

## COUNTY COMMISSION'S ANTI-SICK LEAVE ORDINANCES QUESTIONED

The Lane County Commission acted against Eugene's paid sick leave ordinance before the city had its public hearing on the issue. The three ordinances that the county rushed to vote contain a typo in a reference to Oregon law, and they are similar to model legislation to preempt sick leave put forth at the state level by the corporate-funded American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC).

The Eugene City Council passed an ordinance that would require workers for all Eugene businesses and nonprofits to provide one hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked, up to a maximum of 40 hours a year. It also applies to businesses outside the city with employees who work at least six weeks a year in Eugene. The City Council passed the ordinance July 28, but the County Commission passed its three ordinances against the city's rule on July 21.

The county ordinances exempt all Lane County businesses from Eugene's sick leave mandate if located outside the city limits, exempt all employers with employees in the county from the ordinance and the most heavy-handed of the ordinances bars any local government within Lane County from passing laws that dictate any employment conditions.

Commissioner Pete Sorenson was out of town during the rushed votes. Commissioner Pat Farr voted against the most heavy-hand-

ed measure, but in favor of the other two, and commissioners Jay Bozievich, Faye Stewart and Sid Leiken voted for all three ordinances.

Local attorney Melissa Wischerath points out that the ordinances contain a line saying that the "Oregon Legislature expressed its intent to preempt local legislation in this area with the passage of ORS 657.017," but there is no Oregon Revised Statute 657.017. She suspects that the county meant to refer to 653.017. She says, "Because this is a substantive error, I think they'd have to vote on this all over again with a corrected ordinance."

Trevor Steele, a spokesman with Lane County says that, according to county counsel, a drafting error doesn't make the ordinance invalid, and that according to the county's attorney, the "whereas" section in which the error occurs sets up the action but is not the action itself.

Wischerath also notes the similarities between the county's ordinances and laws pushed by ALEC, a conservative organization that promotes "model legislation" that benefits corporations. According to the Center for Media and Democracy's PR Watch, ALEC funders include Koch Industries and the tobacco industry.

Steele says Commissioner Bozievich, who spoke up the loudest against sick leave, says he had not

heard about the ALEC legislation.

Wischerath also says that since the ordinance preempts "a unit of local government as defined in ORS 190.003" from adopting or enacting employment laws the county has essentially preempted itself because "under this ordinance only the state can legislate employment issues in Lane County." If challenged, she says, this ordinance will likely fail as being unconstitutional. — *Camilla Mortensen*

**'Under this ordinance only the state can legislate employment issues in Lane County.'**

— MELISSA WISCHERATH, ATTORNEY



**Dramatic circulation drops** in nearly all Oregon newspapers are documented in the new Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association directory. Looking at weekday subscriptions and weekday single-copy sales, *The Register-Guard* went from 51,040 last year to 43,663 this year. *The Oregonian* went from 228,599 last year to 162,599 this year — what's shocking is the stalwart *Oregonian* had weekday numbers approaching half a million in the 1990s. The *Corvallis Gazette-Times* went from 9,815 last year to 8,607 this year. *Eugene Weekly*, meanwhile, is holding steady. We print 38,000 to 42,000 papers a week depending on the issue and time of year, averaging 40,000, and those numbers have changed little in recent years.

**The Laboratory** restaurant at 26th and Willamette closed Aug. 3, according to owner Dug Beard, but the chef will continue his culinary work at Agate Alley Bistro, near campus at 1461 E. 19th Ave. Agate Alley features many of The Lab's creations on its menu. The Lab opened in 2011 to "allow for experimental fusion from cuisines around the world," says Beard who now has a baby boy at home. "It's time to focus on the Bistro and my family," he says.

We wrote about the new **Mindworks** business incubator/co-working space in this column July 3 and the enterprise is holding its grand opening celebration from 4:30 to 6:30 pm Friday, Aug. 8, at 207 E. 5th Ave. above the Tap & Growler and Lucky Noodle. The event will include live music, networking, refreshments and prizes. See [eugenemindworks.com](http://eugenemindworks.com) or call 515-9330.

Four new brewing tanks arrived at **Hop Valley's** Eugene tasting room and production facility this week. The new tanks are from Marks Design & Metalworks in Vancouver, Washington. The tanks hold the equivalent of 9,920 six-packs of beer. The next batch of tanks arriving in October will be larger and hold 12,000 gallons each. See [hopvalleybrewing.com](http://hopvalleybrewing.com).

Lane Preparedness Coalition is offering a **free business continuity workshop** on the topic of "A plan for tomorrow, regardless of what happens today" from 2:30 to 4:30 pm Wednesday, Aug. 13, at EWEB's North Building, 500 E. 4th Ave. The goal of this workshop is to help businesses develop a plan of action that, in the event of a disruption or emergency, specifies the key resources and staff, as well as the procedures for re-establishing services and functions. This workshop is intended for business owners and managers. Visit [preparelane.org](http://preparelane.org) and register by calling 682-5860 or email [chair@preparelane.org](mailto:chair@preparelane.org).

Nominations are due by Aug. 13 for the **Serenity Lane Community Service Awards**. Categories include addiction professional, community leadership, community youth leadership, human resources/EAP, health care professional and legal professional/uniformed public service. A new category this year is the mayor's award, nominated by mayors of both Eugene and Springfield. The awards will be presented at a community breakfast Oct. 22 at the Eugene Hilton. See [serenitylane.org/csa](http://serenitylane.org/csa).

## HAPPENING PEOPLE BY PAUL NEEVEL



### RON BUSS

"I got tired of rain," says Ron Buss, who grew up in the Seattle/Tacoma area, but spent high school summer vacations with his older brother in Modesto, California, moving furniture for Beacon Van Lines. "I started when I was 14." After graduation, Buss moved south to work for his brother, then spent a decade at warehouse work. He eventually got a truck and a PUC license and returned to household moving. "I made \$100,000 a year," says Buss, who was supporting a house, a wife and three kids. "But I got injured a lot." When moving work grew scarce, he took a job at a can factory. A fourth child arrived, the couple grew apart and his wife and kids moved to Florence. "I stayed another three years,"

says Buss, who moved north in 2011. Slowed by back injuries, he lived for a year off a 401k, then took shelter at the Eugene Mission. He currently camps at one of Eugene's Safe Spots. Early in 2012, he got a job selling David Gerber's *Oregon Vagabond Motivator*, a street paper featuring stories, poems and artwork by the homeless, at a location outside the Kiva market downtown. When OVM's funding dried up, Buss stepped in with a new \$1 monthly paper, *Our Streets of Eugene*, in October 2013. "At first we had a lot of dramatic stories, train-hopping, etc.," he says. "Now it's gone more towards poetry and current issues." Central Printing inks the first 50 copies in exchange for an ad. Another 300 or so are run off on a copy machine. Ad space is available for \$5.