

• The Eugene City Council deserves praise for referring a May vote on a temporary **income tax to save school kids** from brutal budget cuts. However, if the council hasn't already acted by the time we go to press Wednesday noon, they should move as quickly as possible to tweak parts of their first proposal to make it more fair, workable, and passable. Taxing Eugeneans below the poverty line, even on a temporary basis, is an unwise proposal if you honestly want the voters to support keeping teachers' jobs and staunching the bleeding of school days. These looming budget cuts have serious socio-economic and educational consequences. The city manager, city attorney, city staff, mayor and council members should step up with a smarter proposal to send off to their voters. Already, the national press (*Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 15) has pointed out Eugene as one of the "local governments across the U.S. looking to offset deep cuts in the funding that flows to them from states by raising taxes and easing state mandates on how they spend." Isn't this called a tiny step toward more local control? Both ends of the political spectrum should want it for their kids.

• **Planning wonks** around the valley are engaged in a plethora of planning. Right now we are wrestling with Eugene's TransPlan, Springfield and Coburg transportation plans, the Bike Plan, West Eugene EmX Extension, Envision Eugene, and others. Most of these plans are complicated (for better or worse) by overlapping jurisdictions and state mandates.

What is The Big Picture here? How do we educate ourselves in order to give meaningful public input into this basic function of local government? We hear a couple of local folks have asked Mayor Piercy to hold a town hall on the overriding issues involving local planning. Might be a good idea. The challenge, of course, is to attract more than the usual suspects. OSPIRG has invited Piercy to talk about high speed rail this week (see Activist Alert) and that should inspire some new people to get involved in transportation issues.

Local eco-designer Rob Bolman is giving a timely talk as we go to press this week on "Embracing the Inevitable: Humankind's Reluctant Yet Certain Transition to Sustainability." His title says it all: If we don't commit to serious changes now in our living and our planning, Mother Nature will make those changes for us, and it won't be pretty. Meanwhile, short-term thinkers among us are hanging onto the status quo, or demanding that we compromise and dilute any substantive changes.

• **Not our jocks!** "Ninety-nine percent of people gave up the farce of the student-athlete long, long ago," says Scott Kennedy, the director of scouting at Scout.com, a sports recruiting website. "It's a business," he says, quoted in *The Wall Street Journal* Feb. 9. Oregon, obviously, is in the other 1 percent.

• Congrats to Eugene **guitar virtuoso Don Latarski** who was recently named "One of the 100+ Gifted Guitarists You Should Know" by TrueFire, a teaching institute that *Guitar Player* magazine called "the planet's largest and most comprehensive selection of guitar lessons." Latarski, an internationally renowned finger-style guitarist, is head of guitar studies at the UO's School of Music and has played with the likes of Mason Williams, Mark Alan and Dan Siegel. Praised for his facility with a broad spectrum of genres from jazz and funk to swing and what he calls "urban voodoo," Latarski is a fluid, tasteful soloist with a masterful sense of harmony. If you watched the Grammys on Sunday, then you know that Oregon has another award winner: Portland native Esperanza Spalding beat out Justin Bieber for Best New Artist. See our story this week on Bieber on page 14.

• We need to **raise the price of water**. That was one of the messages Michael Campana, professor of hydrology and water resources at OSU, brought to the Eugene City Club Feb. 11. In Oregon, he said, we shouldn't link land use with water quality and quantity. Instead, we should go to conservation and re-use. Although we've heard these before, his list of Oregon water issues related to climate change gave us the most pause: drought on the east side; loss of smaller snow pack earlier in the spring, resulting in more floods, landslides; less surface water to dilute waste; and an influx of climate refugees coming here because of more severe problems elsewhere. Go to klcc.org to hear the broadcast

• Does the **R-G have a new policy** on its opinion pages of outing liberals? When the wife of the leader of the Eugene police union wrote a letter in support of the cops, she was listed on the letters page only by her name and city. When Lane County Commissioner Rob Handy's volunteer assistant Phyllis Barkhurst wrote a recent letter in support of the commissioners and critiquing the R-G for its biased coverage, she was listed as "Former consultant to Commissioner Rob Handy."

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

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