



• Lane County has a new **Spanish language radio station**, reportedly the first ever on the local FM dial. KEQB, *La Que Buena*, began broadcasting Feb. 17 on 97.7 FM. The station is owned by McKenzie River Broadcasting and will serve the “almost 30,000 Latinos in Lane County and more in the surrounding counties,” says Program Director Steve King. McKenzie River Broadcasting also operates KMGE-FM (Mix 94.5), KGNU-FM (New Country 93.3) and KEUG-FM (105.5 Bob FM).

• The nonprofit **Fern Ridge Community Radio** KOCF 92.5 FM is holding a fundraiser from 6 to 8:30 pm Saturday, March 5, at Domaine Meriwether Winery, 88324 Vineyard Lane in Veneta. Live music and silent auction, food available to purchase. KOCF is building its broadcast studio that will allow live broadcasting, present local musicians, air community meetings, interview local guests and serve as a command center in the event of a natural disaster or other emergency. Call 953-8847 for more information.

• We hear **Community Alliance for Lane County** is looking to fill a half-time paid position for fundraising, development and volunteer coordination. CALC is a venerable organization dedicated to peace and social justice for 50 years, and the staff actually has some fun doing the work. Send a letter and resume to calcoffice@gmail.com.

• Happy to report that **The Torch**, Lane Community College's student-run newspaper, took “Best of Show” for two-year colleges at this year's Associated Collegiate Press conference in Los Angeles. *The Torch*, which has won many awards over the years, was up against community college papers from throughout the western U.S. Production Director Zack Russell says the paper's management crew is working on new digital and multimedia offerings.

• **Willamette Resources & Educational Network (WREN)** is currently scheduling spring 2016 environmental education field trips and classroom presentations. WREN's programs are based in the West Eugene Wetlands and use a combination of classroom and open-air opportunities to teach science-based concepts in natural settings. WREN's programs meet Next Generation Science Standards for grades K-12, as well as addressing writing, vocabulary, math and geography, and are open to all Lane County schools. Interested teachers can email WREN at info@wewetlands.org or call 338-7047.

SLANT

• **The insurance industry won** what could be a temporary victory in the short session of the Oregon Legislature when a bill to increase the 29-year-old cap on damages on wrongful death lawsuits died quietly without a Senate vote. Two Lane county senators, Lee Beyer and Chris Edwards, said they would *not* support the change even though their caucus and governor did support it. The bill had passed the House easily. The present cap on non-economic damages in wrongful death cases is \$500,000, passed in 1987 and never adjusted for cost-of-living increases. The fight is sure to continue in the longer 2017 session.

• The Legislature's bill to **raise the minimum wage** incrementally in Oregon will soon be the law of the land, sucking energy from the two citizen initiative campaigns seeking to make a higher minimum wage mandatory statewide. Raise the Wage ended its campaign this week, but 15 Now Oregon is still active. Rep. Val Hoyle is calling SB 1532 a “victory for Oregon workers,” and it is, but the more immediate higher wage proposed by 15 Now Oregon would have more benefit to workers and our economy than the phased-in compromise hashed out in Salem. Fears and alarms persist about raising the minimum wage, but opponents ignore history: Previous raises have *not* had a significant impact on small businesses or youth employment. We adjust and move on. Let's not forget that 89 percent of minimum wage workers nationwide are age 20 or older and 56 percent of them are women, many of them struggling to raise families and relying on public assistance.

• **A disturbing bill** with bipartisan support is working its way through the Legislature. HB 4079, which would open the door to expanding urban growth boundaries (UGBs) in Oregon, has had a public hearing and has been referred to the House Ways and

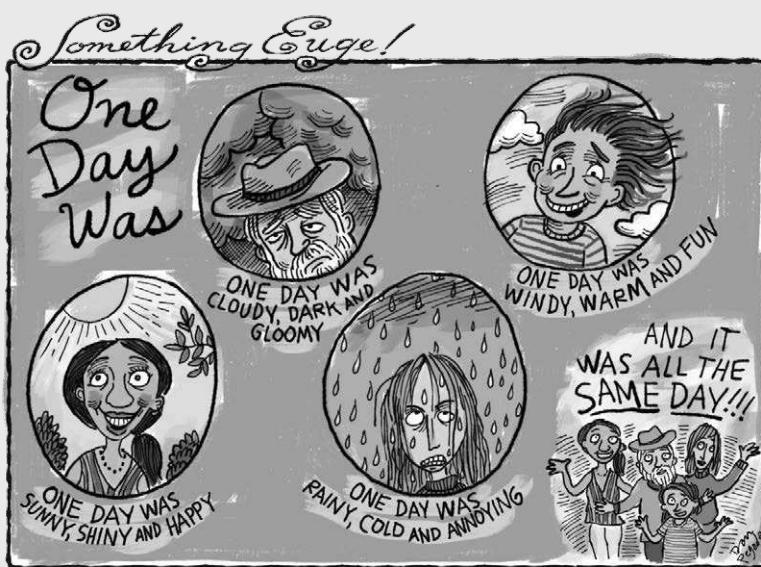
Means Committee with a do-pass recommendation. HB 4079 has been called “a major threat” to land-use planning by the Oregon Conservation Network. The bill would allow “expansion onto farm, forest and natural lands,” says OCN, if some undefined percentage of the 50-acre expansion is zoned for affordable housing, such as mobile home parks. It's a purposefully vague bill open to interpretation, and it could easily be manipulated by land speculators. There's no need to expand our UGBs for affordable housing, even if that were the true intent of the legislation. And of course developing on the outskirts carries a heavy burden on taxpayers who will inevitably subsidize expensive infrastructure and services.

• On a related note, we asked **Sen. Lee Beyer** of Springfield why he introduced SB 1573, a bill that would require cities to annex land without a public vote if landowners petition for annexation (see Slant Feb. 18). He finally got back to us after three

weeks. He admits the bill's language originated with the Oregon Home Builders Association and other related groups. Oddly enough, he tells us he “strongly believes” that “communities have a right to determine the development pattern of their community.” But he goes on to say, “The time for voicing growth concerns and voting on those plans should be on the comprehensive plan, not as an afterthought.” This seriously flawed pro-sprawl bill would take away discretion cities

and citizens have on when and where to expand into their UGBs. The bill might die in committee this year, but we expect it to be back in 2017.

• **Two big deals for journalism** this week. One was *Spotlight*, the movie about *The Boston Globe* taking on the Catholic church, winning the Oscar for best picture. The second was the announcement that Win McCormack, liberal editor and publisher who lives in Portland and New York, has bought *New Republic*. It seems likely that he will bring the venerable old magazine back. McCormack is a prominent Democratic fundraiser and donor in Portland. Two cheers for investigative journalism.



SLANT INCLUDES SHORT OPINION PIECES, OBSERVATIONS AND RUMOR-CHASING NOTES COMPILED BY THE EW STAFF. HEARD ANY GOOD RUMORS LATELY? CONTACT TED TAYLOR AT 484-0519, EDITOR@EUGENEWEEKLY.COM

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