

**SLANT**

• The court decision this week against Commissioners **Rob Handy and Pete Sorenson** was based on the judge's highly technical and subjective 44-page analysis of the county board's very complex decision-making process, and we hope the ruling is tossed out on appeal. The judge admitted that quorum rules were never violated, but then went way beyond Oregon law to speculate on how decisions were made. His ruling sets a precedent that will make local government deliberations much more cumbersome. The Legislature tried to bring clarity to this process in 1991 with HB 2461 that, had it passed, would have made it a violation for elected officials to talk to each other about practically any business coming before the group. *The Register-Guard* editorialized against it Feb. 5, 1991 saying the bill would impose "extreme requirements," and quoted commission chairman Jack Roberts saying, "If we can't talk to each other the rest of the time, we can't do anything." Former commissioner Bill Dwyer was in the Legislature at the time and co-sponsored the bill. Ironically, the *R-G* is now editorializing against these one-on-one discussions. And let's not forget that the purpose of these "violations of the public trust" was to improve the public's access to county services. So much for good intentions.

But a bigger issue than public process is involved here. Do Seneca and other timber industries really care about our open meetings law? Or is this purely a business move, investing big bucks to bankrupt their political enemies and keep them from getting reelected? Here's one business scenario to ponder: The Lane County Commission becomes even more conservative and anti-government and votes to support the Association of O&C Counties' proposal to sell off millions of acres of public land to private timber companies for a pittance. Oregon counties are desperate for cash. Lane County has the most O&C lands and therefore the most clout in Congress to make it happen. Wait 10 years until the market improves and literally billions in profits can be made through clear-cutting. Spending a few hundred thousand now to trash environment-minded commissioners is a solid investment, and if the timber barons can get their legal fees back in a lawsuit, all the better.

• *The Register-Guard* is wasting no time in going after Pete Sorenson and Rob Handy on all fronts now that the post-Tea Party election season **Board of Lane County Commissioners** has gotten a little more conservative. In an editorial Jan. 15 that read just like a recent news story (or wait, did the news story read like an editorial?) the *R-G* tweaked Handy and Sorenson for, gasp, wanting to delay a vote on appointing Undersheriff Tom Turner as the interim replacement for departing Sheriff Russ Burger. The sheriff is one of the most powerful elected officials in Lane County and the two commissioners wanted more public notice and a review of applications. Handy and Sorenson just can't win when it comes to the *R-G*. When the daily rag was creating a stink over the recent attempt to protect drinking water, it criticized the commissioners for not having *enough* public input. What gives, *R-G*? Now that the commission's gone a little more conservative, you guys don't believe in public input any more?

• **Martin Luther King Jr. Day** has gotten more attention locally and nationally than we can recall in recent years. The turnout was strong at MLK events around Lane County and MLK observances continue this week with the Women of Color Conference at UO and other events (see News Briefs). King's legacy is particularly poignant this year in part because of the dramatic and tragic bloodshed in Tucson, Ariz. Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords is a bright light shining in a dark and tumultuous time, as was King. Both serve as reminders of what can be accomplished with courage and dedication, and how far we still have to go in the pursuit of peace and justice. Peace and justice require that we stop turning to violence to solve conflicts, both around the world and here at home.

King ended his "I've Been to the Mountain Top" speech April 3, 1968, the day before he was assassinated, with, *I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain. And I've looked over. And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land. And I'm happy, tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.*

SLANT includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the EW staff. Heard any good rumors lately? Contact Ted Taylor at 484-0519, editor@eugeneweekly.com

lighten up

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- Rafael Aldave, Eugene

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