

CELEBRATING THE WHIT

As a recent transplant I again attended the Whiteaker Block Party — an amazing event celebrating a highly influential neighborhood in this wonderful city. Because I don't fully understand the relationship between those organizing the event and the city of Eugene, I simply want to ask some questions.

Is Blair Boulevard from W. 5th Avenue to W. 2nd Avenue so crucial to Eugene that it couldn't be closed for 24 hours? Likewise with W. 2nd Avenue to Jackson Street and then close Jackson to W. 4th? Or is better to let drunk pedestrians spill over the sidewalk and into the street where they battle it out with cars and bikes?

I am fully aware that to close any road for any reason costs money and resources. Will those money-saving efforts be comforting after a tragedy occurs?

Thank you to those that organized the Whiteaker Block Party and, more importantly, thank you to those that cleaned up after and returned the Whiteaker to its state of eclectic beauty. I hope city leaders, if they don't already, support the Whiteaker Block Party

and continue to find ways to make the event fun, safe and a way to highlight the things that people love and enjoy about Eugene.

Josh Gebhart
Eugene

DOWNGRADING RAPE

I live in Springfield and would love to ride my bike to work in west Eugene during the dry season, but it's not the fear of other vehicles, death or crashing that stops me ... it's the transients, hijackers and rapists.

And before anyone gets their panties in a wad, I am aware that not all transients are criminals and not all hijackers are rapists. But all transients and strangers who approach are scary in the wee morning hours when you're alone on a bike path.

In the last six months, several people have been attacked on bike paths, and I just read that, in the Alton Baker Park incident, the Eugene Police Department called the victim's rape an "unlawful sexual penetration, not rape" — a shocking downgrade to an offense that protects the criminal, and a massive upgrade in offensiveness in downgrading that woman's value as a human be-

ing. It is downright barbaric.

I called EPD today to ask what they are doing about this problem and was told that they are short staffed and unable to keep the bike paths safe at all times. It is up to the users of the bike path to toss that coin.

"What about video surveillance," I asked. Nope. That's on us, too. If we want security, we're gonna have to go knock on the doors of City Hall.

I dunno, maybe we should just carry guns, and if someone gets shot EPD could call it "unlawful penetration of a bullet."

Michele Walter
Springfield

MORE DOWNLOADS, PLEASE

I was surprised and disappointed that you didn't include the WNYC weekly podcast *On The Media, OTM*, (onthemedia.org) in your podcast list. They serve of razor sharp analysis of mostly the U.S. media. "Blah, Blah, Blah... Bang" on July 20, was particularly great, IMHO.

Check it out, please.

Janet Whitesides
Eugene

#FAILINGEUGENEWEEKLY

I am writing to ask why the cover story of your most recent issue (8/2) was simply a list of things that your staff has downloaded. I ask this in all seriousness because it begs the simple question: Why? As in: What is your purpose? I struggle to see how a list of random cultural artifacts has anything to do with the fulfillment of your paper's official mission statement.

It's not like you have nothing to report on. Can you not write more about the specific performance of our city manager? What percentage of Eugeneans are happy with his performance? Your article had quotes both in favor of and opposed to Ruiz, but little information as to what he has actually done. Why is he seen as controversial? How is his performance different from other managers? Perhaps the city's "oppressed and dismissed" could use more information about their local government.

Also, the problem with our recycling situation is not that it is suddenly "complicated" to sort, but that we aren't recycling.

The larger point here is that your paper

HOT AIR SOCIETY BY TONY CORCORAN

Democrats and Dystopia

POST-OBAMA POLITICS

We all know the world changed two years ago. Oregon Republicans now embrace Cambridge Analytica, the Mercers, the Koch brothers and the Trump clan: It's America's new Gilded Age. Promoting historically high income disparity and tax breaks for the uber-wealthy, gutting women's rights, immigrant families and union rights, and tweeting racist dog whistles — these new robber barons are the same assholes that caught Mark Twain's eye over 100 years ago when he described the first Gilded Age.

Obscene power grabs arrived quickly with these new thieves, aided by the whorish compliance of Mitch McConnell and Paul Ryan and the Republican Party in general.

SCOTUS already slapped public employees and the doctrine of *stare decisis* upside the head with the *Janus v. AFSCME* decision. Settled law, my ass. *Roe v. Wade*, you're next. It's just a matter of time. Judicial activism in the face of religious bigotry is a virtue, not a vice these days. I'm sorry, Mr. Kavanaugh, on second thought maybe we've already got too many mackerel snappers on the Supreme Court. Couldn't we just get another one of those nice Jewish lawyers? Preferably a woman?

Oregon campaigns come into clearer focus as we enter the last 100 days before the Nov. 6 general election. Like most progressives I'll be focused on turnout. Who's exciting and who's drawing money and interest? Whose interest?

PERS made its perennial appearance with its unfunded actuarial liability (UAL) and projected rate increases facing the next Legislature. The *Oregonian's* Ted Sickinger recently reported that even though PERS had a healthy 15.4 percent return on its investment portfolio (reducing the UAL by \$3 billion going forward), it still faces a 38 percent increase for the 2019-21 biennial budget cycle.

Anticipating the increase, a coalition made up of the Oregon Business Council and employer groups representing cities, counties and school boards presented a joint letter to the PERS board. They asked the actuarial company, Milliman, to calculate savings that could occur under various proposed legislative actions. These included several that would certainly draw intense legal scrutiny by the unions:

- Extending a federal salary cap used in benefit calculations (now \$275,000) to Tier 1 employees.
- Establishing a 6 percent pension fund contribution from Tier 1 and Tier 2 employees and a 3 percent contribution from Tier 3 employees.

- Transitioning Tier 1 and 2 employees to Tier 3 benefits.
- Establishing an early retirement incentive program that allows eligible Tier 1 and Tier 2 employees to retire any time after age 50 and start collecting a benefit while continuing to work for a PERS-covered employer for five years.

The good news is we're only facing five statewide ballot measures in November, down from an average of 14 over the last 20 years. Some of them simply revisit national red state values in Oregon like anti-immigration and anti-choice crap.

The immigration proposal would repeal Oregon's 1987 sanctuary law, which prohibits state and local law enforcement officers from helping to enforce federal immigration law. A solution in search of a problem.

Another initiative would prohibit state funding for abortion, which is currently covered by Oregon's Medicaid program and public employees' health insurance. Pro-choice advocates argue this measure would actually increase the number of unwanted pregnancies therefore increasing the number of abortions! Great public policy and great family planning! God bless unintended consequences.

Speaking of bad policy, two of the other proposed constitutional amendments affect tax issues. One extends the three-fifths supermajority vote requirement to other means by which the state tries to raise revenue. The other taxation proposal would amend the state constitution to ban taxes on food, an attempt by the grocery industry and the soda pop sugardaddies prohibiting a much-needed source of revenue for the Medicaid obesity population in Oregon.

The last measure is a legislative referral that would allow local governments to issue bonds to pay for affordable housing projects involving nonprofits or other nongovernmental entities.

Finally, a shout out to my buddy, Mo Smith, an Oregon Nursing Association staffer who helped out the PeaceHealth Riverbend hospitalists at a recent picket line. Great turnout and rally. Mo even taught me a new chant, honed by a hospitalist from the next generation of labor's Woody Guthrie-inspired poets. I think it has something to do with a small Catholic hospital that morphed from a Sacred Heart to a PeaceHealth MegaCorp.

"We don't care what the pope would call it:

"We still call it Sacred Wallet!"

Stay tuned. Governor's race, is it close? Let's follow the money.

Former state Sen. Tony Corcoran of Cottage Grove is a retired state employee.