

such as requiring employers to use the highly effective federal E-Verify program or requiring proof of residency to receive non-federally mandated public benefits.

The cowardice extends to our two senators in Washington. Jeff Merkley made a huge deal of Gordon Smith's alleged non-use of E-Verify and then voted twice to kill the program. Ron Wyden's voting record has shown that he is more interested in protecting illegals than protecting American workers.

Yeah, I know I'll be branded a racist, xenophobe and worse for raising the issue. But this has nothing to do with race: it's about numbers — unsustainable numbers that are going to overwhelm us if our "leaders" don't grow backbones and soon. Otherwise, that hallowed mantra of the left, "sustainability," will never be realized.

*Jerry Ritter  
Springfield*

**SAVE YOUR VIRGIN EARS**

I liked Greg Hume's Aug. 6 "pubic" letter about the Oregon Country Fair. I don't go to fairs of any kind because I can't stand the loud ear-busting "music" and wall-to-wall people, many doing goofy things.

The best thing about fairs is that they are so optional — go if you like, stay home if you don't like, and shit is all in the eyes and ears and mouths of individual taste. But

beware, for you will catch deafness in fairs or at home when the volume is cranked up too high. Save your virgin ears.

*Bob Saxton  
Eugene*

**MINDFUL ABOUT MINING**

Firstly, I would like to congratulate you on featuring Roy Keene's article on gold mining (7/23) as a way to earn money while living simply. I'm guessing that the sidebar article by Camilla Mortensen was your effort to keep your activist credibility intact. But one interview and a Google search is no way to write anything but a misrepresentation of the facts.

In the first place, suction dredgers do not "often" run into mercury. When they do, 98 percent or more of it is taken OUT of the water by the dredge; what little bit that goes through will sink back to the bottom since mercury is so much heavier than water. This mercury, along with the arsenic and cyanide referenced, is already in the water, whether from natural deposits or from mining done a century ago. No new chemicals are put in the water. Water quality from sediment resuspension is only affected for a short distance below the dredge, and then it dissipates to background levels.

And there is plenty of compliance monitoring of mining — each miner must submit an operating plan and post a bond to

ensure cleanup, and the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management keep a close eye on claims. The 1872 mining law only gives the right to people to mine on public land. Subsequent laws have mandated environmental controls.

Finally, the 1872 law says nothing about having to be 18 years old to file a mining claim. Try not to rely on Wikipedia as a source.

*Brian Alexander  
Eugene*

**PEAK MONEY**

The writer Ed Abbey said, "Sentiment without action is the ruin of the soul."

Democratic politicians from the city of Eugene to Washington, D.C., shed crocodile tears over climate change yet push plans for highway expansion. Rep. Peter DeFazio's highway committee is shepherding a half trillion-dollar transportation bill, mostly dedicated to road construction. Gov. Kulongoski is pushing a long-term goal of \$18 billion for highway expansion. Eugene, Springfield and Lane County want about a billion dollars for bigger roads.

DeFazio and Mayor Kitty Piercy feign interest in mitigating climate change while supporting burning trees for electricity. Oregon's Democratic Party establishment supports clearcutting our state forests and allowing corporate timber barons to clearcut

and spray herbicides.

Greenwash is more dangerous than denying environmental problems since it lulls people to sleep thinking the crises are being addressed when they are not.

Proposals for "cap and trade" are scientifically illiterate. A great parody is at [www.CheatNeutral.com](http://www.CheatNeutral.com)

Both political parties are subservient to Wall Street and the monetary system's requirement for continued endless growth. Money is made the old fashioned way — it is loaned into existence based on the promise of future economic expansion. Now that we are passing peak oil, the economy will be smaller in the future, not bigger. The pretense that we are merely in a cyclical recession is dangerous disinformation that obscures root causes.

James Howard Kunstler, author of *The Long Emergency*, states, "This is not so much financial bad weather as financial climate change."

*Mark Robinowitz  
Eugene*

**SURLY SERVICE**

In response to Rigel Ross' (7/30) letter offering tips on how customers can help keep their favorite restaurants going during tough times: As someone who likes to eat out, it struck an odd chord in me. Eugene has many restaurants with great food and

**viewpoint/opinion** BY ROSE WILDE

**The Chair**

Walls within walls inside the county jail



**T**he Chair, for all the hype, really was not so imposing. A simple metal chair with several straps tucked into a corner of the Lane County Jail serves as the last resort in suicide prevention.

As he led me on a tour of the jail, Capt. Doug Hooley explained that several hundred inmates attempt suicide every year. If a person scores high for suicide risk when entering the jail, he or she is put on suicide watch, in a small room off the yellow cinderblock hallway of the segregation area Two or more staff may stand watch constantly to intervene. If necessary, the staff will take everything away, even the person's jail-issued clothes.

"One guy pried an old screw out of something, and used it," the captain demonstrated how, rubbing his clasped index finger and thumb against his wrist. "Another guy managed to break free even with three people trying to stop him. He ran down this hall and threw himself, headfirst, into that far wall. So when we have taken away everything, and they are naked and still trying, we strap them into The Chair until they calm down. We have a lot of safety rules — consulting medical staff, mental health staff, moving extremities. They usually give up soon — they don't like being in The Chair."

Continuing the tour, we approached an elevator bank. Holding up two fingers, Captain Hooley said, "I'm not flashing the peace sign, here; it's how the security officers know to send the elevator down and take me to the second Floor."

Already on the elevator I asked, "Are they always so prompt?"

"They always do a great job, but when the captain is in the jail, they tend to be on their toes," he said. What must it be like to lead an organization where having power and control over people is the point? He seemed humble. One of the staff even called him "Doug."

In one of the main housing areas, dozens of men milled around behind a clear window in a large open room, metal bunks lining the far wall. "All these men can be supervised by a couple of staff?"

"Actually, we could supervise even more inmates per deputy if we had built this jail with a more open layout. We have walls in the way that we have to look around — I'd show you but you probably don't want to see someone naked."

I already had one near miss when men returning from court were readmitted and strip searched as I was passing through with the captain. "Naked guy!" a deputy had shouted. Then Hooley had said, "Try to stay close to me — just in case ..." I

stuck close and chattered nervously, hoping he would not hold a grudge about the delay in re-opening the jail beds this May.

In the women's dormitory, a plump African-American woman wrenched a comb through a young white woman's long blond hair. The recipient of these ministrations reminded me of one of the girls in my Baltimore elementary school — her eyes slanty from the tight braid, and stony against the pain. Unlike the men, the other dozen women clustered around the action at the table, talking softly in the vast common area.

"Modern jails don't even have these clear walls separating the jail staff from the inmates in the main dormitory," he said.

"Wouldn't that be more dangerous for the staff?" I gestured at two not particularly tough looking deputies sat in the control area, observing the inmates behind the window.

"Actually, no. By taking down the walls, we have more mixing with the inmates, and more opportunity for role modeling and developing relationships." Few people change without a relationship with someone who supports them. But in a jail?

"Of course, if you asked one of the guys who worked in this kind of jail for 20 years, they'd be pretty against it. Having those walls between them make you think you need them," he added.

Through the tour, Hooley gently made his case for the recently funded 84 jail beds, what services they could offer with funding for another 72 beds: more medical staff to assist the diabetics; a nurse practitioner; dentists to pull teeth; more mental health specialists to help disturbed inmates get stable and ready to consider change, not to mention more safety for everyone. Maybe fewer suicide attempts?

I would do a lot to avoid spending one minute in the jail as an inmate, yet dozens of people check in every day. Many looked fairly comfortable, as though some time inside a concrete cage was routine. Something in their social environment has to explain this.

I was a little afraid for the staff, too. Even with training, how could one survive, with basic values intact, a lifetime of having to control others, even to the point of strapping them to a chair to force them to continue living?

A week later, a station wagon stopped in front of me at Beltline and Roosevelt with the usual Eugene bumper stickers and Country Fair parking passes decorating their rear. A quote by Frederick Douglass caught my eye: "It is easier to build strong children than repair broken men."

*This is the first in an occasional series about Lane County government, as experienced by Lane County Budget Committee member Rose Wilde. She speaks only for herself.*