

Please support Oregon Senate Bill 941. This law will eliminate the private-sale loophole, which allows felons, domestic abusers and individuals with severe and persistent mental illness easy access to guns. Why is that not a good idea?

Martha Snyder
Eugene

SWEATSHOP PHIL

Phil and Penny Knight deserve some credit for their \$500 million contribution to OHSU [in 2013]. However, let's put this in perspective.

As large as this contribution is, it won't

affect the Knight's quality of life whatsoever. They are billionaires who can buy nearly anything they want. However, something they can't buy is more life. But they can donate to institutions like OHSU that very well may produce cancer treatments, etc. that may extend the lives of the Knights or improve their quality of life. If you're a ridiculously rich person like Phil Knight, donating to cancer research is money well spent, particularly if that institution is in your backyard.

Let's remember how Phil made his billions. The sweatshop pioneer has become notorious around the world for exploiting poor people (you would never know it by reading

editorials in *The Register-Guard*) and the environment to produce the Nike products that are worshiped here in the U.S. He has led the charge in exactly the kind of consumerism and unfettered capitalism that is destroying the livability of the planet, which the Pope just highlighted in his encyclical.

Let's also remember that when Oregon was facing massive cuts in public education and we asked the rich and ultra-rich to pay a bit more in taxes to help fund education, Sweatshop Phil said "no way" and funded the losing anti-Measure 66 and 67 campaign.

Let's also remember that Knight funded Chris Dudley, the 2010 Republican

nominee for governor. Dudley ran on lowering taxes for the rich and famously was recorded opposing the minimum wage. Dudley, like Knight, wants the corporations to be able to pay you as little as they can possibly get away with.

And, last but not least, let's remember the massive 30-year tax break that the Legislature handed to Nike in 2012. Like many billionaires, Knight has worked our corrupt, money-driven system to shift the tax burden away from him and the other plunderers and onto the rest of us.

Joshua Welch
Eugene

VIEWPOINT BY COUNCILOR GEORGE BROWN

Our Pressing Need

WORKFORCE HOUSING NEEDS TO BE PART OF MUPTE

Our city has a serious housing problem that the Eugene City Council cannot continue to ignore. When I got on the council in 2009, 40 percent of Eugene's households were considered "rent-burdened" because they were paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Since then the situation has only worsened; yet during the same period, the council has granted millions in tax breaks for upscale student housing projects that did nothing to address our most pressing housing needs.

At present, it's estimated that 60 percent of Eugene households are rent-burdened. When over half of our town's residents are having a hard time meeting rent and other basic expenses, it's time to adjust our priorities so they're better aligned with our community's values. My fellow councilors and I have the opportunity to do just that by requiring that all future projects granted 10-year property tax exemptions under a revived Multi-Unit Property Tax Exemption (MUPTE) include a reasonable number of units with rents that are affordable to "workforce" households.

Who exactly are the "workforce"? They're the barista who pulls your latte, the clerk who checks your groceries, the teller who handles your bank deposit, the secretary at your attorney's office, the gardener who mows your lawn and maybe even you!

A workforce household typically has at least one employed member whose income is adequate to cover most, if not all, of the household's basic needs. However, when the cost of housing is more than 30 percent of a workforce household's income, what's left after rent may not fully cover food, clothing, medical bills and other essentials.

Last January, a 7-1 majority of the council voted to modify the proposed new MUPTE program to require a developer who receives a 10-year exemption to offer 30 percent of the MUPTE-supported project's new units available at rents that would be affordable to workforce households, or to make commensurate "in lieu of" payments to a city workforce housing fund.

At that time, the council left a number of details to be worked out until after receiving additional information from other cities and housing agencies. One of the critical policy decisions is the exact income range to use for a household to qualify as "workforce." Many other jurisdictions set a threshold somewhere between 60 and 100 percent of the area median income (AMI).

"Affordable" housing is another housing category that typically refers to subsidized projects for households earning less than 60 percent of the AMI. St. Vincent de Paul, Cornerstone Community Housing, Lane County's Housing and Community Service Agency (HACSA) and the city of Eugene's low-income housing programs all do a great job providing affordable housing to people making less than 60 percent of the AMI, but in a good year all these programs can build only 100 new apartments (and in many years fewer than that). The waiting list is as long as two and a half years, but at least these programs provide important help to low-income households. However, workforce households earn too much to qualify for any local housing program.

Unfortunately, the council hasn't been provided the necessary information to iron out the details of a practical and effective workforce housing requirement. Even worse, since January the city manager hasn't scheduled a single work session to further discuss this concept. Certain developers have heavily lobbied councilors to remove any requirement to provide the type of housing we most need in Eugene.

But, we have to remember that MUPTE, stripped of all slogans and buzzwords, is essentially a housing subsidy policy. What type of housing will be created and who will live there are questions that are absolutely central to crafting the new program, yet this is the aspect of MUPTE that the council has spent the least amount of time on. We're nearly at the end of a lengthy process. Now more than ever is the time for council to be patient and to require the city manager to schedule a sufficient number of work sessions and to bring us other cities' workforce housing programs so that we can draw useful elements from them to create an instrument that works for everyone and provides real public benefits.

Without requirements to ensure new housing projects deliver the sort of housing our community needs most, I fear that a revived MUPTE program will be nothing more than a taxpayer subsidy of very expensive apartments and condos that few residents can afford. The City Council needs to be mindful of the "Social Equity" part of the Triple Bottom Line.

Contact us at mayorcouncilandcitymanager@ci.eugene.or.us and let us know what you think. ■

George Brown is the Eugene city councilor representing Ward 1.

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