

COUNTING

Kevin Sullivan made a stab at class analysis in “And Inequality For All,” (Aug. 7), saying “It is near impossible, however, to draw a bead on the wealthiest Eugeneans.” That’s not the “end of story,” however. Colorful income maps for all of Oregon show wealth distribution patterns by sections of neighborhood, city and county. Pie charts break it down for cities.

Eugene had 1,956 households making over \$200,000 in 2009 during the Great Recession. There were 1,791 making over \$150,000 and 1,776 taking in more than \$125,000. These 5,423 households comprised 10 percent of Eugene’s total. This could be mapped onto the public disclosure list of the 5,077 Eugeneans contributing large amounts to political campaigns from 2006 to 2014.

It lists them by name and occupation, though many are retired. Coordinating these with actual residences is fairly easy, though time consuming. News stories and business statistics add interest. The income map shows high levels up in the hills and lower ones in the flatlands. North Eugene and parts of west Eugene were moderately wealthy, too. In South Eugene, though, income and elevation are coordinated.

Divining the 1 percent, or the richest 500 households in Eugene, would require research, but it’s not impossible to find them. Many don’t want to hide. We’re still in a roaring, plutocratic era. Characterizing the top 10 percent, or

5,000 households, would be more useful for a class analysis looking at wealth and power of the elite, like the sociologist C. Wright Mills did for America during the last century.

Chris Piché
Eugene

MOVED BY FONTS

I thought I might never be moved to write another letter to the *Weekly*, let alone stoop to the superfluous use of profanity in one. However, after reading Ray McMillin’s condemnation of the font Papyrus, I just have to say right the fuck on.

Timothy Shaw
Eugene

AWKWARD MOMENTS

I appreciated Sally Sheklow’s description of the “awkwardness” of saying “my wife” in public conversation [“Living Out” column, 8/7]. As a parent with a gay son and son-in-law, I know that most people are not used to hearing anyone refer casually to “my son and his husband.”

I try to talk about my gay son in the same way that I talk about my straight daughters. I never announce that my daughters are straight, so I don’t need to announce that my son is gay. But it would be routine for me to say, “My daughter and her husband are visiting me, and we’re going to the fair.” So I can say, “My son and his husband are coming to Eugene, and

we’re taking the kids to the wave pool.”

This works because there is no announcement requiring a response. The conversation can move on gracefully even if the person I am speaking to is startled by the incidental mention of my gay son.

This simple formula never fails me. Anytime I consider how to phrase a statement about my son, I try the sentence substituting a straight daughter, and it is easy to tell if it works.

If everyone who has gay children, siblings, or friends would acknowledge them in routine conversations, the awkwardness of these references will disappear.

Susan Kehrl Rogers
Eugene

EXPIRED TAX HIKE

Responding to “Inequality for All” [cover story, 8/7]: The most important paragraph talked about how in 2010 Oregonians voted yes on Measure 66, increasing taxes on individuals earning over \$250,000 a year. And then the state Legislature allowed it to expire in 2012.

This is worthy of an article. Who allowed this and are they still in office? These are the legislators who are not doing as the people wish. Vote.

Rouanna Garden
Eugene

MEDICARE FOR ALL

Raging Grannies celebrated Medicare’s

49th birthday in front of Lane County’s Health Department! Health Care For All Eugene members loved having the Grannies share this special event and remind everyone that improved Medicare is really what we want for everybody in Oregon. They also remind us that a raising of the eligibility age from 65 to 67, with additional cuts to Medicare and Medicaid, is not acceptable! Cutting Social Security or Medicare is not acceptable!

HCAO asks their supporters to call the Capitol switchboard (866) 220-0044 and request to be connected to their representatives or senators. A truly universal health care system that will reduce the deficit and save American lives will also save us \$500 billion a year just on health care costs.

The rest of the world is watching our failing health care system. Can we make the changes needed? Join their monthly meeting at 7 pm the first Tuesday of the month at First United Methodist Church, 1376 Olive St.

Ruth Duemler
Eugene

SMOKING AT CUTHBERT

We have attended two concerts at the Cuthbert this summer so far. The venue is well organized; however, the smoking section is huge, encompassing the portable toilets and bathroom area. Also right next to food and drink booths. You have to stand in the smoking area to wait for the bathroom

VIEWPOINT

BY ROBERT EMMONS

State Law vs. Natural Law

SPRINGFIELD’S SEAVEY LOOP PLANS DRAW IRE

A long Seavey Loop Road winding all the way to Hwy. 58, “Stop Seavey Loop Industrial Zone” signs have cropped up over the past few weeks on almost every property. The two-lane blacktop runs through floodplain rich in farmland and natural areas nurtured by the Coast Fork of the Willamette River and Oxley Slough and overseen by Mount Pisgah rising gently in the east. The signs are an expression of solid resistance in a neighborhood unified in its opposition to the Springfield City Council’s decision to sweep part of the Seavey Loop area into its urban growth boundary (UGB) overflow and open it up to industrial development.

On Aug. 6, in the shade of one of Buford-Mount Pisgah’s large white oaks, neighbors and other concerned citizens met with State Rep. Phil Barnhart and State Sen. Lee Beyer to put their passionate and often eloquent voices behind the signage. Chief organizer Charles Stewart, a Seavey organic farmer, began with

an announcement that the Straub family, relatives of the former governor and owners of 56 acres of Seavey Loop land critical to Springfield’s UGB proposal, have abandoned their neutrality and joined neighbors in the fight against expansion and industrialization.

A dozen speakers highlighted the deep-rooted cultural history of the area, the callousness and absurdity of imposing industry on its fragile ecology, the impact of industrial pollution on the land, the lives and the living of local farmers and residents, and its place in the joint city-county scheme to urbanize and industrialize the I-5 corridor from Springfield through the Lane Community College basin to Goshen. Planners refer to the proposed industrial area as College View.

In response, the guests of honor paid lip service to the beauty and fertility of the surrounds without, however, recognizing the importance of the area’s farms and farmers to the local economy and to food security now and in a future plagued by population and development pressures and depleted resources. To the contrary, Barnhart insisted that “Oregon is an industrial state” and that the economy needs and will have industry, implying that industrialization of the gateway to Pisgah is both desirable and inevitable.

Both legislators encouraged the audience to voice their concerns at upcoming city and county sessions on UGB expansion. But they know the system is rigged against equitable and meaningful participation by the legislative requirement that local jurisdictions provide a 20-year supply of buildable lands, a toxic recipe for exponential growth well beyond its pull date.

Given the unwillingness to address population control, land-use protections weakened or eliminated by development interests and complicit administrators and politicians and the inevitable environmental and social degradation as a consequence, the expansion of urban

growth boundaries is axiomatic.

The common corollary, “It’s a state law; we have no choice,” justifies every invasion — as if the 40-year-old buildable lands mandate, established in a bygone era, were an edict from God and immutable. To eliminate this requirement, as anachronistic and destructive as the General Mining Law of 1872, is both a choice and an obligation.

Expanding to meet state law, Springfield runs into natural law: Any direction it chooses to expand is already occupied by wetlands, rivers and streams, farmland, forestland and mountain. Given these topographical limitations, it’s unfortunate that Barnhart and Beyer were not asked where the farms will grow and how the rivers will flow as UGBs expand into infinity.

In a bid to the farmers and sympathizers in the crowd, Beyer properly praised Hector McPherson, a farmer, as the progenitor of SB 100, but in the same breath chose to damn Tom McCall as a mere opportunist given the credit due to McPherson and Bob Straub. Beyer should be counseled that without McCall’s passionate and articulate commitment to comprehensive, regulated land-use protections and his tireless public advocacy — qualities conspicuously absent in every state legislator and governor since — Oregon’s nationally recognized land-use program would likely have died an early death, or never been born.

Early in the session, someone asked if there were any Springfield city councilors, planners or Lane County commissioners present. We looked around but couldn’t find any.

Robert Emmons of Fall Creek is president of LandWatch Lane County, a group that seeks to protect and sustain Lane County’s soils, air and water quality. See landwatch.net.