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to halt logging in the Elliott State Forest for the past four years. But a bill, HB 2595, that was brought before the Oregon Legislature's House Judiciary Committee in Salem March 4 would make free speech and protest activities a felony, complete with a mandatory minimum sentence. Another bill, HB 2596, also aiming to quell state forests protests, has also been introduced.

The Elliott protests have paid off, Jason Gonzales of CFD says. He says that logging projects that the group has protested in the forest were halted by a judge pending the resolution of a lawsuit brought by conservation groups Cascadia Wildlands and Oregon Wild. The lawsuit showed that threatened marbled murrelets were likely to suffer "irreparable harm" if the Oregon Department of Forestry didn't halt the logging. Gonzales points out that "civil disobedience becomes the only behavior efficient enough to stall the logging and give the courts time to catch up."

Gonzales says the bill is very similar to a state law that was known as "Interfering with Agricultural Operations" that was struck down in 2009 as unconstitutional when challenged by attorney Lauren Regan with the Civil Liberties Defense Center. He says an amendment was discussed at the Salem committee hearing that would create "protest zones," but he says that those zones have also been constitutionally challenged elsewhere.

Gonzales and Grace Pettygrove, also of CFD, testified at the hearing, and the group says it will continue to follow and testify against the bills, which they say "are designed to have a chilling effect on citizens exercising their free speech rights to protest the management practices of the Oregon Department of Forestry."

Gonzales says Rep. Wayne Krieger of Gold Beach, who introduced the bill, said at the hearing that it would prevent things like treespiking and sabotage. Gonzales says those allegations are "off the wall."

He says, "It's time for elected officials to respond to the public, which has accepted the science of climate change," and he adds that protesters have served jail time, performed community service and paid fines for their environmental civil disobedience, but mandatory prison time would "clog and burden the prison system with peaceful protesters." — *Camilla Mortensen*

FIGHTING TO INFORM FOSTER CHILDREN

The Oregon Foster Youth Connection (OFYC) has fought for the rights of foster children, but now the organization wants to pass a bill that would let the kids know what their rights are. Currently on the table, with an upcoming hearing in March, is a bill of rights that helps youth understand what they can do in any situation. Lydia Bradley, the OFYC program manager, says this is a long time coming.

"This is something that has come up for several years, the idea of a foster youth bill of rights," she says. "And so it is something that really started as an idea several years ago, and this is finally the time to have this bill come to session. The bill is really about giving youth information about what their rights are. We are not creating new rights for foster youth; we are just referencing rights that already exist in pre-existing law."

The bill was drafted from the input of more than 100 young people based on their experiences in the child welfare system, and it is sponsored by Sen. Chip Shields, D-Portland and Alissa Keny-Guyer, D-Portland.

According to Communications Coordinator Martha Calhoon, the OFYC's main objective is to bring the voice of the youth to the policy table. In past years, they passed bills relating to foster youth health care coverage and foster youth's driver's licenses.

There is currently no one whose occupation is to address grievances from foster youth. The only option for foster youths to express complaints is a consumer hotline number, and even that has its drawbacks.

"A youth calling about, for example, a foster parent withholding food could end up talking to the same person who handles complaints about cracks in the sidewalk," Calhoon says. "This person likely does not have the sensitivity to foster youth issues to address that complaint and, even if they do, there is no protocol or procedure about where to go from there."

Foster youth can discuss their grievances with their foster parents and case-workers, but in some instances that isn't an option if they are the ones troubling the children. — *Nick Poust*

SLANT

• The **South Willamette Street Improvement Plan's** six design concepts for the street, which will be repaved in 2014, were presented last week to a big crowd. Willamette between 24th and 32nd avenues has needed an overhaul for a long time — its four-lane configuration and redundant driveways that act like tiny intersections have led to an accident rate almost twice the state average for similar roads. Bikers must choose between sharing the lane with impatient drivers or risk riding on the sidewalk. Six proposed designs use variations of motor vehicle lanes, bike lanes and sidewalks to revamp the 60-foot right of way, and we hope Option 3 makes it to the final three. It has a center turn lane (instead of two inner lanes often used as turn lanes), bike lanes and consistent 9-foot sidewalks. See all the options at wkly.ws/1fn. Public comments are due by March 13.

• It's great that a **new VA outpatient clinic** is finally coming together to serve local vets, but as we reported in our June 2, 2011 issue, the VA might be violating federal law in picking a new clinic site that promotes urban sprawl rather than downtown redevelopment. Federal Executive Order 12072 requires that "the process for meeting federal space needs in urban areas shall give first consideration to a centralized community business area." The order says "federal facilities and federal use of space in urban areas shall serve to strengthen the nation's cities and to make them attractive places to live and work." The order requires "serious consideration" of social and environmental impacts of siting decisions. Building a spread-out facility on agricultural land on the outskirts appears to fly in the face of this federal order. Few wounded warriors will be walking or biking to Chad Drive.

• Big turnout at the **Public Interest Environmental Law Conference** this past weekend and we will be running PIELC stories for the next few weeks. We've started blogging videos of the conference, including the Saturday keynote talk by attorney Thomas Linzey that generated such a big buzz at the conference. Congrats to UO Law School students Zachariah Baker, Lauren Ice, Chris MacMillan, Robin Meacher and Margaret Townsend, who were co-directors of this year's excellent conference.

We hear law school applications at UO and around the country are down due to the scarcity of jobs for new lawyers and high student debt. But the need for public interest lawyers is greater than ever, not only to hold corporations accountable but also to make sure regulations are enforced. One international lawyer at PIELC, professor Jolene Lin of the University of Hong Kong, says the word "law" can be a misnomer. She prefers to talk about "governance" since on-the-books laws are so easily manipulated for political and economic gain. We've seen this happen right here in Lane County where land-use laws and other environmental regulations are politicized, money rules and people who protest illegal and destructive practices are subject to intimidation, physical violence and prosecution. Fighting for better governance is a noble cause.

• What's happening with the UO's **Sustainable Cities Initiative (SCI)** and its Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP)? We did a cover story on it Feb. 10, 2012, and noted that, for the first time in three years, no major (\$250,000-plus) city contract was in place for the 2012-13 academic year. But we now hear from one of the founders, Marc Schlossberg, that replication of the program is happening across the country and "We will be announcing our city partner for 2013-14 in a few weeks." The UO School of Architecture and Allied Arts is planning a big national conference April 9-12 in Eugene and Portland to show other universities and cities how they can duplicate the SCYP. It's not too late for the city of Eugene to buy into this remarkable collaboration between city staff and UO students, professors and community professionals. Eugene, despite all its green talk and green intentions, has a long way to go to becoming anything close to a true "sustainable city."

• *EW's* Camilla Mortensen is the host of **Occupy TV**. Join the Occupy Eugene Media Group for a season premiere party from 6 to 8 pm Tuesday, March 12, at Growers Market, 454 Willamette. Watch *Occupy TV* on the big screen, online or on cable Channel 29. More fun than *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. Light refreshments will be available.

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