

young Oregonians by the time they are in third grade? Or even earlier?

This letter was prompted by a message I received from one my students. It read:

"I have taken several state math tests in the past, and I have gotten close, but never passed them. But taking that smarter balance test made me think I'm probably not going to pass the test. So I don't know how I'm going to graduate high school."

I hope you will reconsider this harmful policy. More and more studies have come out that demonstrate the harm the Smarter Balanced tests have on educational progress. There is no reason to subject children to a test that they have little chance of passing.

Geoff Barrett
Eugene

WEALTHY MIGRATION

We notice that new people to Oregon want big taxes to repair all of Bend. I suspect that natives of Bend, their kids or folks who've lived there 25 or 30 years don't want taxes

and don't want Bend too improved.

Like other states, Oregon has very bad class warfare going on. People with plenty of money move here, raise all the home and cost-of-living prices, and original residents can't stay in our own states.

It happened to California; natives who were kids there, grew up and were forced to move away because "big-ticket outsiders" all moved to California and raised the cost of living astronomically. The natives could not afford to stay in their own birth state! Now, most of California adult residents are not natives.

If you longtime and native Oregonians do not organize and discuss legislation, both locally and on a state level, to limit the amounts (and high-wealth categories) of hordes of people moving from other states to Oregon, you will lose your own state and be forced to leave forever.

It's happening now. Endless migration of wealthy hordes invading other states and pricing out the inhabitants may not go on forever when individual states start passing

legislation to limit numbers and wealth categories of immigrants so families don't lose their own birth states to huge costs of living.

Look at California and be very afraid. Massive wealthy migration will destroy Oregon, too. That is a promise. Michigan is very, very empty, guys! Go there!

D.H. Bucher
Eugene

KOCH AND NPR

I couldn't believe my ears when I heard that Koch Industries is an underwriter for NPR (KLCC). The Koch Brothers have done everything in their power to undermine democracy in this country by buying politicians, from Congress to local politicians. They have been instrumental in funding climate change denial as well as preventing regulations that insure Americans have clean water and air. They are the worst face of polluters and corporate greed in this country.

David Koch sits on the board of OPB

and no doubt influences the content of material seen on NOVA, which squashed a documentary about them.

Did Alternative Radio disappear from KLCC programming because of donations from the Kochs? Was the show too controversial for the Kochs?

I do not know the answers to these questions, but I think the general manager of KLCC owes its listeners an explanation as to why it sold out our beloved KLCC to these pirates.

I have gone out of my way to not support Koch Industries, as I feel they undermine our democracy, and will no longer support KLCC fundraisers. KLCC, why would you do this to your listeners?

Arlen Markus
Eugene

EDITOR'S NOTE: KLCC General Manager John Stark tells us: "Koch Bros. is an underwriter for 'Marketplace Morning Report,' produced by American Public Media, not NPR. KLCC's editorial firewall prevents sponsors, whether Koch or LCC or Marché, from in any way influencing our news coverage. Likewise, NPR and all of public media pride ourselves on our editorial integrity."

VIEWPOINT

BY BONNY BETTMAN MCCORNACK

Kick DTURD to the Curb

TERMINATE URBAN RENEWAL

With the city's most recent proposal for a new Downtown Urban Renewal District (DTURD) Plan Amendment, councilors are on the verge of destroying any lingering hope that they serve the public rather than the economic elite. That hope will be replaced with profound distrust if they resurrect the DTURD after vowing to end it.

City councilors must be so completely out of touch if, after multiple fiascos like Capstone, MUPTE, City Hall, South Willamette rezone, city service fee, stormwater fee expansion, etc., they believe they still have a fount of political capital to muster for continuing the DTURD. Especially since they promised it would end.

Downtown Urban Renewal in Eugene is about to celebrate 50 years of failure. After tens of millions of public dollars invested, and despite subsidies exceeding the entire taxable valuation of the DTURD, real property values in the district have barely increased. The money expended downtown has been siphoned away from critical community needs. DTURD is yet another local example of privatizing public resources.

DTURD gets its money by diverting property tax revenue into its coffers — taxes you paid for schools and essential city and county services. That money is then used for planning department salaries, subsidies for developers and downtown property owners, and a few "poster child" projects. Those expenditures circumvent the budget process and thus avoid having to compete with taxpayers' actual priorities like schools, parks, public safety, jails, infrastructure, etc.

In 2007, the city came up with a scheme to increase the DTURD's debt by an additional \$40 million and expand the boundary. That proposal had the endorsements of most elected and non-elected officials. Plus, the city spent tens of thousands of

taxpayer dollars on an "informational" campaign in favor of the proposal. Some of us, fiscally conservative progressives, launched a grass roots campaign against the DTURD Plan Amendment, and voters killed it by about 70 percent to 30 percent.

Having been trounced soundly at the ballot, the city was left without a plan amendment. And because the debt was paid, the city was legally obligated to terminate the district and refund the excess money (or TIF, tax increment financing is the "official" term for revenue diverted into the DTURD's coffers) back to schools and local governments. The city violated the state statutes by continuing to transfer property tax revenue into the DTURD accounts.

The city badly wanted to keep that money and to keep the district alive, so in 2010 it moved forward with the \$13.6 million plan amendment. That money was to fund three "poster child" projects: LCC's new building, paying off debt on a parking garage and using that money to fund patrols downtown, and for improvements to the Farmers Market. (The \$500,000 allocated to the market has never been spent.)

Being cognizant of the fact that they were shamefully thwarting the voters' will, council promised that the district would terminate after paying off the debt for those three projects. Not only did city officials vow to end it, they legislated the district's termination in the text of the adopted plan:

"Upon the repayment or defeasance of debt related to the urban renewal projects specifically identified in the Plan, as amended by the 2010 Amendment, the Downtown Urban Renewal District will be terminated, any unused tax increment funds will be returned to Lane County for redistribution to overlapping taxing districts, and other assets and liabilities transferred to the City of Eugene." (Excerpt from Section 100 of the 2010 plan amendment. Sections 1200 and 1300 A also

have explicit "shall terminate" language.)

Again, council, enabled by City Manager Jon Ruiz, is ignoring its promise to the taxpaying public to end the district. Not only are they planning to reverse their vow to terminate it, but they are doubling down on it by proposing to expand the district's boundary by 10 percent and increase the spending capacity up to \$48 million.

The city is floating four vaguely construed projects with a range of cost estimates as justification to continue the district. There are many questions and inconsistencies surrounding those projects, but there isn't space here to debate the pros, cons or costs of them.

And it's beside the point because the city does not need DTURD to pursue worthwhile, community-supported projects. If a project is a high enough priority, council can allocate money from the capital budget, ask voters for a bond or create a local improvement district.

Councilors, the manager and the R-G are now attempting to reframe this stunning betrayal of public trust as a choice between sending DTURD back to the voters or simply adopting it with a majority council vote. But, in reality, the choice is whether to completely betray the public trust or do the ethical thing and terminate the district as promised.

A public hearing on the ordinance approving the new proposed plan amendment will be held 7:30 pm May 23 at the Public Services Building, Harris Hall, 125 E. 8th Avenue.

You can also submit comments to the City Council on the city of Eugene website. Be sure to indicate you want your comments "on the record" for the hearing.

Bonny Bettman McCornack is a retired register nurse, former Eugene Ward 1 city councilor and longtime progressive city and neighborhood activist.