

SLANT

• We left the City Club of Eugene's excellent debate on March 13 about **manmade microwave radiation's impact** on human health undecided. Dr. Davison Soper, UO physics professor, and Dr. Paul Dart, MD, left us thinking that the science is not there on either side, although both expressed strong views. Soper was not concerned about wifi, cell towers and smart meters impacting human health. Dart definitely was. More science, please.

• **The art of transit:** This week LTD announced the three artists who will complete the installations "inspired by nature and neighbors" along the West EmX line — locals Tallmadge Doyle, Betsy Wolfston and Kari Johnson. Lisa VanWinkle, communications coordinator for West Eugene EmX, predicts that the art will be installed in summer 2017. The art funding came from the same pot as the general funding for the West EmX project — 80 percent of which comes from the Federal Transit Administration and 20 percent from Oregon lottery-backed bonds. "The FTA does not require an investment in art but LTD believes it's important," VanWinkle tells *EW*. She also notes that in addition to making the project and neighborhoods more attractive, public art is proven to significantly reduce graffiti and vandalism. We'd like to see more of this proactive attitude towards public art and spaces, no matter where the funding comes from. Imagine what the student housing downtown could have looked like if builders took some of their MUPTE money and invested it in art. Perhaps instead of boxy, flimsy eyesores, the building's exteriors could have featured murals by local artists or the courtyards could be galleries for homegrown sculpture.

• While some anti-democratic and mean-spirited states **are trying to suppress voting**, Oregon shines with our new Motor Voter law. It allows you to register to vote or update voter registration information after interacting with the DMV without additional steps. We want to give a special shout out to the Bus Project, which has worked for years along with countless others to make this happen. Started by Jefferson Smith and now headed by interim director Nathan Howard, the Bus will be critical in educating, engaging and turning out the hundreds of thousands of new voters that will be added to the rolls by 2016. Smith and Howard were both student activists at the UO.

• We hear **Oregon Ducks basketball** coach Dana Altman has been named a finalist for the 2015 Skip Prosser Award for coaches who "who not only achieve success on the basketball court but who also display moral integrity off of it as well." Huh? Altman has 25-9 record this season, led the Ducks to a second place in the Pac-12 standings and the team will play in the NCAA Tournament for the third year in row. But winning is not the same as moral integrity, and we don't see the moral integrity in the countersuit Altman and the UO filed against the woman who says she was raped by three of Altman's players. The suit was dropped after a public outcry. If Altman wants to help lead the way to stop sexual assault on campus, then maybe we can give him an award for integrity.

• Rumor is that **Councilor Mike Clark** is already sucking the air out of the room in the contest to succeed Kitty Piercy as mayor in 2016. Other names continue to pop up: Alan Zelenka, Chris Pryor and some surprises. November 2016 seems a long way away, but the Hillary Clinton strategy of scaring away challengers with early money and supporters might work, even in Eugene, Oregon.

• First we canceled the Eugene Celebration, now the annual **Earth Day celebration** at EWEB is out this year due to changes in the permitting process and the application requirements, according to a press release from Earth Day Oregon. Party aside, these celebrations bring our community together and let good local groups do outreach.

NEWS

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Basic Rights Oregon, a non-profit LGBT rights organization out of Portland, brought HB 2307 to the Legislature. BRO Policy Director Nico Quintana says it is a high-priority bill because of the number of people BRO has worked with who have been harmed by conversion therapy. By banning the practice, he says the state will fulfill its obligation to balance the rights of parents with the safety of youth.

Supporters of HB 2307 include the American Counseling Association, the Oregon Psychological Association and the Oregon Nurses Association. The American Psychological Association also supports it and recently released a report that discredits conversion therapy. These mental health professionals agree that being LGBT is not a mental disorder, so efforts to "cure" patients are not permissible practices.

If passed, it will be up to mental health professional associations to regulate the new law. Quintana says

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— ALYSSA CHIAMPI,
PANGENDER STUDENT

the bill is very narrowly focused, and it does not restrict free speech or violate privacy rights — concerns brought by groups including the Oregon Family Council. It would only ban licensed therapists from doing conversion therapy on minors.

Chiampi says she hopes her story proves that HB 2307 is needed badly today.

"In Medford, I know people that are scared of coming out to their parents because they know their parents will

make them go to conversion therapy," she says.

The bill passed out of the House Health Care Committee on an almost party-line vote. Rep. Knute Buehler (R-Bend) joined the five Democrats on the committee to vote in favor of it.

According to BRO, conversion therapy puts youth at risk for depression, substance abuse and suicide. — *Lucy Ohlsen*

PANEL EXAMINES ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS OF POT GROWS IN CALIFORNIA

What's the environmental impact of your bud?

A March 6 Public Interest Environmental Law Conference panel at the UO law school explored illegal marijuana grows in Northern California, home to the Redwoods and Mt. Shasta, and their negative impacts on water and wildlife, including coho salmon and Pacific fishers.

Panelist Thomas Wheeler, program and legal coordinator for the Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC), explained that trespass grows in California's Humboldt County often consist of thousands of plants on private or national forest land.

Wheeler said illegal pot grows can harm wildlife by using a particularly potent kind of poison called second generation anticoagulant rodenticides, meant to discourage animals from eating marijuana plants. The poison causes an extremely painful death by hemorrhaging and internal bleeding.

One species killed by the poison is the Pacific fisher, a member of the weasel family. Its West Coast population is currently proposed to be listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, and marijuana grows dot its habitat. A study of fishers in the area showed that 80 percent of fishers tested positive for exposure to a rodenticide of some kind.

More than anything, Wheeler said, National Forest land needs better protection. "We need to combat the misconception that illegal marijuana growth is a social and not an environmental problem," he said.

Panelist Scott Greacen, executive director of Friends of the Eel River, went on to explain the impact of trespass grows on coho salmon runs.

Eel River is the third largest watershed in California, and its south fork is prime habitat for threatened coho salmon. When marijuana growers divert water for grow operations, it can cause sediment disruption and water loss and, because of this, California tributary Sproul Creek went dry last year. Greacen said that an entire year's run of coho salmon were lost.

Trespass grows are problematic because they are unregulated, said panelist Natalynne DeLap, executive director of EPIC. "Environmental laws may or may not be in violation, but we don't have enough law enforcement to go and bust everyone," she said.

Estimates from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife say there are 5,000 grows in Humboldt County, and that number doubled between 2009 and 2012, DeLap said.

"We need effective regulations now," she said. "We need to be able to provide a legal framework to cultivate cannabis."

In California, a group called California Cannabis Voice is organizing to write an initiative that, according to DeLap, bypasses California Natural Resources Agency regulations and has no mechanism to produce revenue for Humboldt County. This is not the solution that Californians

need to protect their natural resources, DeLap said.

Panelist Hezekiah Allen, executive director of the Emerald Growers Association, said that regulation is the key, and that "the number-one executive action to be taken is to designate cannabis as an agricultural product."

He said his organization recognizes that the landscapes on which illegal grows take place are already "devastated," and he would like to see some revenue from grow operations go into restoration. "Revenue moves bills, and I do believe the governor would sign a regulatory package," he said. — *Amy Schneider*

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