

## SUCK IT UP, SOUTH

I am writing regarding the article titled, "Teachers concerned over 3x5 schedule" (2/21). My student attends Churchill High School where the 3x5 schedule is already in effect as of fall 2012. Sources tell me that the district was originally going to start the program at South Eugene High, but everyone there put up too much of a fuss. Teachers and students did not welcome the 3x5 schedule at Churchill this year, but they stepped up to the plate and implemented it. Am I suggesting that the South community are a bunch of whiners? Absolutely.

As a member of this community for the past 15 years, I am accustomed to hearing how South is best at everything, from sports, to scholastics, to parent support. I feel that Churchill staff, students and parents are to be commended for making the best of the situation they were given by the district. I would like to say one thing to the South community, "Suck it up, South." There, I said it. It felt great.

Pamela McMahon  
Eugene

## FUND THE SERVICES

The city of Eugene has a budget deficit of more than \$6 million. We can debate the causes of this deficit, and who is to blame for it, but right now there's a host of services

that will be reduced, or eliminated, if the city doesn't generate money to continue funding them. Voters will decide on a May 21 ballot what happens to these services.

Services to be eliminated, if my understanding is correct, include but are not limited to the Buckley House sobering station; the Looking Glass Station 7 youth shelter; and St. Vincent de Paul's homeless parking program. Services to be reduced, by as much as 50 percent, include the CAHOOTS mobile crisis intervention program. Public libraries and pools, as well as fire department services, will be reduced or eliminated entirely.

What is especially obscene about the list of impacted services is that some of them, such as Buckley and CAHOOTS, are cost-saving resources that divert people away from expensive and dwindling 911, jail and hospital services. Other programs, such as a shelter for homeless kids or swimming programs for elderly people, hardly warrant a defense.

These are programs we need to keep. Our city will suffer without them, and the consequences will be grave. I'm willing to hear any suggestions for how we might collectively deal with our many problems. But right now the citizens of Eugene have a choice: Fund the services or don't. I will vote to save the services.

JP Scott  
Eugene

## MORE BONNY

She's back! Bonny Bettman McCornack's breakdown (hopefully to be updated) on the city's financial situation (column, 2/7), shows that her return is to be welcomed and her insights to be thought about. I'm looking forward to more of her commentary.

Don French  
Eugene

## HARRISON'S LEGACY

I met Gil Harrison at Maude Kerns Art Center in 1968. He was among the many talented artists who learned or taught their craft there. Many of us are now aging and will disappear from sight and memory. What won't go away, though, is our art. That's how cultures live on: by what the artists leave behind. Gil was a focused but funny and gentle-hearted, crazy New Yorker. He has left us all beautiful memories of himself in his pottery. RIP, my friend.

Annie Kayner  
Eugene

## TWEAKING THE AVATARS

At first blush, Marilyn Hedtke's recent letter [2/21] about EWEB's new paperless billing security icons might seem like one of those "only in Eugene" moments. Who would have thought that choosing a security image of an astronaut or a farmer would generate criticism about gender

diversity or cultural insensitivity?

And in fact, KUBRA, the company EWEB contracted with to provide an online "paperless" e-billing option for customers, says such criticism of its "avatars" is unique among the hundreds of other utilities and companies it provides similar services to.

But this is a case where "only in Eugene" has produced a positive result, not just locally but globally. Even before Ms. Hedtke's letter appeared in the *Weekly*, EWEB and KUBRA were already working to change some of the "avatars" that may (or may not) be objectionable. KUBRA says it is making the change for everyone it serves across the U.S. and Canada who has this optional online security feature. This change is the result of a handful of EWEB customers who contacted us directly soon after the new system went live in early February.

EWEB has a strong commitment to diversity, and we are proud of our efforts over the past several years to create a workforce that reflects our community's diversity. We also have successfully incorporated diversity into the photos, images and other visual messages of EWEB brochures, newsletters and other intentional communications. We appreciate some of our customer-owners raising concerns about the security icons, and we appreciate KUBRA's quick response.

That said, EWEB's new e-billing

## HOT AIR SOCIETY BY TONY CORCORAN

## The Politics of PERS

AND OTHER QUANDARIES FACING THE LEGISLATURE

Everyone knows Salem is the official site of the Hot Air Society, and currently all 90 members, both chambers, meet at the state Capitol building. However, Eugene has its own version, called HASSLES, the Hot Air Society of South Lane, Eugene and Springfield. It began in 1806 when two geezers, I mean pioneers — Floyd Frank Prozanski, a former Texas A&M Aggie, and Dr. Paul Kaplan, a semi-retired frontier gynecologist — began their search for the cheapest happy hour beer in Lane County. Once they discovered Cornucopia at 17th and Lincoln, the wagon train never left the station.

Our local Hot Air Society unfortunately, has very low membership standards. It includes doctors, lawyers, architects, a cranky farmer, a national child development expert, nurse practitioners, the Huckleberry fence guy, software engineers, all the way down to a couple of local legislators and a few union goons. We have a longstanding ritual — begun I believe in 1865 when Kaplan returned from the original Civil War: We toast *bad* people! Bill Sizemore was our hero for years before he went to prison and became irrelevant. Dennis Richardson, the House Republican point man on public employee attacks, is a current favorite. We toasted him recently for wanting to arm teachers. We think the bill has a lot of promise with just a few tweaks, so we've proposed amendments to allow teachers to be armed only during labor negotiations and to require a teacher in every gun shop.

Speaking of guns and Newtown and Clackamas — I'm glad we have our own Lane County star, Sen. Floyd Prozanski, chairing the Senate Judiciary Committee where these gun bills will be heard. Prozanski rightly points out that laws banning high-capacity gun magazines and semiautomatic rifles need to be passed by Congress in order to prevent state-by-state evasion of such bans. Floyd will focus instead on state issues like preventing concealed weapons on school grounds and *in the state Capitol building*, for Christ's sake! Who wants mentally unhinged elected officials who think the right to bare arms is a male fashion statement to be roaming the halls in Salem? Unless, of course, it's a Republican House or Senate caucus meeting, then it's OK. None of those nanny-style, overly protective gov't regulations for them boys and girls!

So, maybe the Republicans shoot themselves in the foot on their Second Amendment yap and their schizoid attitude toward public safety: Lock 'em all up, throw away the key,

and do it for free. But the Democrats have a 600-pound gorilla as well: PERS.

No sooner had the Legislature convened than dueling legal opinions emerged on the governor's proposals to create \$850 million in PERS savings. I can only remind folks this same phenomenon happened in 2003 and the lawyers for both sides of the dispute are the same guys making the same arguments they made back then. We did five major reforms in 2003. Justice Brewer organized all the lawsuits into addressing those five reforms.

Greg Hartman, the lawyer for the public sector unions, told everyone that none of those five reforms could withstand judicial scrutiny. He was wrong: Four of the five passed judicial muster. The only reform that failed, the 8 percent lifetime guarantee, was the masterpiece of another attorney, who formerly served on the Oregon Supreme Court, and therefore felt like he knew how the court might treat this measure. He was then-Gov. Ted Kulongoski.

PERS will be the major challenge for House Speaker Kotek and Lane County's newest star, House Majority Leader Val Hoyle. In only her second election cycle, Val has assumed a higher leadership position than any Lane County Democrat since Grattan Kerans was speaker of the house and Ed Fadeley was Senate president in the late 1980s. This is a tribute to her political skills and her hard work. There will be plenty of PERS measures up for consideration, ranging from Kitzhaber's \$850 million proposal to a harsh \$1.9 billion proposal from the Oregon Business Coalition.

Certainly Democrats in Oregon have the teachers and public employees to thank for moving into their slim majorities in both chambers. And, yes, those Democrats also have a responsibility to protect the pensions of public employees. But Kitzhaber's proposals on means-testing the cost of living adjustments and changing the treatment of out-of-state retirees' taxation deserve a look. As Wally Carson, former Chief Justice of the Oregon Supreme Court, used to say: "The governor proposes, the Legislature disposes and the Supreme Court settles their hash!"

Tony Corcoran is currently a state employee, but his observations in this column are those of a private Oregon citizen. While he served in the state Senate he wrote a column for EW called *Insider Baseball*.

