

HARMFUL TESTING

Recently I wrote a letter to the 4J School District concerning my decision to opt my children out of the Smarter Balanced state tests. My reasons are that I think the potential harm that taking tests in which over 60 percent of students are likely to fail surpasses any possible benefit that my children will derive from participating. I reserve my right as a parent to make the decision to withhold my children from participating in these tests.

However, apparently district 4J believes it can usurp my authority as a parent and force my children to take this test. In a document published on Feb. 4, the district maintains that parents cannot opt their student out of testing unless exempted due to disabilities or on religious grounds. Parents should be clear that they retain the parental right to opt out their child regardless of what school district policies attempt to dictate. It is my position that the district should provide educationally enriching activities to those students whose parents chose to opt them out of testing. Students should not be denied a day of instruction due to their

parent's determination that these tests are potentially harmful to their development.

Geoffrey Barrett
Eugene

CAMPING BAN 'SOLUTION'

What does enforcement of the no-camping ordinance accomplish? It doesn't reduce homelessness. It criminalizes people for engaging in necessary life-sustaining activities like resting and sleeping. It ties up police on far less important tasks of preventing and solving crimes that directly harm residents and their property. It creates criminal records for people who are cited and arrested but can't afford to pay fines or answer warrants. These records make it even more difficult for people to persuade landlords to take them in or for employers to hire them.

It demonizes those who are homeless and makes them more likely to be subject to intimidation, harassment and serious hate crimes. It is more expensive, when considering police time taken up, involvement of the court system and the contributions it makes to health problems that must be addressed, than simply

leaving people alone or allocating money to put them in apartments.

The camping ban is not a "solution" to homelessness. It is ineffective, unproductive and expensive to enforce. We need to stop criminalizing homelessness and provide people with more safe and legal places to be sheltered and to self-shelter. Most of all, we need to get people into permanent housing.

Ken Neubeck
Eugene

VIOLATING WHOSE RIGHTS?

Amendment violation my butt! Practice what you preach before you write an article like Art Bollman, a member of the Occupy Eugene Library Committee, did in the Jan. 29 Mic Check! column. People's First Amendment rights are being violated, says Bollman. His focus was over the privatization initiative that gives tax-paying business owners the right to purchase a vending permit that allows the jurisdiction and say over what happens on the sidewalks bordering their establishments.

Bollman says, "At best downtown will be the home to the rich and out-of-

state students, and the closest thing to a cultural event will be a Ducks rally." He says this because he believes it forces the unhoused, the buskers, street artists and the craftspeople to leave downtown. It is usually self-entitled people with no sense of American value that so freely spout off with a self-righteous badge of activism on their chest, that their rights are being violated. Unlike your so-called artists, craftspeople and homeless, these tax-paying business owners have the right to say what goes on in front of the establishments. Your artists, craftspeople and homeless don't help pay for these establishments' rent.

Want some truth? You can't try to infringe upon the rights of tax-paying business owners and at the same time say that your rights are being violated. What makes you or the people you are defending so special?

Philip B. Goss
Eugene

NICE WORK, ODOT

If you haven't taken an urban walk or bike ride recently, I encourage you to venture to the east side of Eugene and stroll or peddle the new extensions of the

HOT AIR SOCIETY BY TONY CORCORAN

Holy War on Kitzhaber

WHAT'S BEHIND THE MANUFACTURED OUTRAGE?

A lobbyist popped this question last week at Magoo's, my local watering hole in Salem: What are the three most hated and feared words these days to an Oregon Republican? I guessed maybe "taxes/gay marriage" or "equitable income distribution." Turns out they are: "Governor Kate Brown." Now you know why the current Republican minority leaders in Salem are being relatively quiet in their attacks on Gov. John Kitzhaber and fiancé Sylvia Hayes. Something about the devil you know.

In politics you can learn a lot about a man by taking a close look at his enemies. Look no further than the Wall Street hedge fund guy who spent a million bucks in multiple campaigns trying to defeat Congressman DeFazio and elect his batshit-crazy opponent simply because DeFazio had recommended that scumbag inside-trading financiers get a warm bed in prison.

The unrelenting holier-than-thou war by *The Oregonian* on Kitzhaber just picked up a notch last week with its editorial board calling for his resignation. Talk about creating your own storyline: It turns its ubiquitous personal attacks on Sylvia Hayes into this handwringing editorial about the "distraction" Kitzhaber caused, then demands his resignation. Really? Man bites dog? To buy *The Oregonian's* latest conspiracy theory, you'd have to accept the theory that Hayes has somehow flimflammed Dr. John into becoming an environmentally conscientious governor at this point in his career. Really? The same former Oregon Senate president who engineered and fought for the Oregon Salmon Plan even before he was elected governor 20 years ago thinks differently about carbon emissions and healthy streams after meeting Hayes 12 years ago? Nice regression analysis.

Remember this: *The Oregonian* Editorial Board

(OEB) members are the same clowns who endorsed Monica "Stalking Order" Wehby over our fine Sen. Jeff Merkley. Erik Lukens, OEB member, has a long history of opposition to anyone who supports extending Oregon's low-carbon fuel standards program that expires at the end of the year. This issue is expected to be the first big partisan vote this session, and the Republicans are working furiously to tie this fight to Sylvia Hayes and a potential transportation package.

Not to be outdone, the guys who lost to Kitzhaber by over 6 percent in the last election, Dennis Richardson's former campaign advisors, already began collecting petitions for Dr. John's recall. Numbskulls that they are, they soon learned from the secretary of state (what's her name again?) that a recall must wait until the gov has served a minimum of six months of his term.

I'm in the same camp as Senate President Peter Courtney. I won't speculate on Dr. John's future. I know him as an honorable man, a private man, a sincere man, and I consider him a friend. You underestimate him at your own risk; he's also a wily and stubborn guy. His enemies, whether they be Dennis Richardson, Art Robinson or OEB's Erik Lukens, are also our enemies, sports fans.

Sorry, I didn't mean to get "distracted" by all this nonsense. Apparently House and Senate Dems are undistracted. In addition to a vote on extending the sunset on the low-carbon fuel standards coming as soon as next week, Dems are also going after two bills that failed last session — automatic voter registration and class-action lawsuit payouts. Floyd Prozanski says the Senate is working more slowly on the background checks gun bill, even though he's confident the Senate will be successful in passing a good measure this session.

As a recovering former labor goon/politician, one of the bills I'll watch closely this session is Senate Bill 469, which would toughen laws to force Oregon hospitals to provide adequate nursing staff for their patients, sponsored by the Oregon Nurses Association. The bill would give nurses stronger authority to negotiate with administrators on staffing levels and monitor compliance. This issue has significantly heated up with the public, and the ONA has done an excellent job exposing working conditions and patient safety hazards associated with chronic staffing problems. I've watched my good friend, Mo Smith, an ONA organizer, go to contract battle every few years with the highly paid administrators at PiercedHealth. I'm still mad at them for their hospital's religious health care provider tax-exempt status while they're selling land at their new chalet/development north of town. Go ONA!

Tony Corcoran of Cottage Grove is a former state legislator and soon-to-be retired state worker. The views expressed herein are his alone.

