

PUBLIC IS THE POINT

To the writer of that sad and ugly commentary on the presence of homeless citizens in our downtown library:

Our tax money paid for our beautiful new library, which has ample seating, restrooms, water fountains, reading rooms, public computers and a compassionate and respectful attitude to the public that occupies its welcoming spaces.

It is certainly reasonable to request the traditional library silence (aka phones, music and loud talking) that the librarian has the responsibility to curtail. The library is also cleaned daily.

However, if you are so uncomfortable in the presence, and understandably challenged personal hygiene, of our homeless neighbors seeking comfort and safety during these long cold winter days, then take your book and go home to your warm, comfortable private home and leave your cruel judgments behind.

Katherine Knowles
Eugene

GET RID OF THE POOR

After reading Mr. Harris' letter regarding "Our Public Library" (Jan. 17), I felt he was spot on. Thanks to enabling by previous and present-day mayors and City Council members, Eugene is being destroyed by vagrants and squatters.

As a public servant for more than 20 years, I responded along the river involving illegal campfires, overdoses, physical and sexual assaults, and various other calls for assistance by illegal campers. While there, I had to walk through garbage including feces and needles. And when it rained, it all washed into our river.

This same scenario is played out all throughout the city, including the library. The library is no longer a place for quiet research and study. It has now become a germ-infested flophouse and cesspool. And now it is no wonder the city has a rat problem.

As long as working taxpayers provide housing, clothing, bikes and cell phones

to those who litter and panhandle, Eugene will never be a city that welcomes business, tourism and its working community. We should continue to provide benefits and shelter like the Mission and other charity groups; however, vagrants, squatters and lawbreakers should be out.

Eugene could learn from Springfield.

Steve Waleri
Veneta

STALINIST SOLUTIONS

Statistically, your data favors the success of Community Court ("Courting a Problem," Jan. 31). For the 17 percent of those eligible for the program, graduates have a 30 percent recidivism rate, which is amazing. The national average is over 75 percent.

We need to focus on the ones who don't finish the program. My guess is they had no intention of rehabilitation to begin with. How to stop this cycle? I offer a possible solution.

For the "habituated," force them to go to rehab classes eight hours a day, and give them eight hours sleep; this leaves them three hours for meals, four for exercise and one for a buffer in case they get behind schedule.

As for the individuals who manipulate data to create false arguments: They should be charged with a misdemeanor and held without bail until they repent.

Vince Loving
Eugene

POOR ROADS

Having lived in Eugene for six years now, I am increasingly annoyed by the inability of the city to fix terrible potholes on so many streets. I noticed that on South Willamette, the street is paved well in the "high rent" area, but after about 26th Avenue going north, potholes and thrashed streets take over.

Same is true for West 11th, and also where I like to ride my bike going near the Rose

VIEWPOINT

BY TOM BOWERMAN AND JACKMAN WILSON

Ideological Checkerboard

OREGON'S LEGISLATURE SHOULD LOOK TO ITS VOTER BIPARTISANSHIP FOR PROGRESS

With daily news constantly reminding us how divided our political culture is, new research shows Oregonians from blue to red share a surprising amount of common ground. This could mean that Lane County's senators and representatives begin the 2019 legislative session well-positioned to guide the state toward progress on vital issues where strong bipartisan support exists on topics ranging from climate change to health care.

The 2018 election gave Democrats supermajorities in both the House and the Senate and returned Democratic Gov. Kate Brown to the governor's office. But Lane County legislators' opportunity stems from more than their partisan affiliation.

Sens. Floyd Prozanski and Lee Beyer, and Reps. Nancy Nathanson, John Lively and Paul Holvey — have reached positions of influence by virtue of seniority and diligence. Others — including Sen. James Manning and Reps. Julie Fahey and Marty Wilde — are among the Legislature's most promising newcomers.

In addition, Lane County is a political microcosm of the state as a whole: It has a deep-blue urban core, Democratic-leaning suburbs and bright red rural areas. Many Lane County legislative districts include precincts of all hues. They have learned how to serve and communicate with constituents across the political spectrum, and understand a key finding of PolicyInteractive Research: Oregonians are less polarized than is commonly believed.

PolicyInteractive conducts public opinion polls in Oregon and other states. Our current research builds on the Pew Research Center's polling at the national level. Pew sorted Americans into eight political categories, ranging from Solid Liberals to Core Conservatives.

PolicyInteractive applied Pew's methodology by asking registered voters 25 pairs of ideologically defining statements. We found Oregon's political culture was polarized on just six of the 25 paired choices while 17 pairs showed moderate to strong agreement, and fully 10 topics had strong agreement. A summary report of these findings may be found at policyinteractive.org/commonground.

On a spectrum of blue to red, we found 64 percent of the active voters belong in six archetypal groups standing between clear Core Conservatives and Strong Liberals. This 64 percent is not a gentle gradient of blue to red purpose but a diverse checkerboard of ideological positions.

For instance, 13 percent are Opportunity Dems: liberals who value free markets and private initiative. Eleven percent are Progressive Conservatives, who see a place for government action to address some social and environmental problems, reminiscent of east side Oregon Republican Gov. Tom McCall.

Then there are the Disaffected Dems (13 percent), the Young Liberal Consum-

ers (8 percent), the Apolitical Country-First Libertarians (9 percent) and the Market-Skeptic Rs (12 percent) with a dim view of big business.

On 12 of the 25 topics we found that respondents in at least six of the eight categories share significant levels of agreement. We found acres of common ground on a couple of issues — climate change and health care — and delved into these more deeply. For example:

- Majorities in all eight categories support an "overhaul of the existing system toward one that educates and rewards good health rather than one that focuses on profit and sickness."
- Across the political spectrum, high levels of support exist for greater transparency in health care pricing, and for price controls on health care services and pharmaceuticals.
- Majorities in all categories except Core Conservatives agree that "climate change requires us to change our way of life, drive less and live more simply."
- Majorities in all categories except Core Conservatives support joining with other states and Canadian provinces to achieve a 90 percent reduction in carbon emissions by 2050.

However, only the Solid Liberals group (17 percent) by a slim majority agreed that "Government often does a better job than people give it credit for," while majorities in the seven other groups chose "Government is almost always wasteful and inefficient." This means new fiscal initiatives necessitate fiscal prudence with evidence of benefit and efficiency.

Nonetheless, Oregon has some very critical policy issues to resolve this session, including climate policy, health care and education. Although voters delivered Democrats a two-chamber supermajority, Senate President Courtney is indicating Republican legislative "bipartisanship" participation is required, making progress difficult. Our study shows that voters are giving bipartisan support to specific policy goals that legislative Republicans oppose unanimously.

Analysts say this is because the two-party closed primary voting system locks out non-affiliated and independent voters who now constitute greater numbers than either of the two main parties. The Senate president should look beyond the walls of the Legislature to measure bipartisanship.

Members of Lane County's delegation have the experience to help their colleagues find common ground on pressing issues. They already know how to bridge political divisions in their own districts. Oregon needs them to apply those skills statewide.

Tom Bowerman of Eugene is director of PolicyInteractive Research, a non-partisan independent organization engaged in polling and public policy analysis. Jackman Wilson, former editorial page editor of The Register-Guard, assisted in preparing this essay.