

HIS MONEY, OUR DEMOCRACY

Bob Macherione, leader of the “Our Money Our Transit” opposition to the new West Eugene EmX bus line out W. 6th, 7th and 11th avenues, complains that the *EW* March 17 article “Don’t Let a Loser Win” shows “what is wrong with the U.S. and especially Eugene politics today: the lack of civil public discourse with others who may not agree with your point of view.” (Letters, March 31)

Mr. Macherione should know about the lack of civil public discourse — his group is behind the anti-EmX signs along W. 11th Avenue. Can you picture those signs that complained about “arrogant bureaucrats” and referred to “drug dealers” riding on the buses? I wish I had photos of all those signs. Over-the-top, mean-spirited, dubious references. The worst of uncivil discourse.

Sure, he has a different point of view about the EmX project; OK, I respect that. But his tactics on those signs are exactly the lack of civil public discourse he laments.

Larry Lewin
Eugene

ELECTORAL DISFUNCTION

There’s no blue pill to cure this type of ED. Among the myriad dysfunctions in

our 17th century electoral system, “vote splitting” could afflict the Eugene mayor’s race.

The five candidates for mayor could, ostensibly, be categorized as four liberals and one conservative. Even with a majority liberal electorate, what can happen is that the liberal vote is split among four candidates while the conservative vote is coalesced onto one candidate. In this situation, it is possible for the conservative to win.

Without doing detailed analysis, I don’t know the likelihood of the conservative garnering the 50-plus percent needed to win the office in the primary. However, another form of ED could amplify the vote-split phenomenon: low voter turnout. Voting data shows that, despite Oregon’s accommodating vote-by-mail, primary elections garner half the turnout of the general election and liberals have lower turnout than conservatives.

So, will liberals put down their (now legal) joints long enough to vote in the primary? Will Oregon adopt ranked-choice voting, which can mitigate many ED symptoms? It’s up to us, folks.

James Stauffer
Eugene

SPEAK TRUTH

I am going to take part in Democracy Spring, a huge grassroots effort to speak truth to power, from April 11-18. What do we risk if we don’t speak our minds? We risk the possibility of addressing collectively and creatively the myriad issues of social inequality, ferocious bellicosity and environmental disaster. The life-affirming option is to take ownership of our policies, politics, country and communal voice.

This is not comfortable. I’d rather stay home in this splendid spring and not expend money and energy to travel to Washington, nor experience discomforts. I am not excited about the crowd, the cold cement outside the Capitol, the prospect of arrest. And, when you have to do something, you have to do it.

Does this make sense? I don’t know. Will it make a difference? I don’t know. Am I feeling a strong pull to do this? Yes, clearly. Maybe that’s what’s meant by being spirit-led, or following the heart.

Democracy Spring is organizing the demonstration and civil disobedience to call for fair elections and real democracy. Every day thousands of protesters — including me — will risk arrest (democracyspring.org).

I invite you to support me. Join physically or in spirit. Sit in, even if it’s symbolic.

Katherine Bragg
Eugene

PROTECT NATURAL AREAS

Much obliged to Bob Warren for his explication of the function and enduring value of our national land trusts [Viewpoint, 3/31]. While public interest land use advocacy groups such as LandWatch Lane County scrap with city, county and state agencies to protect farms, forests and natural areas, individual landowners can do that job themselves — without the fuss and bother — by donating or selling their lands to an accredited land trust or by putting them into conservation easements in perpetuity.

As a long-time regional business development officer for the Oregon Business Development Department, Warren was no stranger to the interests that threaten our natural heritage. Happily, in his retirement and as a board member of McKenzie River Trust (MRT), he appears to see more value in protecting land than in promoting its exploitation.

By protecting “more than 4,500 acres of land in the McKenzie, Upper Willamette,

VIEWPOINT BY JOSEPH MCKINNEY

Setting an Example

WHY I AM RUNNING AGAINST PETER DEFAZIO IN THE PRIMARY

I’ve been the president of Oregon Roads, a leasing and finance company in Eugene, for 26 years. I’m married, have a son, daughter, daughter-in-law and a grandson. I have board-member and board-chair experience with corporations, nonprofits and municipal entities. I’ve been appointed to Eugene City Council committees and served on Lane Transit District’s steering committee. I volunteer my time as a habit. I believe that I have the qualifications to govern, so I humbly ask for your vote.

I understand that unseating an incumbent who has served ably is nearly impossible today. That has not stopped me because it is not my goal. I am attempting to set an example by doing something different than politics as usual. Of course, I’m setting an example hoping it starts a trend, and offer this brief explanation: Campaign finance reform is long overdue, and so is campaign practice reform.

Addressing campaign finance first, one congressional candidate told me that he must raise \$11,000 a day to fund his campaign for re-election. I received an email from a local incumbent stating, “It takes as much as \$40,000 to run a campaign even though I’m running unopposed.” This is absurd; it results in the election of the best fundraisers. Connections to money and power are corrupting. The individuals who might be our best candidates are eliminated from contention because that is not their interest or skill set. I believe there are many able citizens willing to participate in governing, but they are not willing to beg for financial support. Working people cannot afford the risks. The result? It is prohibitively expensive to participate in electoral politics.

Turning to campaign practices, notice our candidates abandon their families or, worse, exploit them for political gain. They build a virtual company with managers, handlers, statisticians and the omnipresent fundraisers. Next comes baby kissing, hand-shaking and stump speech making. Then we’ll get commercials, bulk mail, robo-calls and bumper stickers. American politics has been called a circus and a carnival.

Often, the people we select to elect are the best fundraisers and carnival barkers. That will continue until we redesign the selection process. I am seeking candidates

who are unwilling to play these games yet willing to serve as my representatives.

We have been barraged by the spectacle of the presidential primaries this year. My first political campaign experience was as a student volunteer for the Robert F. Kennedy presidential campaign in 1968. Not much has changed. I have only been involved in political campaigns peripherally since then due to my lack of respect for the process. I believe that I stand with the majority of voters on this: alienated and disconnected from our own democracy.

No citizens, including corporate citizens, will spend a dime on my campaign. Filing for office has cost me \$100 and that’s all that will be spent on this campaign. I seek no endorsements. Serving the constituents of the 4th district would be an honor and a privilege, and I am prepared to do so. It’s my duty as a citizen. Though I am prepared to serve, I am not prepared to run. I do not seek to become a member of the political class.

Instead, I estimate that I may spend as little as 2 to 25 cents per primary vote. Compare that to the average campaign budget and you’ll find I’ve the most efficient and cost-effective campaign.

We have elected officials with good intentions, and they find themselves trapped in this broken system too. I ask them to join me to help fix it.

I’d like to change the way we practice politics. This candidacy is my contribution. My vision? I’d like to see professors, common-sense parents and business managers elected to the offices now held by attorneys who dominate the political class. If you are the chief of a fire department, an ER nurse, contractor, researcher, accountant, grocer or engineer, you may make an excellent civil servant.

The ballot of the future looks brighter when good citizens feel welcome to put their names on it. Citizens, offer your service on your own terms. You do not need a manager, a fortune, endorsements or connections. When I see a qualified candidate who reflects my values, he or she will get my vote.

Thank you for considering my candidacy and please consider my encouragement to join me and throw your hat in the ring soon.

Joseph McKinney of Eugene is a Democratic Party primary candidate for Oregon’s 4th Congressional District.