

ACTIVIST ALERT

• The **Eugene Food and Ag Forum** is the local version of InFARmation and meets on the first Sunday of each month from 4 to 6 pm at Cozmic, 199 W. 8th Ave. The next forum will be Jan. 5.

• **Sen. Lee Beyer and Rep. Phil Barnhart** will host a series of “listening sessions” from 7:30 to 9 am starting Monday, Jan. 6, at Randy’s Main Street Café in Brownsville, then at Nana’s Cafe inside the Coburg Pizza Company in Coburg; then from 5:30 to 7 pm Thursday, Jan. 9, at Aunt Dings Restaurant in Walterville. RSVP at 607-9207 or by email at rep.philbarnhart@state.or.us.

• Public hearings on **Eugene city budget options** have been scheduled for 5:30 pm Tuesday, Jan. 21, at Harris Hall and 5:30 pm Wednesday, Jan. 29, at the Eugene Public Library. Community members will be asked to respond to a list of Budget Committee options or suggest their own. Five of the six current options being put forward present different combinations of service reductions, while the sixth option calls for a citywide across-the-board reduction of 2 percent for all departments. See eugene-or.gov/budget.

• Springfield Mayor Christine Lundberg is kicking off a campaign to raise money for the construction of an additional three **Conestoga huts in Springfield**. The campaign is in collaboration with the Springfield Shelter Rights Alliance, St. Vincent de Paul’s overnight parking program and local churches. Each Conestoga hut costs about \$1,200 to build. Donations can be mailed to CALC at 458 Blair Blvd., Eugene 97402, and designated “SSRA Conestoga Huts.” Donations can also be made at calclane.org.

POLLUTION UPDATE

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced on Dec. 20 their intent to find that the **State of Oregon** has failed to submit an approvable coastal nonpoint pollution control program (required by the federal Coastal Zone Act Reauthorization Amendments of 1990). The agencies specifically propose to find Oregon’s program deficient with regard to new development, onsite sewage disposal, and forestry. Public comments on the proposed finding are being accepted through March 20. The agencies are also accepting comments regarding the adequacy of agricultural measures in Oregon’s program to protect salmon spawning, rearing, and migration. More information about commenting can be found at goo.gl/ISc0mi.

Doug Quirke/Oregon Clean Water Action Project

CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS

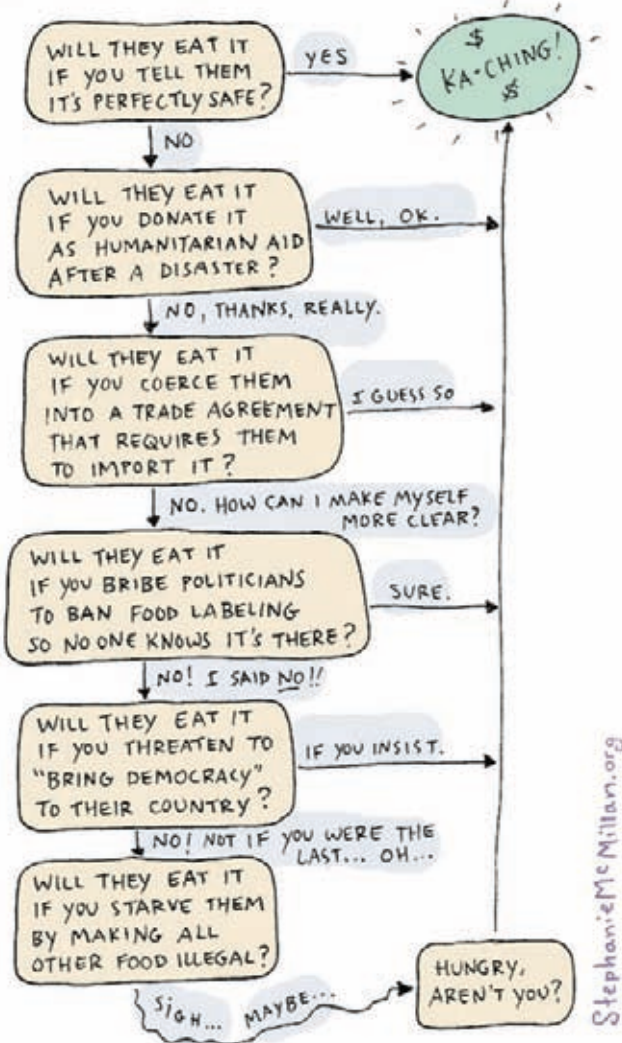
We ran a wrong date in Biz Beat Dec. 26 for a **free legal clinic for veterans** that will be held at 5 pm on the last Wednesdays of the month. The next will be Jan. 29. See Biz Beat this week for updated information.

lighten up

BY RAFAEL ALDAVE

Looking for a needle in a haystack is like looking for a needle in a haystack. Are you listening, NSA?

GMO MARKETING PLAN



OMEN ANSWERING SMALL BIZ HEALTH CARE QUESTIONS

Health care insurance has long been confusing, and the troubled rollout of Cover Oregon hasn’t clarified much. But Jan. 10, the Oregon Microenterprise Network (OMEN) will visit NEDCO offices in Springfield to listen to small business owners and help answer questions about buying health care for employees.

“Our goal is to help our members understand this process,” says OMEN Executive Director Marilyn Johnson-Hartzog, adding that the free session is open to all. She says the small business portal of the Cover Oregon website, which is not yet functional, is designed to let employers make apples-to-apples comparisons of different health care plans and lower administration costs.

The Affordable Care Act doesn’t require organizations with fewer than 50 full-time employees to provide health insurance, but some do in order to reduce turnover and for ethical reasons. Buying through Cover Oregon also makes small businesses eligible for the Small Business Health Care Tax Credit. The tax credit’s maximum raises in 2014 to 50 percent of premium payments made by small business employers. According to the IRS website, smaller businesses generally get a bigger tax break.

“The ship has not sailed, it’s just that the business owners have been put on hold,” Johnson-Hartzog says. She notes that even OMEN is affected by Cover Oregon’s technical difficulties. “We renewed the current plan that we had,” she says, but OMEN will cancel its coverage and buy through Cover Oregon when it becomes functional.

Michael Cox, a communications specialist with Cover Oregon, says there’s not yet a target date for releasing SHOP, the small group portal for buying health care coverage.

The session will be held at NEDCO’s offices at 212 Main St., Spfld., 1 to 2:30 pm Jan. 10. OMEN asks for RSVPs to the event by Jan. 8 to taylor@omenetwork.org. — Shannon Finnell

SECRETIVE TRANS-PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP REVEALED

The Trans-Pacific Partnership sounds like a conspiracy theory. The TPP talks about a trade deal that will govern 40 percent of U.S. imports and exports as well as affect copyrights, pharmaceuticals and more are being conducted in secret, and only a few portions of the agreement and memos about it have been leaked. Congressman Peter DeFazio says he vehemently opposes the TPP.

The TPP is being negotiated between the U.S., Canada and about 10 countries in the Asia-Pacific region including Australia, Brunei, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore and Vietnam. It does not currently include China, but DeFazio says that could change. The TPP has been under negotiation for nearly a decade, but is only now coming close to being voted on by Congress. An end of the year deadline for a final version of the TPP has passed.

Despite the fact that Congress will vote on the deal, DeFazio says the TPP secrecy extends even to Senate and House members. He says in order to view what’s in the TPP document he would have to make a special appointment, with no staff present, not take notes and then not talk about what he saw. He says he did not look at the document and instead has reviewed the leaked portions. According to memos about the TPP leaked in December, the agreement would give new political powers to corporations, increase the cost of prescription medications and restrict bank regulation. It would possibly outlaw his proposed Wall Street transaction tax, DeFazio says.

A chapter of the TPP on intellectual property released by WikiLeaks in November, shortly before the TPP talks in Salt Lake City, contained wording that according to the Electronic Frontier Foundation, “carries draconian copyright enforcement provisions that threaten users’ rights and could stifle innovation well into the 21st century.” DeFazio says that it looks like the TPP could make much-needed pharmaceuticals more expensive for developing countries.

The secrecy about TPP is allowed because under presidential authority such agreements that are said to possibly affect national security can be made classified, DeFazio says. However, he says that one power that President Barack Obama does not currently have is the “fast-track” authority that former President Bill Clinton had when NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) was put in place. Fast-track authority means Congress would have an up-or-down vote, and it forbids amendments. “It doesn’t matter who is president or what they said as candidates, once they become president they start saying free trade agreements will benefit Americans, and time and time again it does not,” DeFazio says.

According to the Sierra Club, the TPP would give “corporations the right to sue a government for unlimited cash compensation — in private and not-transparent tribunals — over any law or regulation that a corporation argues is hurting its expected future profits,” and allow attacks on environmental laws.

DeFazio and others call the TPP “NAFTA on steroids.” DeFazio voted against NAFTA, which he says cost the U.S. thousands of jobs. The congressman says an “unholy alliance” of Democrats, Tea Party Republicans and “Republicans who actually care about the economy” could make sure the TPP does not get fast tracked in Congress.

DeFazio says the TPP is “informed and manipulated by corporate interests” and if the public knew what was in the classified document, they wouldn’t like it. — Camilla Mortensen

‘The Trans-Pacific Partnership is informed and manipulated by corporate interests.’

— CONGRESSMAN
PETER DEFazio