

• If you're a local Democrat who has always hankered to be an Oregon **state senator, here's your chance**, maybe. Our tough, in-your-face Senator Vicki Walker is giving up her seat for a \$97,000-a-year job as chair of the Oregon parole board. Not surprising after her years as a virtual volunteer in the legislature. We'll miss both her clout and her grit. But there's no shortage of applicants willing to be screened by the Lane County Democratic party and selected by the county commissioners.

Some progressives are trying to persuade Andrea Ortiz to leave the city council and head for Salem. We'd rather have her here. If she resigns from the council, a conservative majority could appoint her replacement. Bob Ackerman has been heard musing about going back to the legislature. He served well but would not be our first choice at this time. Probably the two strongest candidates are the two representatives from the senate district, Nancy Nathanson and Chris Edwards. A former chair of the Lane County Democratic party, Nathanson served rather conservatively in the city council, winning the endorsement of then Republican Mayor Jim Torrey when she ran for mayor against Kitty Piercy. She has strong numbers in the legislature from the OLCV, ACLU and other groups that rank members, but Edwards has the excitement right now. He has grown to be a highly effective arm-twister, best demonstrated by his effective role in passing SB 528 which banned nearly all field burning. If either Nathanson or Edwards is selected, that will leave a house seat to be filled. If you're a local Democrat who has always hankered to be an Oregon house member, here's your chance, sort of.

• Oregon has more than 10,000 violent crimes and 130,000 property crimes a year, but last week what was the biggest crime-fighting priority in the state? About 70 Oregon State Police dressed in full camo and assisted by untold numbers of county sheriff's deputies came down hard on a few unarmed environmental protesters blocking old-growth logging in the **Elliott State Forest**. But that wasn't enough. They even called out the National Guard. The tab for the paramilitary invasion force (Operation Chainsaw Freedom?) has already topped \$50,000. With trial, jail and prosecution costs, the bill could easily run into the millions and will likely far exceed any timber sale revenue. Such revenue, by the way, doesn't really go to schools as advertised. The state's fluid budgeting in effect mixes it in with everything else, so it's available for the state to spend on yet more wasteful, anti-environmental misadventures.

• Eugene City Councilor Betty Taylor and local architect Otto Poticha made the most sense July 10 at the Eugene City Club discussion between Taylor and Councilor Mike Clark. Clark argued for the city **buying the EWEB administrative building** and moving city offices over there. Taylor argued against this because the EWEB building is no bigger than the present City Hall, is difficult to reach by auto, bike and foot and such a move would further damage Eugene's downtown. Both Taylor and Poticha, who spoke during the question period, championed the historical significance, the character (if the building is maintained properly) and the accessibility of the present City Hall. Taylor said seismic retrofitting could be done for \$6 million to \$8 million. But Clark claimed that it would take \$40 million to make the present City Hall work. Taylor said the space vacated by the fire department is still empty. If the police leave, that's more vacant space. If the sprawling city staff needs more consolidation, even in this age of computer linkage, Taylor suggested building a functional office building on the 8th Ave. parking lot across from City Hall. We wonder how the city staff, who appear to be the movers of this "new City Hall" discussion, feel about that proposal.

• We don't seem to talk much about Republicans in "Slant," but the **Republican race for Oregon governor** should be fascinating to watch – if you're a political junkie, that is. Allen Alley, former Portland high-tech exec, already has announced. A mechanical engineer by profession, he was Governor Kulongoski's economic advisor and chief of staff in 2007. Greg Walden, congressman from Oregon's 2nd district, is the biggest name tossed around, but he has nothing to say about the possibility of leaving D.C. for Salem. Jason Atkinson, legislator from southern Oregon, also makes the top tier. No public announcement there either. The trick in the elephant's ring will be to stake out conservative turf necessary to winning the R nomination in this state but make moderate moves necessary to winning the general election. Some D observers ruefully predict an Oregon unemployment rate still so high in 2010 that a Republican could steal the top job. Stay tuned.

• Kudos to ODOT staff for slipping a better bike connection to Glenwood into the I-5 bridge widening project. Here's another good idea: Instead of tearing down and throwing away the hundreds of tons of cement and rebar in the old bridge, how about reusing it as a **hanging garden**? The "temporary" bridge already has the on ramps for a rest stop. Add a few dump trucks of top soil and volunteer planting efforts, and the hanging garden over the Willamette could become a spectacular tourist wonder on the I-5 corridor and powerful symbol of truly green transportation.



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