

He adds that the city of Portland provides Porta-Potties to areas along the river where people camp, and it helps prevent human waste from entering the water stream.

Michelle Emmons, also of Willamette Riverkeeper, says she's worked locally to educate the public on this issue. She says volunteer work is restricted in certain areas due to the hazardous nature of the materials concerned, including human waste and used needles. "This isn't about villainizing people who are homeless or have drug addiction," she says. "One suggestion has been the installation of Dumpsters. What if we provided some way for people to be more responsible?"

Roberts says that since Union Pacific is such a large organization, it takes time to implement actions like local cleanups. UP spokesman Mark Davis says the area was cleaned earlier this year, and the railroad is working with local stakeholders on a solution to keep people from "putting themselves in an unsafe position" to "access the areas that are requiring cleanup." See the video at wkly.ws/1uf. — Amy Schneider

THREAT OF KICKER BRINGS BUDGET WORRIES

Oregon's economy isn't exactly booming, but it is improving, and that could lead to about \$300 million in tax rebates to individual taxpayers if revenues exceed 2 percent above official state projections in the 2013-15 biennium. That might sound good to taxpayers, but the potential loss of revenue has some Oregonians very worried.

The "kicker," as it is called, would lead to cutbacks in education, health care, childcare assistance and other state-funded programs, says Charles Sheketoff, executive director of the Oregon Center for Public Policy. "It's a fiscally irresponsible policy," he says. "The prudent course of action would be to save unanticipated revenues into a rainy day fund because there will be another recession. It's just a matter of when."

One new factor this biennium is Phil Knight's \$500 million fundraising challenge for Oregon Health &

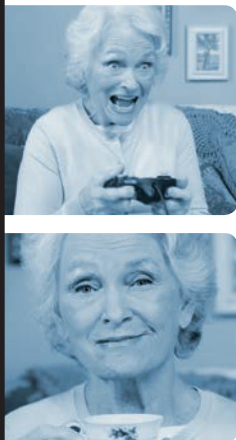
Science University. If major donors sell stock to make contributions, then that could boost their individual tax liability, which in turn would increase state revenues. Knight has not made any public announcements so far about joining UO's \$2 billion fundraising goal.

Back in 2007, the state spent \$1.1 billion on kicker checks that "disproportionately flowed to the most well-off Oregonians," Sheketoff says, and this happened just as the Great Recession was beginning to take its toll. The kicker has triggered eight times since it was approved by ballot measure in 1980. Corporate taxes no longer qualify for rebates, thanks to a voter-approved change in the law in 2012.

The revenue benchmark was established when the Legislature set the budget for the 2013-14 biennium. The projection was set high, but it only takes about \$70 million in surplus revenue to trigger the kicker, according to the most recent state baseline revenue outlook, and that number is shrinking. Oregon's General Fund revenue forecast for the biennium is \$15.8 billion. See wkly.ws/1ub.

The next quarterly revenue forecast will be released

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