

BILL OF GOODS

Voters should reject the proposed city services fee on the May ballot. It is regressive and open-ended taxation subject to change at the whim of a future City Council. Lower income folks, renters and small businesses will pay the same as wealthy citizens and large corporations.

Some of those corporations (especially out-of-town developers responsible for a local housing bubble) could continue to receive large development tax breaks to make more apartments than our local economy can support. Our City Council should end those tax breaks and reap enough development funds to pay for CAHOOTS, police, fire, branch libraries and Sheldon Pool.

Voting for a fee under threat of losing services is a poor and myopic way to envision a future. Let's be smart enough to see a bait-and-switch move fueled by wealthy interests proposed by the city manager. A majority of city councilors have seen the wisdom of finding another approach to Eugene's budget crunch.

Eugene citizens have approved positive taxation schemes including bond measures for parks and open spaces, road improvement measures, stormwater fees that help us provide cleaner downstream inputs and funds to shore up schools. But there is a difference in a bond measure for libraries that is paid according to the value of property and a flat fee that hits up folks every month. Don't be fooled by the city's multicolored promotions. This so-called

"fee" is really a disguised sales tax. The city manager is selling us a bill of goods.

Ethen Perkins
Eugene

NO FEAR OF BIG BAD FEE

I'll be here in 2015; my friends and family will be here, too. Most of my neighbors aren't going anywhere. Most of us pay attention to what is going on in our community, and most of us vote.

A majority of us are voting "yes" on Measure 20-211, the city services fee, because we know the fee won't be spent on extraneous programs after 2014, despite bald-faced claims to the contrary. We know our councilors, and know they'll pass the robust low-income assistance program proposed by them last week, which reduces the fee for everyone below median income and eliminates for any person who makes 185 percent of the poverty line and below.

The citizen oversight board will watch the dollars and make sure they fund vital services, which is outlined in the proposed law. Heads will roll at the ballot box if the fee isn't implemented as (plainly) stated in the measure and its binding resolution.

So I'm not afraid of the Big Bad Fee — it is necessary, and I'll gladly roll up my sleeves and put up my fists to protect our pools, libraries, police, fire, CAHOOTS and services for our youth and mentally ill. It won't be a cakewalk for most of us, but it's better than making sausage of our townspeople to toss

out back as food for the dogs.

Pearl Shapland
Eugene

REPAIRING OUR SCHOOLS

The League of Women Voters of Lane County urges voters in Eugene's 4J School District to support Measure 20-210, which would allow the district to issue \$170 million in bonds to replace and repair aging school buildings. These improvements should cut operating expenses for the district and free up general fund dollars for other uses, such as teachers and educational programs. The funds also would be used for much-needed technology improvements to schools throughout the district and to update instructional materials, purchase buses and provide for additional safety and security features.

This investment in our schools is expected to cost an estimated 24 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation or \$48 annually for the owner of a \$200,000 home.

The measure is part of a long-range plan which began with approval of an earlier bond measure in 2002. The district has avoided sudden increases in property tax rates by paying off older bonds before issuing new ones. Interest rates and construction costs are low right now, making this a good time to replace the outdated buildings.

A good education system is an important part of economic development. One of the first questions always asked by those considering relocating is about the quality of local schools.

Approval of Measure 20-210 will make our schools and community stronger.

We urge you to vote "yes."
Sue Boyd & Susan Tavakolian
Co-presidents,
LWV of Lane County

POLITICAL EXTORTION

Bonny Bettman McCornack, a political presence in Eugene for decades, has come out of retirement to actively oppose the Eugene city services fee on the May 21 ballot. It is her view that Measure 20-211 is not only a regressive tax but that it is not really needed by the city in order to maintain its current level of services.

Bettman McCornack has served many years on both the City Council and Budget Committee and, unlike many of those she served with, always did her homework and was always well prepared. Bettman McCornack's integrity is beyond repute and her expertise is unmatched.

Contrary to what some of her current detractors have suggested, Bettman McCornack has not turned her back on the poor. In fact she has not changed her political persuasions one iota. So who are you going to believe? Bettman McCornack, or a couple of well-off spinmeisters sitting in safe seats on the council spouting their talking points while claiming that those who vote "no" do not want the essential services that they have put on the chopping block in order to coerce voters into voting "yes"? Their threats are not thinly veiled.

HOT AIR SOCIETY BY TONY CORCORAN

Of Deadlines and Decals

BOTH SIDES HUNKER DOWN WITH UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Deadlines come and go in Oregon's legislative cycle. The deadline for most committees to post notice of action on bills that have cleared the other chamber is May 20, and the deadline to complete action on those bills is May 31. The legal deadline for session adjournment is July 13.

But with only two months left to go, while it's not quite the dog days of summer, Salem's Hot Air Society has ground to a halt with all eyes on Betsy Johnson's pelvis. Now, I don't want you to confuse this obsession with that little men's road trip the House Republicans took down to Palm Springs a while back; in this case there is nothing prurient about the Legislature's interest. Sen. Johnson, a North Coast Democrat, is recuperating from surgery following by a car wreck. So you see, without her, Senate Democrats don't have 16 votes to pass any damn thing. Senate Republicans are already holding up votes, just because they can. Last week they refused to pass a hospital tax, a key bipartisan piece of the state's health care budget. Republicans admit they'll release this particular hostage when they see more PERS reform. All this, by the way, leaves the House with nothing to do either, and we all know about idle hands and devils' workshops.

Meanwhile, Gov. Kitzhaber has assembled a small group to begin hashing out the parameters for a final budget settlement that will probably include further PERS changes in exchange for additional revenue. The group includes Senate President Peter Courtney, Senate Majority Leader Diane Rosenbaum, Senate Minority Leader Ted Ferrioli

and House Minority Leader Mike McLane. Not sure how engaged House Democratic leaders Tina Kotek, Val Hoyle, Ways and Means Co-chair Peter Buckley or House Whip Vicki Berger are at this point, but they will be the critical to any deal. Meanwhile another rump group is meeting on the PERS changes, including Senator Tim Knopp, Senator Richard Devlin and others. I think Jack Roberts got it wrong; "transactional politics" is either an oxymoron or it is redundant. We'll see as both sides hunker down.

For those watching Oregon's attempts at gun legislation, it's not looking very promising. There is a package of four bills still alive — pretty innocuous, watered down already — allowing primary and secondary school districts to ban guns on campus and requiring background checks for gun sales between private individuals. Last week the package was sent down to the Senate Rules Committee, diverted from a vote of the full Senate.

Depending on your perspective, the package is awaiting 16 votes to pass over to the House, or it will die a slow death in committee for lack of compromise. Or, on the other hand, the good news is that it went to Senate Rules — generally the last committee still meeting at the end of session and comprised of leaders of both parties. Maybe Courtney will pull a rabbit out of his, uhm, hat and his workgroup will come up with a passable compromise. We all hope he does. However, at some point, before the end of this session, before July 13, there *must* be a vote on the floor of the Senate. Even if every whip and every lobbyist in the building says the package is dead, *make 'em vote!* Each Oregon senator stands for re-election every four years. The

public will remember how this was handled — maybe.

As your faithful Salem observer, I'm always on the lookout for feisty interchanges and truth-sayers in the process. I really like Portland Democratic Rep. Lew Frederick's comments during a debate over Medford Republican Rep. Sal Esquivel's bill to mandate the Pledge of Allegiance daily in schools — a typical insignificant gesture by a guy who's never seen a school budget he liked. According to Harry Esteve's report, Frederick called Esquivel on it: "This is all about posturing and preening," Frederick said. "It's all about getting videos of ourselves being patriotic." Of course, that comment required Esquivel's caucus Whip Vicki Berger (R-Salem), to interrupt Frederick's comments and object. Frederick, a long-time advocate and activist for Portland's communities and schools, got in the last word though. He ended his remarks by quoting folks singer John Prine: "Your flag decal won't get you into heaven anymore." So here's our Hot Air Society toast to the knucklehead of the week: Sal Esquivel. What's he gonna come up with next? School uniforms? Cheers. ■

Former state sen. Tony Corcoran of Cottage Grove is currently a state employee and his observations in this column are those of a private citizen.

