

KeizerOpinion

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A yes vote for transit is a yes for economic development

Anyone paying attention to local issues might assume there is no one in favor of the transit payroll tax proposed by Salem-Keizer Transit to fund extended service hours. The proponents have staged a poor campaign—out-manned and out-spent by the opposition. The quality of the campaign, however, should not determine how one should vote.

We favor a yes vote on the ballot measure 24-388. It is good for economic development and it is good for the thousands of people who must or want to rely on public transportation.

Some opponents have taken a the-sky-will-fall stance on the ballot measure. If the 0.21 percent tax on employer's payroll passes opponents warn that contributions to hundreds of area non-profits will dry up; small business will cut jobs.

A business owner who does not ride a Cherriots bus might ask themselves why they should support and pay a tax that does not benefit them.

Approval of the payroll tax will add about \$5 million per year to the transit district, which will allow restoration of weekend service, later evening service and holiday service. Those three alone are not insignificant—employees and customers will be able to get where they need to go seven days a week. Evening and weekend service will allow those without reliable private transportation to get where they need to go when they need to go.

Every retailer should be happy to expand their customer base. Increased bus service means more people can shop at more times in the evening and weekends.

Economic development is the modern mantra of politicians and business at every level. A reputable and reliable public transportation system is key to that—moving people around easily is the hallmark of a contemporary city. Recruiting businesses to Keizer and Salem that will create new jobs will be a

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bit easier with a system that gets employees to work. A public transit system demonstrates to businesses considering a move or expansion in the area that Keizer and Salem are as modern and conscientious as any other metropolitan area.

Living in America—like freedom—is not free. Our social compact dictates that we watch out for each other. Every adult pays taxes; they may not agree what their taxes pay for, but that is the trade off in a democracy—taxes pay for the things we rely on everyday.

The payroll tax is a better funding mechanism than a levy which means a renewed debate on the merits of public transit every five years. That is exhausting and expensive. If the district wants to increase the payroll tax it is required to hold public hearings before a vote of the board of directors, the district cannot raise the payroll tax indiscriminately.

Proponents of the payroll tax have done a poor job in addressing the area's single largest employer: the state of Oregon. The state of Oregon contributes about \$5.5 million a year to the transit district and has done so for more than 30 years. Our largest employer has played their part.

The payroll tax is part of the district's Move Forward campaign. If voters approve the tax bus service will be increased next year. But the district should not be happy to let it end there. The district should work with large employers, public and private, to make the Cherriots experience (inside the bus and at bus stops) as pleasant as possible. Low gas prices is not an incentive for people to get out of the single-occupant cars and hop on a bus.

Getting daily city commuters out of their cars and onto public transportation is good for the environment, good to decrease traffic congestion and builds economic development.

We support the payroll tax measure 24-388. It's good for the whole community.

—LAZ

Say yes to fire equipment

Voters in the Keizer Rural Fire Protection District should vote to approve ballot measure 24-389.

If approved Keizer Fire District homeowners would pay 14 cents per \$1,000 valuation to purchase needed equipment. In reality the levy would replace a levy that was used to construct the Chemawa Road fire station; after two decades the fire house levy was down to 15 cents.

Revenue from this year's bond levy will allow Keizer Fire District to purchase and upgrade equipment that is key to their mission—including a much-needed ambulance.

With more than 4,000 emergency calls annually the district and its constituents are best served with equipment that operates as it should. Several times this year ambulances have had maintenance issues that forced them to be towed. Not a good outcome for a public safety organization.

The board of directors have been good stewards of the fire district's money and supplies. But when equip-

ment is down more than it is operable, it is past time to improve the situation.

The fire district responses to medical emergencies and fires within six minutes more than 90 percent of the time. It is crucial to the wellbeing of the community to assure those response times stay under six minutes—lives depend on it.

Fire and medical vehicles are not cheap. A new ambulance (which is built to KFD specifications) can cost up to \$250,000. The current ambulances are not built to take the punishing regiments that are asked of it by the district. Fire trucks, with all their complexities, are much more.

With a total 20-year outlay of more than \$6 million there is little margin for error in purchasing and upgrading equipment. We are satisfied that the district and its chief, Jeff Cowan, have the public's best interest at heart regarding this levy. Vote yes on 24-389.

—LAZ

Support for Keizer Fire

To the Editor:

As a business owner here in Keizer I am writing in support of the Keizer Fire District bond measure. It is important to me and the health of my businesses that the Keizer Fire District is able to respond quickly and effectively if and when I need their services. I know how important good, reliable equipment is to my businesses and I know the Keizer Fire District cannot do their jobs effectively to keep us all safe with unreliable and out-dated equipment. I'm urging all voters to vote yes on this important bond measure.

**Wayne A Thackery
Lorens Sanitation
WHEAT, LLC**

letters

The legacy of Art Burr

To the Editor:

I first met Art Burr when I was on staff at this newspaper. He had just taken over as interim director of the Keizer Community Library, and he was unsatisfied with both its status and its coverage in the *Keizertimes*.

I pointed to the numbers: How many times had we reported on upcoming library events, or on efforts to sustain, build up or even publicly fund the library? When he wouldn't back down, I said he was being unreasonable. Knowing Art, he likely took that as a compliment.

The truth is that not having a li-

Views of those who protect us

gene h. mcintyre

The distance in miles between Salem and Roseburg is about 120 miles, about two hours by car. After the shooting rampage at Umpqua Community College two weeks ago, the unsettling facts of that horrible event have caused some wondering here about similarities should something like it take place at Chemeketa Community College or any other school or college in the area.

Would we locals find out that the Marion County sheriff does not favor gun controls? That he, like his counterpart in Douglas County, feels so strongly against any limitations that he, too, has written a letter to the Vice President announcing that he will not enforce any laws on gun controls? Did he, as did Douglas County's Sheriff John Hanlin, establish a Facebook page where he argued that the Sandy Hook shooting rampage that took 26 lives in Newtown, Conn., 20 of them school children, was staged using actors so that the federal government could gain the advantage in the gun controls debate?

Would the full measure of facts be withheld so that an apparent grandstanding opportunity to express personal views could be achieved? Where leadership was called for, Hanlin chose to go personal. If there's a call for the public to provide information on the killer, as Hanlin requested, how is that possible if the name of the killer is withheld? Further, what else will Hanlin withhold because whatever it is conflicts with his views? Guidance from those granted the public's trust is undercut when secrecy trumps guidance.

Media publications in our area have not, to my knowledge, been contacted by the Marion County

sheriff to inform us that he does not stand with Sheriff Hanlin. People living in Marion County know nothing about

what our sheriff stands for or against in law enforcement except a list of generally acceptable objectives on his Internet page. It would be most helpful that we know where our guy would be found should we have an event like the one at UCC.

Then there is the killer's parent, a single mother who has left a record of her views on guns for the whole world to know that nobody should mess with her and not expect a bullet in return. She allowed her troubled son to have guns and acknowledged on the Internet that he struggled with autism but says she had no idea he was potentially a killer who'd go to a public place and open fire. She said of herself, also, that "I keep two full mags in my Glock case. And the ARS & AKS all have loaded mags. No one will be 'dropping' by my house uninvited without acknowledgment." She also complained about gun-control efforts in "lame states."

More on the killer's mother is that she should be held to some degree of accountability for having raised a monster who lived in her apartment with her and left that morning with several guns and multiple rounds of ammunition? It's just possible that if more parents of those who carry out acts of slaughter were held accountable, perpetrators like Chris Harper-Mercer might think twice before acting; if they do not, it would be known far and wide what

happens to parents who do nothing to stop their children's evil deeds and even apparently prepare them to act on them.

Meanwhile, one needs not wonder where most Oregon sheriffs stand as the Oregon State Sheriff's Association web page announces support for Sheriff John Hanlin. Taking this further, are all Oregon's sheriffs like Hanlin—that is, selective in the laws they enforce? It's believed that many an Oregonian would feel safer and more secure if the sheriffs outside of Douglas County announced that they stand separate and opposed to views like Hanlin's but their web site says they do not stand apart. What a person living in Oregon concludes is that county sheriff departments will not initiate proactive measures "to protect and serve" but will only serve after the fact or in reactive mode: Hence, what good are advertised good intentions when people are laying in pools of blood?

A footnote on gun controls: It's not possible here to explain why so many people throughout Oregon and the U.S. are opposed to some, even reasonable controls that would make a deliberate, ongoing effort to keep firearms out of the hands of those persons who may have a clean record but who are known to make threatening comments, including those with homicidal overtones. The big bugaboo on the part of gun owners is their fear, as repeatedly exacerbated by the leadership of the NRA that simply wants more guns sold, that the government will come for their guns. I'd like them to identify one person who has had their guns confiscated by any government entity.

(Gene H. McIntyre's column appears weekly in the *Keizertimes*.)

letters

the Portland metro area pay for their award-winning transit systems. That's why it is hard

for me to understand why our local business and community leaders seem so opposed to the plan. I know these people, serve on committees with them and we work on community projects together. Many are my friends. I'm convinced that if local businesses in Eugene and Portland have somehow managed to succeed and thrive for decades with a payroll tax three times higher, our local businesses — who are even more capable — can withstand this modest proposal to help make our community better.

The misinformation campaign put forth by opponents of the measure has been disappointing. For instance, the State of Oregon, the area's largest employer, is exempt from the tax. But what opponents conveniently forget to mention is that the State already pays an "in lieu of" fee of \$5.2 million annually or 0.6 percent of payroll and has been paying it since 1980. It's really Salem Hospital, the area's second largest employer, that's not paying its fair share. Salem Hospital as a non-profit pays no property taxes. So while you and I help pay for Cherriots through our property tax bill, without this modest payroll tax, Salem Hospital pays nothing. *That's* unfair.

I started my professional career as a transportation planner and worked at Lane Transit District while attending graduate school at the UO. In 1995, I moved to the area to become Salem's bicycle/pedestrian planner and to manage the Mid-Valley rideshare program. My wife Pat and I continue to use transit. That experience has demonstrated to me the difference a good transit system can make in a community. But it also revealed that to be effective and more utilized, people need to be able to depend on it. Folks need to be able to get to work or play or shopping and know they can get home again at the end of the day, evening or on weekends. The restored/expanded

service this measure provides brings that dependability.

Vote yes on Measure 24-388.

**Chuck Fisher
Keizer**

No to payroll tax

To the Editor:

As the owner of a new small business, there are even more expenses and pressures to get the business off and running smoothly and to the point where it is profitable. The more taxes and fees that are placed on the back of small start-ups the more likely they are to be forced to close down before they have the opportunity to grow and give more to the community around them. We have witnessed this time and again in our downtown core.

I know the importance of having a variety of ways for people to frequent my business. Bicycle lanes, parking spaces, sidewalks and public transit. We need all of these working in concert and funded in a manner that does not target one sector of the community. I am a business owner and pay property taxes that fund transit, now I am being asked to pay another tax for transit. How is that fair?

As the former CEO of United Way of the Mid-Willamette Valley I understand the socio-economic dynamics of this community; and as a private business owner I understand the socio-economic dynamics of the business community. I want the best for the whole community. This employer payroll tax is not the fair way to fund expanded services. The whole community needs to explore other funding options.

Please vote No on Measure 24-388.

**Gayle Caldarazzo-Doty
Salem**

The *Keizertimes* accepts all points of view on its Opinion page. Submit a letter to the editor (up to 300 words) by noon Tuesday. Email to: publisher@keizertimes.com

Opposition to payroll tax

To the Editor:

As a small business with a relatively small payroll of six team members, my "investment" into the community with another tax would admittedly be relatively small at this point. However, it still has to come from somewhere. It means I have to grow revenue, cut expenses, or take home less money—all to pay another tax that "may" increase ridership.

As a small business that started as the Great Recession hit, we had to scrape, claw, sacrifice and work our tails off to even survive. We have already "invested" a ton to get to the point where we have now been able to create new jobs and are able to give back to the community, and we're incredibly thrilled to be able to do so. We love adding people to our team and growing our ability to serve more customers. A new payroll tax, along with other ways that small businesses are constantly being squeezed, would be one more disincentive to grow our business, add more jobs, and be able to give more to the non-profits that we support.

We all want a vibrant community. I have lived and worked in Salem for most of my life. But it is already a tough place to do business in many ways. And just because you are own a business, doesn't mean you are raking in the dough or have a bunch of extra cash sitting around. This tax targets businesses in a way that adopts that mentality and it gets tiring.

That's why I'll be voting no.

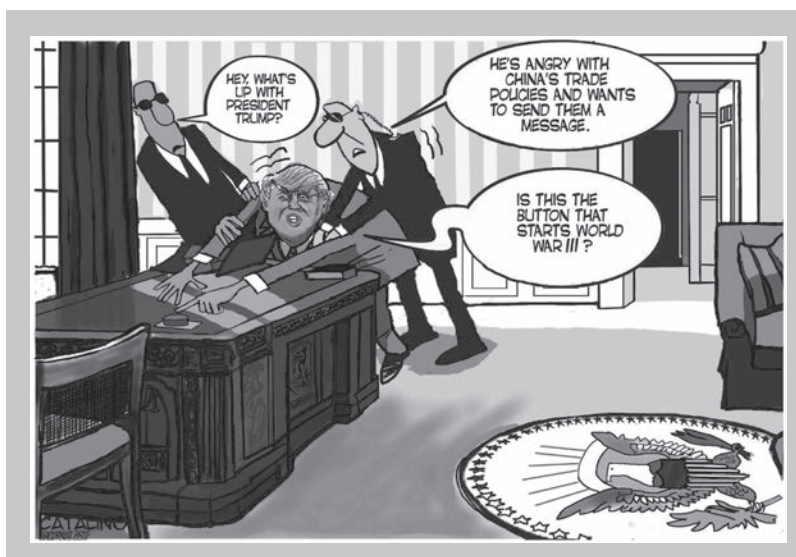
**Tim Fahndrich
Salem**

Yes on payroll tax

To the Editor:

I will be voting to restore and expand Cherriots service in our community, and I hope you'll join me.

The modest tax, 0.21 percent of payroll is less than 1/3 of what employers in Eugene/Springfield and



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