

## WHAT UBER DOES

The Eugene City Council recently voted to have Uber abide by taxi regulations, jeopardizing Uber's future in Eugene. On the surface this may appear as if the city is acting in the residents' best interest. Its argument is that taxi licensing ensures that drivers are vetted and accounted for. Yet Uber does state and federal criminal background checks and a 10-year driver history check. What Uber does that taxi companies don't do is put its driver information on the internet, as well as precisely document every ride online.

The question stands then: If Uber exceeds industry standard safety regulations, why is the City Council so insistent on making it abide by the city's taxi regulations? I trust readers to draw their own conclusions. But it should be noted that taxi licensing costs money that goes to the city.

It should also be noted that Mothers Against Drunk Driving released a study showing that drunk driving significantly decreased when Uber entered a market.

I am an artist, I am a teacher, I am an

Uber driver, trying my hardest to make ends meet in a community I love. I'm not the big corporate guy. But who is your city government?

Steve Buettler  
Eugene

## NEW CITY POLICY NEEDED

It's becoming tricky for our leaders to legislate the local economy. Uber and Airbnb are two of the largest examples of an emerging economic boom that is taking place around the U.S. I personally feel that it's a pretty great trend. I'm not making claims that these are benevolent companies that want to encourage the growth of a "sharing economy." These are still very much large corporations that are looking mostly at quarterly profits. Still, it's a step in an interesting direction and one I think we should pay attention to and not hinder.

Eugene wants Uber to pay the same modest fees for licensing that taxi companies pay. That seems fine and reasonable at the first glance, but there is a lot more to this. I'm sure that normally Uber would be happy to oblige and would

even like a healthy relationship with the city. The problem is that it has potential to set legal precedence that they are taxi companies, which could cost them millions in places like New York City. Are they taxi companies? The end result for the consumer is certainly the same, but they have a radically different business model.

I've heard a lot of people discussing safety issues as being the primary reason for the licensing requirement. Maybe we should be looking at these requirements a little differently. Let's do away with traditional licensing. Eugene could set up a unique designation, whether we're talking about transportation services like this, temporary housing or any of the other types of "shared" services that we will be inundated with in the coming years.

Find a way to keep the background check requirements if that makes people feel better, but do away with the traditional licensing that would link these services directly with their soon-to-be antiquated counterparts so that legal precedence is less of an issue. A new designation is needed as this is not likely a short-lived trend. I just

hope that lawmakers can make new policy instead of banning anything that doesn't fit quite right into the old policy.

And let's not pretend that taxi companies are the most benevolent employers either. They hire their workers like strip clubs do: independent contractors with no guaranteed wages and next to no labor rights.

On a side note: When a group is interested in getting citizens to reach out and petition their local government to make policy changes, I think it's pretty horrible that the government would attack it on Twitter for doing so — like the city of Eugene did recently [see [wkly.ws/ly6](http://wkly.ws/ly6)].

Christopher Anglin  
Eugene

## HITTING THE POOR

The proposed Lane County annual vehicle registration fee is a negative potential revenue generating idea. Oregon has been recognized two years running by national moving company United Van Lines as the number one inbound relocation destination, and our county commissioners are cooking up new taxes

## HOT AIR SOCIETY BY TONY CORCORAN

## Who'da Thunk It?

BIG SHAKE-UP AND ANOTHER BOOST OF ESTROGEN THERAPY

What a difference a week makes! I'm shocked and saddened that he walked away the way he did. The most painful part for me was watching a news clip of him Wednesday night repeatedly telling a reporter he had no intention of resigning. There was no toughness, just the raspy monotone of a defeated man.

My initial reaction to House Speaker Tina Kotek, Senate President Peter Courtney and Treasurer Ted Wheeler's public Democratic pile-on press conferences on Thursday was that it was hasty, without due process for John himself and a guilt-by-association reaction to a "distraction" (what was her name again?) created by the Oregonian's Republican-leaning muckraking. But as I mulled it over this weekend, I realized there probably was no alternative: Red flags thrown by well-respected Kitzhaber insiders were either given lip service or simply ignored by the couple during his third term in office.

I still stick by what I said last week, though — you can tell a lot about a man by the enemies he makes. An anti-Kitzhaber/Hayes mailer urging voters to call Majority Leader Val Hoyle to oppose the fuel carbon emission standards bill hit Val's district before you could spell "influence peddling." But you can also tell a lot about a man by the way he responds to his friends. This is where the train goes off the rail for the governor and what's-her-name.

I've known Peter Courtney for as long as I've known John Kitzhaber, over 20 years. Courtney was my Democratic caucus leader or Senate president the entire time I served. And he and John go back another 10 years plus. I know that press appearance on Thursday calling for John to resign had to eat Peter alive. No one in that building has a stronger sense of institutional

integrity and respect for the elected officials who serve in the process — regardless of party or voting record — than Peter Courtney. When he comes to deliver the executioner's message, it means he's tried every other alternative possible, without success.

We all know from recent history that the Oregon Legislature is a difficult place to get things done in a six-month whirlwind session. We all know that each legislative assembly arises anew without legal or political attachment to previous sessions, a *tabula rasa* soon to be scribbled upon by two opinionated gangs of third-graders whose only vow to each other is to end the session *sine die* some future day, maybe, after delivering a relatively balanced budget.

Each session has its own personality, driven by the intensity of the moment, horse-trading, posturing, deal-making, working both sides of the aisle, counting votes and consulting with the other two branches of government. When activities in the executive branch spill out into the Capitol, activities that overshadow potential legislative progress, it doesn't really matter if they arose through yellow journalism or best-practices research. Kotek and Courtney reached the same conclusion, a public execution, only after their inner dialogue with the executive branch was ignored. Leadership is leadership. I trust those folks. It had to be done.

Gov. Kate Brown will do just fine; she's had plenty of experience herding cats as the Senate Democratic leader my last session. I served in both chambers with her. She's a tough Portland liberal, and I mean that in a nice way. She's strong on civil and women's rights, education funding, environmental issues, and she's a good

friend of public employees. I agree she might have a different strategy for slicing and dicing the public education dollar, but I think on the carbon emission fuel standards issue, ironically, she'll be in the same policy position as the previous administration.

Given my perverse and deviant political nature, as the session progresses I'm really going to be zoned in on how much fun Kate, Tina and Val are going to have at the expense of their male Republican and Democrat counterparts during their big-pants leadership negotiation soirees. Believe me: Courtney,

Teddy Ferrioli and Mike McLane are in for some serious estrogen therapy. Let's hope, sports fans, it's not another NFL-style "Deflate-gate."

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

