

SCAPEGOATS DOWNTOWN

Regarding the Kesey Square cover story May 7: First they demolished the Olive and Broadway fountain. That was where old people hung out. The pool was round with a low smooth flat edge you could sit on, and had a fountain in the middle. Around it, concrete chess tables with inlaid marble where elders played chess and fed the pigeons, kids splashed in the water.

Then they removed the Broadway playground, a solid, safe playground enjoyed by families with children. Then they took out the benches where everyone rested. Then there was no way to be comfortable. The adolescents didn't mind. They needed a place! People called them mall "rats," which is extermination language.

Then came "Broadway, a Great Street." Pictures showed the wonderful new street with cars, children holding balloons and guitar players on benches. Now cars drove on it. Any place to sit was blocked. Some can endure this environment — homeless, adolescents, people shopping, drinking or walking through.

The word "fascism" is thrown around, mostly inappropriately. But to blame homeless people for the alienating landscape is straight-up fascist scapegoating.

A successful square *did* have a life of its own. Restoring its life will require understanding basic human needs and pleasures.

Kari Johnson
Eugene

URBAN BLIGHT

Poor Eugene, suffering so much — and all self-inflicted by "public servants." The City Council ignores its only objective study and approves a City Hall proposal; almost immediately, it adds millions to expand the project. Meanwhile, council debates continuing a tax-exemption program responsible for Capstone — during a rental market glut! And the city and 4J School Board refuse Fred Meyer's bid to acquire Civic Stadium — citizens later learn that the owner of competing grocery stores is a committee member and that he'll purchase some of the property. Concurrently, the school board that hired the debacle that was Shelley Berman (this alone should have led to resignations, at least out of shame) obsesses over secrecy and tolerates a member advocating the destruction of information (illegal). These role models, mind you, are responsible for the education of our children.

It is blindingly obvious that Eugene has a cabal of insiders and leaders whose shelf life has long expired. Hubris and incompetence have become the norm.

It falls to us, the fed-up, to let them know how we feel *now* and, when the opportunity appears, vote them *all* out and begin anew with fresh faces and new ideas.

Enough is enough.

Jayne Vasconcellos
Eugene

STAND FOR WHAT?

After the scandal that the 4J School

Board has been mired in due to its lack of transparency, it is imperative that voters have full information about the organizations that are supporting the incumbents running for reelection. The 4J School Board incumbents are endorsed by the advocacy organization, Stand for Children.

Perhaps in honor of 4J's quest for transparency and accountability, Stand For Children should be re-named Stand For Standardization. Stand For Children has voiced its support for the shameful Race to the Top legislation as well as tying teacher and school evaluations to student standardized test scores. In 2010, Stand for Children received a \$1,378,527 grant from The Walton Family Foundation, the anti-union owners of Walmart.

Recently, Stand for Children has stood against HB 2655. This Student Assessment Bill of Rights would ensure that students and parents receive detailed information about any scheduled assessments, are provided clear information about the legal right to opt out, and are allowed to opt out for whatever reason they choose.

Stand for Children has been a long-time supporter of the ever-expanding, profit-driven high-stakes testing movement. Its opposition to HB 2655, a bill to provide clarity, expanded rights and openness for parents and children, puts them in opposition to transparency and accountability in testing.

While Stand for Children has done valuable work in support of adequate education funding, we should not stand

for its relentless advocacy for high-stakes testing and its stand against parent and student rights.

Laura Farrelly
Eugene

CHALLENGING TORREY

Kevin Cronin killed it at the Amazon Neighbors' debate April 30 against Eugene's former Republican Mayor Jim Torrey. When I heard that a 20-something kid was challenging Torrey, a local political heavyweight, I showed up to what I assumed would be a calf sent to slaughter.

But Cronin held his own, showing he knows a great deal about the problems facing 4J schools and has a realistic and keen grasp of the work ahead of us to improve them.

Many people who talk about Oregon schools say we need to "stop throwing money at the problem," not realizing that we *did* stop throwing money into our schools and that this is exactly the problem. "It doesn't take a rocket scientist," Kevin said, to understand that our trip from having the top schools in the country to some of the worst "is a direct result of Measures 5, 47 and 50. They drained money out of our schools, and we need to decide how to give our kids some of that money back."

Cronin says he wants to join the board for the long haul. I believe him. The first step is engaging our community and helping them understand our schools have a problem — and that the principal part of

HOT AIR SOCIETY BY TONY CORCORAN

Just Screw U,
Turkey!

THE BIG TRADE PLAN AND OTHER GOBBLERS

During the last six regular sessions of the Oregon Legislature, I have had the honor and privilege of serving with Marla Rae and Jon Chandler — two of the most profanely funny bipartisan lobbyists in the business — as a judge in the Golden Gobbler Awards honoring the worst bills introduced each session. This party has been around forever, hosted by Pamela Jones, Mark Nelson and his lobby firm, Public Affairs Counsel, at their beautiful home on the Willamette. Mark invites legislators, staff and lobbyists, and the price of admission is a sense of humor and a bill that should not be. Four frozen rock Cornish game hens and a frozen turkey were the prizes. And yes, the lobbyists have to report themselves to the Oregon Ethics Commission.

Sen. "Pretty Boy" Floyd Prozanski got an honorable mention for SB 461, his bill to permit Oregonians to get a replacement drivers license if they dislike the photograph on their license. We accused Floyd of running for some as-yet unidentified statewide office and attempting to solicit the vote of every female in the state. And Sen. Brian "Spyman" Boquist got recognition for SB 176, his bill to outlaw Sharia Law in Oregon. Why, you might ask? Even former Gov. John Kitzhaber got a game hen for his pre-session filed HB 2401, which creates an excise tax on wild bird feed. Since former turkey, Cylvia Hayes, was unable to be there to accept the bird, we sent it to that hyper-vigilant guard at the Deschutes County Dump.

However, the winner far outdistanced its opponents. Hidden deep within the bowels of A-Engrossed Senate Bill 298 was one of the scariest unforeseen consequences hidden in a seemingly innocuous proposal which could have wreaked havoc for generations of Oregonians! On its face, its relating cause seemed like mere window-dressing: It simply changed the name of the State Board of Massage Therapists to the much sexier

and elucidating State Board of Massage Therapists and Bodyworkers! But it contained this poison pill: ORS 687.011(4)(b) now specifically excludes high-velocity, short-amplitude manipulative thrusting from the definition of "massage." Now, unlike you, I'm not sure what all that means. But I think we may have inadvertently just outlawed twerking!

Speaking of turkeys, you got any birdseed left for those two snake oil salesmen, Obama and Wyden, and their latest attempt to fast-track a Trans-Pacific Partnership plan? As much as I like these guys, they are once again dead wrong on trade, just like they were on NAFTA. What's with this sucking up to corporate America at the Nike campus over another bad deal? Remember 20 years ago when Uncle Phil changed his corporate logo from "Just Do It" to "Just Screw U" and stopped supporting Oregon athletics when the UO, under pressure from its students, faculty, local human rights groups and unions, joined an international oversight group to examine labor practices in Uncle Phil's far-flung factory empire?

And what exactly *did* NAFTA get us after 20 years? According to the *Huffington Post*: One million U.S. jobs lost, a \$181 billion U.S. trade deficit with NAFTA partners Mexico and Canada and growing income inequality. Uncle Phil and the other off-shore manufacturers created their own sham oversight commission. Ironically, 20 years later, Nike just reported that *its own commission* announced that over 30 percent of Nike's foreign plants are out of compliance with wages or workers rights issues. And now you want us to fast-track this current dog?

Speaking of dogs, are Oregon Democrats the luckiest people in the world, or what? Not only did we have Art "Urine Specimen" Robinson take over the Oregon Republican Party and run against Peter DeFazio (again), and Dennis "I Wear a Motorcycle Helmet So You Won't Recognize Me" Richardson run for governor last year: We now have the prospect of Sid Leiken running for governor next year! You remember Sid, don't you? County commissioner, former Springfield mayor and oh, yeah, used to be a Democrat? Ran against DeFazio a while back? Oh, this is not going to be any fun at all. However, I'm just here to help!

Of course, the first thing you do if you're a candidate is you find out if people remember you and if they like you or not. The fancy technical name for this exercise is "polling." Now, if you'll remember, Sid is an expert on polling. Should come as no surprise; it turns out Sid was raised by a pollster: his mother. At least that's what he told the ethics commission when he reported his campaign finances. Stay tuned.■

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