

UNDERMINING RIGHTS

As the administration raises pressure on Congress to pass Trade Promotion Authority to seal the deal on the Trans-Pacific Partnership, I wanted to bring your attention to a letter written to Congress by President Obama's mentor at Harvard, Laurence Tribe, and a group of senior legal experts. In the letter, they raise very serious and real concerns about the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) system under TPP.

The American legal system is based on every citizen's equal right to seek a fair trial in court. But ISDS creates a separate, exclusive legal system available only to foreign investors. It's a powerful tool to further empower multinational corporations to undermine workers' rights, consumer protections and environmental health. As you opine on the trade debate, I hope you will bring this issue to the attention of Oregonians who deserve to know the truth.

Rep. Peter A. DeFazio
Springfield

CRONIN OWNED DEBATE

The best part of the debate April 30 between 4J School Board candidate Kevin Cronin and Republican former mayor Jim Torrey was when Torrey asked Cronin, "Have you ever been to a 4J School Board meeting in your life?"

Cronin responded with this: "Mr. Torrey, not only have I been to numerous meetings, I also ran the 2011 local measure that, if passed, would have helped to hire more teachers and deal with our class sizes at 4J."

To be fair, Torrey would have known that if he'd been there with us fighting for our local schools — he wasn't.

Cronin raised the bar for the purpose and direction of the 4J School Board. He differentiated himself from Torrey by defining his school board election as a run to force action on our local school board and to force conversation in our local communities about how to truly deal with the crisis facing parents, students and teachers around the state.

Cronin also said that he would never sue *The Register-Guard* to keep secrets from the public, but rather engage the public by informing the newspaper of important developments in the district — a stark difference from what we have seen from Torrey, who chairs the board and voted to sue the paper for trying to inform the public about what was going on.

We need transparency. We need action. We need Cronin on the 4J School Board, Position 5.

Keith Hoskins
Eugene

IS IT REALLY 'MODEST'?

The ballot title for Measure 20-231 in the Lane County Voters' Pamphlet reads "To ensure road safety by modestly increasing vehicle registration fee."

I do not disagree with the need for "road safety." But I am amazed that the adjective "modestly" passed title approval. I always had the impression titles were to be written with impartiality. I would be very surprised if many low-income Lane County residents would find the proposed registration fee of \$35 per vehicle to be a modest increase.

I recommend careful reading the entire ballot summary for Measure 20-231 to learn what passage would encompass and how it might affect you.

Eilene Schultz
Springfield

A GOOD FIT FOR ESD

Regarding the Lane ESD board election for the at-large seat (the seat I currently hold), I believe ESD will be best served by electing Linda Hamilton. Hamilton brings life and professional experiences that resonate perfectly with the growth and direction of ESD, and which are crucial if the organization is going to properly support the districts and students it is being called upon to serve. Lane ESD is expanding its participation at the MLK Jr.

Education Center, which serves the youth at Serbu and is contracted through the Junction City School District to provide educational services for youth housed at the new psychiatric hospital.

Lane ESD is an active partner in Lane County's Gang Prevention Task Force. Lane ESD is committed to closing the achievement gap and is helping facilitate countywide discussions addressing disproportionate suspension and expulsion rates among students of color. Hamilton's life experience makes her uniquely qualified to bring a relevant and important perspective to these conversations. Her work experience as a parole officer (opening her heart to youth and adults who have been marginalized) will bring a needed voice to the board, ensuring that Lane ESD fulfills its mission to serve all students in Lane County. I believe the Lane ESD Board needs Hamilton. She is a perfect fit. Please vote for Hamilton for the Lane ESD board.

Carol Dennis
Eugene

SCRATCHY THROATS

It's too bad that reviewers only see a theater production once, and then make broad, general statements about certain aspects of which they have little or no knowledge. Case in point is Isabel Zacharias' review April 23 of *Les*

HOT AIR SOCIETY BY TONY CORCORAN

Punting on PERS

OREGON RECKONS WITH \$5 BILLION LOSS

As this column goes to print, yours truly will be a whole new person in approximately two weeks. No, no, this isn't a Bruce Jenner moment, about his transgenderification and his alleged dedication of his balls to Obama. Simply stated, I will be able to discard the chains of oppression, forever freed from the shackles of being a First Amendment victim of this sobering qualifier at the end of each of my columns: "Tony Corcoran is currently a state employee, but his observations in this column are those of a private Oregon citizen." (In other words: Don't believe a thing he has to say because he's biased and he can't tell us how he really feels.) Pretty soon, dear reader, you'll soon be able to discern just how full of bullshit I am on my own merits, despite no longer being a public employee. Just a retired geezer! My plans involve a little golf and producing paella for progressive politicians in perpetuity.

Speaking of retirement, last Thursday the Oregon Supreme Court delivered the latest slam-dunk to Oregon public employers, whether they be the state, counties, cities or school districts (seriously, does Oregon need all 197 school districts? — if you ever want to have a *real* discussion about unnecessary bureaucratic redundancy and responsible school finance, start there). Once again, as they did in response to the PERS legislation we passed in 2003, the supremes unanimously reinforced their previous position that contract law is simple: "A deal is a deal." You can't change a deal retroactively.

And just for full disclosure: I will retire under the defined benefit formula, not the money match, even though I'm Tier One. Why? Because 10 years of my PERS time was spent serving in the Legislature making less than minimum wage. The outcome of the current Supreme Court decision wouldn't have affected me either way.

Both the Legislature and then-Gov. Kitzhaber recognized the risks of the 2013 reforms they proposed. I never sensed that the proponents or opponents of PERS reform had a clue how the supremes would rule. *The Oregonian* editorial board succinctly laid out the result: Taxpayers no longer must compensate retirees who live out of state for Oregon income taxes they don't pay, and reductions in annual cost of living adjustments — the reform's primary cost-containment mechanism — will apply to income earned by public employees after the effective date of the 2013 reforms. You can't change a deal retroactively.

Granted, the executive and legislative branches now have a larger unfunded actuarial liability owed to people who'd already retired. The anticipated savings of the reforms — more than \$5 billion over 20 years — has vanished.

As *The Oregonian* editors asked: What can legislators do? Now the rabid anti-public employee voices recognize that even if there were a legislative will to tinker once again with the contractual rights of a public pension system, support in the courts would be difficult. As for the \$500 million hole in the budget, this Legislature will simply punt forward to the 2017 budget. 2016 will be a fascinating political season; I predict plenty of estrogen from Kate Brown and Hillary Clinton and ballot measure wars.

Speaking of estrogen, I'm saddened by the conflict that has arisen in the Republican House caucus. Apparently, the Queen of Self-righteousness Julie Parrish is starting to irritate not only every Democrat in the Capitol, but also her own colleagues. I don't usually have a lot of good things to say about Republicans in general, but I've got to hand it to Rep. Vic Gilliam of Silverton. He had the *cojones* to take Parrish to task for her shameless piling on in the aftermath of the Kitzhaber/Hayes fiasco. After berating Parrish on the House floor last month, Gilliam introduced his own legislation, aimed at legislators who run campaign consulting firms on the side, to require them to regularly and frequently disclose any political work they are doing, and who's paying them. And Parrish seems to be the only Republican legislator in the campaign consulting business today.

Parrish and Gilliam have a history. Gilliam, who these days would be described as a moderate Republican, beat a right-wing challenger in his Republican primary who received a huge donation from Parrish's sugar daddy, Andrew Miller of Stimson Lumber. It is ironic that Parrish was on the losing end of a bill last week that will require insurance companies to extend women's birth control prescriptions for longer than 30 days. My wife, Jeannie, a nurse practitioner, has railed for years about how unfair this insurance practice has been to women. Anyway, after her long harangue on the House floor in opposition to the bill, pitiful Julie was only able to garner one other Republican vote, from her pathetic colleague, Bill Post, an anti-choice Lars Larson wannabe radio host. Stay tuned. ■

Former state Sen. Tony Corcoran of Cottage Grove is currently a state employee but his observations in this column are those of private citizen.

