

- It's time to stop this odd connection between the **exclusion zone** and the shortage of jail beds. Deciding between safety and the Fourth Amendment is a false choice. The council vote this week to extend the Downtown Public Safety Zone (aka exclusion zone) until November isn't as bad as it could have been, but seven more months of an unconstitutional lack of due process is four years too long. Kudos to Councilors Betty Taylor and George Brown for their no votes.

- The February **endorsements** by the Democratic Party of Lane County are still generating partisan bickering and angry letters to editors of local papers. The routine DPLC meeting is usually a low-key affair with candidates making short speeches and getting rubber-stamp endorsements, but passions are running high in our polarized political environment, blowing issues out of proportion and creating conflict out of unwarranted assumptions.

One DPLC endorsement that hasn't gotten much attention is for Eugene City Councilor George Brown, who replaced the fiery Bonny Bettman in 2009 and is up for re-election in May. Brown started off as a quiet observer of city government and has grown to become an exceptionally knowledgeable, dedicated and thoughtful voice of reason on the council.

Another candidate enthusiastically endorsed by the DPLC was Commissioner Rob Handy, and we hear this week that Mike Clark has dropped out of the race against Handy, leaving Pat Farr and Nadia Sindi as his challengers in the May primary. Clark, who has never really had to campaign for office, would have been a long shot.

- The new OPB program on the **life of Sen. Wayne Morse** premiered Feb. 21, but if you missed it, you can watch it anytime online at wkly.ws/17c and it's worth the time. A lot of familiar people are interviewed in the documentary: Margaret Hallock, Ron Abell (who just died), Bob Packwood, Ed Fadeley, R.P. Joe Smith, Art Pearl, Gena Hardin and Morse's granddaughter Melanie Lee. Morse embraced the "liberal" label proudly and fought for issues that are still with us today: labor rights, civil rights, education funding, getting out of unjust wars, ending unfair tax breaks for big corporations and stopping log exports. "Our national forests are turning into Japanese tree farms," he once said, decrying the exporting of U.S. jobs – still happening today from private timberlands. Morse is also credited with stopping legislation that would have made the UO just a branch of OSU. It's all inspiring, relevant history with strong Eugene ties.

- The **Public Interest Environmental Conference** is happening this weekend with some amazing speakers and workshops. It's a little odd that most Eugene media got excited about loggers and chainsaw sculptures but will likely ignore a world-renowned law conference. Looks like our timber roots still run deep. Coming up next week is International Women's Day and another great conference at UO, a symposium on "Gender Equity and Capitalism" March 8 that will include economist Nancy Folbre as keynote speaker. Check our Calendar this week and next week for details on all the events surrounding International Women's Day.

- The same question always comes up when Oregon's political leadership talks about education. **Ben Cannon**, smart young Portland middle-school teacher turned legislator, recently turned education policy adviser to Gov. Kitzhaber, asked the City Club of Eugene Feb. 24 what it will take to make education great in Oregon. His first answer: increased funding. So where will that come from? Not one suggestion in Cannon's speech. Maybe the strategy is to wait for an improved economy with more tax revenue, or maybe a massive restructuring of education will persuade conservatives to restructure taxes. Or maybe the leadership is watching Curry County to see what happens to its sales tax proposal. Like Oregon's kids, we can hardly wait to find out.

- **Half of Americans don't pay any taxes?** You've probably heard that claim, or some variation, perpetrated by right-wingers at all levels, including Republican presidential candidates. It's silly, of course. People who pay rent cover their landlords' property taxes. Every gallon of gas, bag of carrots, quart of milk and bottle of beer has taxes and fees calculated into its price tag, directly or indirectly. Some people on the bottom of the economic ladder pay no income taxes and might even be a net burden on the tax system, but they are nowhere near half of Americans. According to the IRS, only about 18 percent of working age people pay no income tax or payroll tax, and most of them are retired or unemployed. Nothing is certain but death and taxes – and propaganda.

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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