retired Goodyear area manager is heartwarming proud of her president for undoing five Supreme Court justices' protection of workplace discrimination. Meanwhile, the president is having a heck of a good time among representatives of one more group of people who has just triumphed, once again, over senseless, destructive, indefensible discrimination.

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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IGNORING THE PEOPLE

Easy mathematics. The proposal to upgrade City Hall seismically and mechanically is for \$5 million. It would assure that present police facilities will be safe. So, no need at this time to build a new \$17 million police station. That is one of the reasons that I with a majority of Eugeneans have voted against it, three times!

But here comes the city manager, ignoring citizens' preferences, and proposes to use \$17 million of city reserves to build a new police station. He got some councilors and even the major to agree with this.

Those reserves should support popular community services (library, Hult Center, parks and open spaces) and not be at the disposal of a city manager.

Another big question for me is the location of that new building. Where would it be placed? I would like to see a professional master plan for downtown Eugene, one that we and future generations can follow. How would the EWEB site for a new City Hall fit into that?

Lora Byxbe
Eugene

THE LAST CRASH

I remember the 1981-1984 recession in Lane County. The Agri-Pac cannery in downtown Eugene had a handful of openings. Lines at the fairgrounds to apply circled the building. Mills closed. The ones surviving busted the unions. "Not accepting applications" signs were a big seller. There were 2 million fewer people in Oregon and thousands moved away. Bummer.

If you got unemployment, you had to file in line and go to the office to claim a week's benefits. About an hour in line. Jobs planting trees had warnings to be fit or don't bother. Food stamps came in a booklet of script in denominations like cash. The jobs you could find paid the \$3.35 minimum wage. Only Manpower and Kelly Girl offered temp jobs.

Despite the dreary winters, we still had great summers. And Wendy Ray and Uncle Fuzzie gave us a fun, innocent AM radio show mornings on KUGN. Sean Hannity

was in troubled youth detention and Dr. Laura Schlessinger was shacking up with Bill Balance from his L.A. call-in radio show.

Greg Hume
Creswell

IDEOLOGY VS. SCIENCE

Opinions expressed in some recent letters seem to be based on misinformation being spread by the Oregon Toxics Alliance, which is renowned for misrepresentation. At a recent community meeting concerning the proposed spraying of Btk for gypsy moths in southeast Eugene, the local leader of OTA introduced herself as "an associate professor at UO." She once taught dance there, but was let go some years ago. She has no current association with any university.

She introduced a speaker this way: "Dr. Tom Kerns has come down from Portland to discuss the medical aspects of Btk." The intention was clearly to suggest that Kerns is a medical doctor; he has a Ph.D. in philosophy.

The OTA website includes provocative statements such as "The application of harmful chemicals over public areas without our permission is a violation of our human rights." Btk is a biological insecticide, not chemical. Even the base of the spray, the liquid into which the Btk is mixed, is organic. When ODA first used Bt for the 1980s gypsy moth outbreak, the idea came from organic gardeners, who were then pretty much the only ones using Bt.

Scientific research and the preponderance of anecdotal evidence from all Oregon spray projects — including south Eugene near Crest School six years ago, and the major project throughout Lane County in the mid-'80s — attests to the lack of human harm or environmental impact from the aerial spraying of Btk.

The 2008 catch — seven moths scattered around a large area — probably represents a population of hundreds of moths which, if not quickly eradicated, will spread far beyond that area this year. If no spray occurs now, an even larger area will be sprayed in