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The Great Tax Debate

It's getting ugly. And complicated.
The Portland Spectator believes that the academic environment should be an open forum, where there is a chance for rational and prudent conservative arguments to be heard. We encourage the expression of diverse ideology to promote thought-provoking discussions.

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Dear Readers,

Here at The Spectator, we get excited when a big conversation comes along. And what’s bigger than taxes and the institutions they fund? After all, aren’t death and taxes the only sure things we have?

We got lucky when Oregon voters signed that petition to put state tax Measures 66 & 67 to a general vote, because they gave us more than the chance to cast a simple vote. We have a rare opportunity to have an open conversation about our taxes, about our government services, and about our businesses. Truly the marketplace of ideas will be thriving this month.

In this Spectator issue, Jonathan Miles and Alexander Almeida offer two equally compelling arguments on the tax measures. Read them both, then go to the public debates that will be hosted here on campus and listen to the arguments offered there. At this point, you might as well vote on January 20—and why not be a part of history? You’ll have something to talk about with your fellow taxpaying Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Joe Wirtheim
Editor-in-Chief
2009-2010
Kyoto 2.0

In a typical display of the effectiveness of world politics, the summit in Copenhagen produced a three-page document, which will gently push countries in the direction of thinking of cutting emissions. On the plus side, it has, according to Gordon Brown, “almost universal support.” However, it appears to lack other important elements, such as a binding agreement or CO2 cap of any kind. Environmentalists call it “the triumph of spin over substance” and say “it recognizes that we need to keep warming below two degrees (Celsius) but does not commit to do so.” In short, it’s Kyoto 2.0 and is looking to be as ineffective as the original.

No News is New News?

The future of journalism will be explored at an upcoming lecture from some interesting journalism advocates. The Nation magazine’s Washington correspondent, John Nichols, and the Editor of the Monthly Review, Bob McChesney, will be addressing the topic of their new book, The Death and Life of American Journalism. The lecture will take place January 20 at 1 p.m. in the Native American Student and Community Center at 710 SW Jackson Street.
The statewide Oregon Student Association (OSA), of which ASPSU is a member, created an informational presentation about the Ballot Measures 66 and 67 to encourage student participation in the upcoming special referendum on January 26. ASPSU volunteers will be delivering the presentations to classrooms throughout January.

Selina Lynn, member of the ASPSU Senate, reiterated the organization’s non-partisan mission in an interview, saying, “ASPSU is a resource for students who want to learn about politics and advocate for students on all student issues.” However, the script that ASPSU is reading from offers a one-sided account and appears to be designed to deliver a “yes” vote for the tax increasing measures.

The script sums up the result of a no vote on Measure 66 by saying, “Regardless of your ultimate opinion on these measures there is no question that the presence, or absence of $733 million will affect our experience here.” The nine-page script dedicates roughly seven pages to the benefits of a yes vote with only a few lines discussing the effect of a no vote, none of which are positive.

The presentation offers little explanation of the consequences, including the decrease of jobs that may ultimately affect the student population. Well-respected economist Bill Conerly points out that “raising the maximum tax rates on personal income, including capital gains, to 11 percent will cost the Oregon economy 36,000 jobs by 2015. The job losses will continue to accumulate beyond that year.” Measures 66 and 67 will certainly affect the student population. Whether it is our tuition that will be affected or the lack of jobs available upon graduation, the pros and cons of the tax increases are extensive.

Over the course of fall term, students volunteered many hours working alongside ASPSU to register students to vote. When asked why student government dedicated so many hours registering students to vote, Lynn’s response was refreshing. “Registering students to vote gives us a rare opportunity to give a non-partisan break down of the issues,” she said, “and helps demonstrate how voting directly affects the average student, like Measures 66 and 67.”

However, the OSA is compromising ASPSU’s supposed non-partisan stance. Tamara Henderson, executive director of OSA, offered another answer during the October 24 OSA Board of Directors meeting, saying, “That’s why it’s imperative to register people to vote. Polls are showing that new people will vote yes.”

Another interesting addendum that ASPSU utilizes is the separate presentations written specifically for minority students (Chicano studies, Black Studies, LGBT, etc.) called “Color the Vote.” Those scripts have an added two pages in which students giving the presentations are to talk about how marginalized these groups have historically been (citing Oregon’s Anti-Sodomy laws of 1853, for instance) without any explanation of what that had to do with several tax increasing measures.

If the student government’s mission is to create a non-partisan branch where students can, through critical examination, become a strong voice that represents the needs of the students, then why are PSU students paying over $100,000 of student fee money so the OSA can tell us how to think?
Portland State’s Pre-Law Society is left in a difficult bind after Student Fee Committee (SFC) member Ron Lee alleged financial and procedural wrongdoing against acting president Ashley McClain despite a lack of substantial evidence. The charges were sent to the group’s more than 200-member public listserv. McClain said that because of Lee’s Nov. 22 allegations, at least two organizations, a PSU honor society and Oregon State University’s Pre-Law Society, have dropped out of discussions to collaborate on joint projects. Probably the most troublesome issue for McClain is the loss of her PSU faculty advisor Dr. R. Kevin Hill, a lawyer who resigned his advisor role after trading barbs with Lee.

“I’m just trying to move forward for the good of the group,” McClain said in an interview. “This thing is taking time from other group activity.”

The society’s troubles began in mid October when Lee, 32 and a former real estate broker, paid his $15 membership dues with a $20 bill, handing the cash to then-president Jake Merz. When Merz resigned for personal reasons on November 5, the group’s executive committee turned to their vice-president, McClain, to take over. McClain e-mailed Lee indicating she would have his change at the Law School Fair on November 12, but she says he didn’t show up. Regardless, Lee sent an e-mail to Suzanne Flores, the group’s assigned Student Activities and Leadership Program (SALP) advisor, complaining that the society’s executive committee had inappropriately selected their new president.

It went on to describe what Lee alleged were financial irregularities such as failing to record membership dues, and failing to issue change to a member—presumably Lee’s own $5. He wrote, “It is my position that the pre law society is not operating according to the criteria set forth in the guidelines to receive student funds.” Lee then outlined his intention to bring the matter before the SFC, which he would ask to freeze the group’s funding while it investigated the group’s financial procedures. On November 22, Lee attached the letter to a statement on the society’s public listserv to about 200 persons.

Flores responded to Lee in a November 23 e-mail asking him and the SFC to “think critically” about freezing the society’s funding. She wrote, “Since they have not been using their funds in a manner that would cause concern I feel this would be an inappropriate sanction for the group.”

Also in response to Lee’s allegations, Hill, who believes no wrongdoing of the sort Lee described had occurred, wrote a listserv message a few moments later on November 22, saying, “I cannot
express emphatically enough the seriousness associated with making the sorts of accusations I’m seeing tonight.” Hill, a member of the Illinois Bar, reminded the students intending to practice law that the Bar conducts a Character and Fitness investigation as a regular part of the membership process. The intent of that investigation is to look for evidence of financial or ethical wrongdoing in an applicant’s past. Hill followed up with a direct e-mail to Lee to further illustrate the point.

That message caused Lee to go to PSU administrators complaining that Hill had “threatened” his career. “I felt virtually body slammed,” Lee said in a phone interview.

SALP Assistant Director Domanic Thomas received Lee’s complaint, and asked Hill to sit down for a mediation session with Lee. However, Hill chose not to engage in mediation, saying in a statement, “I very much resented the fact that I was the object of a complaint of any kind when I was trying to be helpful to all concerned.”

Hill resigned his position as adviser to the society on December 17. In a letter to society members Hill said that a recent death of a close family member “has left me somewhat less patient and tolerant of petty destructive behavior than I have been in the past.”

Lee’s dispute with Hill continued, however. A December 24 and 25 e-mail exchange between the two, which was copied to PSU President Wim Wiewel and PSU student media, highlighted the depth of the rift. Lee wrote, “Professor you do not have any right to infer a threat upon students legal futures suggesting in any way that you can, may or will have ANY negative influence over them when they are serving in a elected position of leadership with very real legal responsibilities which affect the entire student body.”

The SFC did not hear Lee’s complaints. “Honestly, I had no idea what was going on,” said SFC Chair Johnnie Ozimkowski in an interview. “I didn’t want to put it on the agenda. It just didn’t make sense.”

McClain claims the society’s reputation has been left damaged after Lee’s allegations. She points to a contact she made early fall quarter with Oregon State University’s Pre-Law Society which is also on the listserv. After the allegations surfaced, the OSU contact called McClain to say she was no longer interested in working together.

“My big goal this year is networking. Now that’s going to be tough,” McClain said in a December 26 phone interview, calling the situation “embarrassing.” McClain went on to say, “I would like an apology and a retraction from Ron.”

Although according to the Oregon defamation statute, McClain had passed the 20-day window after publication in which a retraction may be demanded. McClain is concerned that finding a new advisor will be difficult, saying, “There aren’t that many faculty who are Bar members and who want to advise a student group.”

Also as a result of Lee’s November 22 allegations, Andrew William Bridge, a Pre-Law Society member, sent a note indicating his withdrawal from the group. In a phone interview, Bridge, referring to Lee, said of the listserv message, “it sounded outrageous. I don’t think people are stealing, but I didn’t want my group involved with such a guy.” Bridge, who is also president of the honor society Alpha Phi Sigma, pulled out of co-sponsoring a planned event with the society, but added, again referring to Lee, “Ashley is a strong leader, but he successfully undermined the group.”

In 2009, the Pre-Law Society received SFC funding for the first time in two years—the minimum of $5,000. Students intending to go on to law school join the group to access discount LSAT prep courses, engage in mock trial competitions, and attend law school application workshops.

See also related commentary page 6.
How to Make a Mountain
(hint: start with a mole hill)

The SFC’s Ron Lee needs to retract and apologize for the allegations made against the Pre-Law Society. It’s the only right thing to do.

By Joe Wirtheim

Doing the right thing isn’t always the easy thing, especially when it comes to saying “sorry.” However, it would appear that Student Fee Committee (sfc) member Ron Lee’s drive to make right what was once a little wrong has somehow made that simple word nearly impossible to say.

His exchange with both the Pre-Law Society’s president and now former PSU faculty adviser Dr. R. Kevin Hill has devolved into a cringe-inducing airing of dirty laundry.

Nonetheless, “sorry” is what it will take to clean the large amount of egg accumulating on Lee’s face. Since his public accusations toward the Pre-Law Society and its acting president Ashley McClain, many of the 200-some students and faculty on the society’s listserv have been left in a bewildered state, unable to discern if a general fraud has been committed or if a rogue member is settling a score. In either case, it’s up to Lee to use the same platform to clear the air and let everyone move forward.

The problem is that this has all gotten a bit out of hand, making a simple apology difficult. One issue is that Lee’s unfortunate words for Hill have been scattered across campus. Lee’s nasty comments toward the tenured faculty member have been copied via email to SALP directors (who actually are best equipped to deal with this kind of nonsense), PSU student media, ASPSU executives, and even PSU President Wim Wiewel’s office.

Prefixing one series of e-mail exchanges, Lee asserts that he will refrain from further comments until he “gets a chance to see what the suggestions/position of PSU President, Wim Wiewel, are.” It’s quite the imaginative stretch to believe that Wiewel is in his office pondering the barely comprehensible exchanges between Lee and Hill.

However, if Wiewel did make a statement to this issue, he’d probably point to the university’s values like “climate for mutual respect,” or “openness and reflection.”

This story has been difficult to keep up with; like wading into a muddy bog that just gets thicker with every step. Through it all, there is a core motivating factor animating Lee: his crusading position on the sfc—a powerful group of elected students who allocate student fee money to student groups and departments, amounting to about $13.8 million. Elected student members of this committee should be held to a higher standard—after all, they are representing students.

In an interview, Lee indicated he interprets his job very broadly, saying there are no “jurisdictions” for sfc members. He goes on saying its “my duty to pursue any matters personally that I believe have consequences to student fee money.” This interpretation arms an individual sfc member with a broad police power who, on a whim, may step in and micro-manage groups or departments—not okay.

sfc Chair Johnnie Ozimkowski, referring to Lee and his work with the society, said “I realize he thinks he’s helping students overall, but he’s actually jeopardizing the career of a lot of pre-professionals. There’s a lot of interconnected issues at play.”

It’s troubling to realize facts are an afterthought for Lee and his brand of investigation. On December 26, Banner, the PSU financial system used by student groups, showed nothing of the wrongdoing Lee was so adamant about. McClain deposits all membership dues into the drop box at SALP’s office, just like every other student group.

“Membership dues were paid but the transaction did take some time,” Flores said of Lee’s $20 bill. “It wasn’t stolen, it was in a locker not deposited yet.” He handed over the cash to cover his $15 membership fee. The $5 change is what Lee was so worked up over, accusing the society’s leaders of “commingling funds” in his November 22 public listserv message. (Conveniently for readers, Lee offers a definition of the term in his message—one lifted verbatim from Wikipedia.)

The leadership position of McClain is also no longer in dispute, since the group’s executives made the decision to have her as president for the year. After all, she was the vice-president when Jake Merz resigned on November 5. Courageously, she still plans to lead and grow the group this year.

The issue leaves us to consider our principles. What about PSU’s core student values of leadership, mentorship, respect for faculty, and respect for the learning process? The kind of behavior demonstrated by Lee is one that disrespects the chain of administration, and has little regard for due process.

Rather than engage with the students and advisers in front of him, and demonstrate leadership, he seems to prefer to complain to university administrators. How does Lee plan to apply his ability to get his immediate bosses in trouble while in the professional world? Launching objection after objection over the pettiest of issues eventually becomes an obstruction.

It is staggering to believe that someone with these capabilities and patterns of behavior is now representing students while actively engaged in allocating the millions in student fee money. As a member of the eight-person Student Fee Committee and liaison to nine student groups, Lee’s methods are beyond the pale.
The Salem Democrats are at it again. This time, they’re aiming for our jobs and our wallets. The Spectator has decided to step in and take sides. Traditionally taking the side of the fiscally conservative, our editorial staff decided to square off and present both the pro and con perspective on the matter of January’s special election.

First, you need to hear the back story. It was July 20, 2009 when Gov. Ted Kulongoski signed two tax bills presented by the Oregon Legislature in their 2009 session. His signature approved the increase of taxes in the state by $733 million by raising the state’s corporate minimum tax, raising taxes on the state’s high-income individuals, and raising income taxes on businesses.

In reaction to the news, tax activists in the state mustered a veto referendum to put the hikes up for a vote. On October 8, 2009, the Oregon Secretary of State’s office announced that both measures had qualified for the ballot. The successful signature drive was initiated by Oregonians Against Job-Killing Taxes.

According to Don Hamilton, spokesman for the Secretary of State’s office, supporters of the measures “filed more than twice as many [signatures]. It’s unusually high for a statewide ballot measure.” Defend Oregon, a political action committee funded primarily by public employee unions, oversees the campaign in favor of the permanent tax increases.

Oregonians are being asked to vote as the legislators do - “yes” to adopt the bill or “no” against the legislation. A yes vote on Measure 66 and 67 will uphold two bills passed earlier this year. A no vote will overturn the legislation.

It is worth noting the Oregonian’s Editorial Board recommended voting no on the two measures in their January 2 article, calling the ballot “ugly stuff, at an especially ugly time in Oregon. People are suffering, business is hurting, plunging tax revenues have ripped a $727 million hole in the state budget.”

- Megan Kimmelshue
The Yes Vote

Measures 66 & 67: An End to the Budget Shortfall

By Jonathan Miles

As a state, we can afford to pay more taxes in Oregon. Here’s why your vote to pass Measures 66 and 67 is the right thing to do.

In Oregon’s attempt to keep the lights on in Salem (and the rest of the state) the biennial budget was written. It took special sessions and special elections thanks to a voter-referred pair of ballot measures that will do two things. The first is to raise taxes and the second is to raise taxes. While heavy government bureaucracies tend to get friendly with redundancies, this one is a bit more complicated than that. Measure 66 will, in short, increase the revenue that the state receives from wealthy individuals, while Measure 67 will increase the revenue from local corporations.

Xander Almeida, my rhetorical counterpart, will likely have a hard time calling out the guard against M66, since it merely seeks to create what Republicans have been calling for since the beginning of our nation: fair taxes. Because of the ability for Oregonians to claim their taxes paid to state as an expense on their federal tax return, the real breakdown of the income tax structure in Oregon turns out to be regressive. Which is to say, the wealthiest among us pay a smaller share of their income than the poorest. In fact, according to the Oregon Center for Public Policy, the wealthiest 1 percent of Oregonians pay almost 3 percent less of their income than those with the lowest income. Just think about what the phrase “without representation” means to the poor and disenfranchised when those with access to rocket-like upward mobility pay less than their share. M66 corrects this in two simple moves by slightly increasing taxes on those who can afford it and removing the ability to claim the Oregon tax liability on their federal tax form for the rich. The tax increase, by the way, is not on the total income, but only on the income that exceeds between $100,000 and $500,000.

Now, liberal tax advocates like to sling the word corporation around like a four letter word, but the corporate minimum tax hike that M67 proposes will affect more than the big mega-companies like Nike and Intel. Little businesses whose income is less than the wealthy Oregonians facing taxation under the passage of Measure 66 will be paying more taxes than they ever have. What the tax proponents argue is that the last time Oregon raised the tax on corporations was in 1931, when it went from zero to 10 bucks a year. The purpose of the tax then was the same as its metamorphosis now. Oregon, like the rest of the country, has sunk into a deep recession, and, companies like Nike and Bob’s Handy Pantry alike have been able to avoid paying any more than the $10 minimum for almost 80 years.

My compatriot will no doubt write that the tax measure is too poorly arranged to be passable. His is a classic tax opponent’s argument when there is no way to deny the utility of the tax. Since the removal of that tax income from Oregon’s budget will mean higher tuition for the students at Portland State and other Oregon universities, as well as a cut to Oregon’s K-12 schools, it’s pretty hard to sell the evils of the tax. But, if the measure cruelly taxes
those who can’t afford to pay, then it may be justifiable to kill the measure. While it’s true that M67 taxes revenue rather than profit, it is also true that certain corporate tax laws allow for corporations to pay out bonuses and gifts at the end of the year as a way of showing no profit on paper. In this way, companies that are really raking in dollars to their top employees are able to cut their tax liability down to less than the cost of a book of city bus tickets. According to the Oregon Center for Public Policy, two thirds of the corporations in Oregon (about 5,156) had an actual profit, but managed to cook their books down to paying the $10 minimum. The State does not release the names of these companies, but some of the big complainers are members of the Oregon Builders Association.

It may be true that some small businesses that are struggling to get off their feet actually make zero profit, but if their revenue is small enough, their tax burden will also be small. S-Corporations and LLC’s (Limited Liability Corporations) are the most common structures for small businesses due to the small number of shareholders required, and the minimum tax that those two will face if they make no money is only $150 at the end of the year. If a business owner can’t factor an extra buck and a half for taxes then I don’t know what makes them think they can run a business.

As for the big dogs, C-Corporations (the kind that smell liberals hate), M67 stratifies the amount that they will have to pay based on gross income. If your company takes in less than half a million dollars in gross sales, you pay the quaint $150 just like the other small businesses. However, if you make more than that, then you have to pay 0.0015 cents on each dollar of income. Seriously, raise your prices two cents and see how that hurts business. The third bracket for corporations starts at $100 million dollars of revenue for which $100,000 will be owed in taxes, or 0.1 percent.

Though I doubt that my adept opponent will toss out the tired phrase “job killing” in his argument against M67, it seems worth refuting that pathetic claim based on its popularity in the news lately. Depending on whose “most trusted” economic report you read, you might learn that M67 will definitely force Oregon industry giants like Nike or Intel to fire a slew of employees or move their business to states like Washington, which have no minimum tax. While the Oregonian quotes a report by Randall Pozdena that claims a loss of 40 thousand jobs, the Portland Mercury refers to an economic study by Kim Rueben and Rosanne Altshuler which reveals zero jobs lost thanks to all the public sector jobs created or saved by a complete state budget. Public sector jobs like the people who put out the flames consuming your house or teach your children how to read. It’s true that Oregon’s dismal unemployment rate is alarming, but the biggest employers in Oregon, like Intel, actually claim a profit every year, which means they are already paying their taxes. M67 is not designed to kill jobs; it is designed to keep Oregon businesses honest.
Measure 66
Household Income

"Raises tax on household income at and above $250,000 (and $125,000 for individual filers). Reduces income taxes on unemployment benefits in 2009. Provides funds currently budgeted for education, health care, public safety, other services."

The Oregon Department of Revenue’s most recent personal income tax report (from tax year 2007) shows the actual numbers when it comes to an individual’s tax liability. This graphical analysis compares the percentage of an individual’s share of the taxes paid to the state (on the left) against the taxable income earned by that individual (on the bottom). The shaded area under the curve represents the range of incomes which will be paying higher taxes if Measure 66 passes this month (between $125 thousand for individuals or $250 thousand for joint filers).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annual Income</th>
<th>Percentage of Income Paid to State (Tax Liability)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than $11,725</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$11,725 to $25,157</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25,157 to $44,224</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$44,245 to $76,745</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$76,745 to $149,917</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$149,917 to $352,236 and up</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of Oregon’s tax payers are making 25K or less annually. They contributed 4% of Oregon’s income tax revenue.

Of Oregon’s tax payers make 300K or more annually. They contributed 28% of Oregon’s income tax revenue.

Roughly 5% of Oregon tax payers make between $175–299K and contribute roughly 13% of Oregon’s income tax revenue.
Measure 67
Corporate Minimum

2/3 of C-Corporations (that’s 5,156 of them) currently pay the minimum tax ($10.00)

If measure 67 passes...

If you make more than 100 million (and you don’t claim a profit) then the maximum you’ll pay is 100K with the new tax. That’s 0.1¢ on the dollar or less.

If you make between 500K and 100 million (and you don’t claim a profit) then you’ll pay 0.15¢ on the dollar.

If you make less than 500K (and you don’t claim a profit) then you’ll pay $150 a year (the new minimum)

Oregon Legislature expects roughly 257 million in revenue from Measure 67

5% or $18 million from LLPs Entity Tax
5% or $18 million from S-Corporations Minimum Tax
11% or $30 million from all Secretary of State Filing Tax
79% or $211 million from C-Corporations

Of the 79% made from C-Corporations, $93 million will come from the Minimum Tax and $108 million will come from the Marginal Tax (profit tax)

“Raises $10 corporate minimum tax, business minimum tax, corporate profits tax. Provides funds currently budgeted for education, health care, public safety, other services.”
Let’s talk Measures 66 and 67. This is the special election coming up where we shall be voting upon two tax measures, and the targets of the taxes are the usual suspects: the rich and the corporations. It feels good inside to somehow stick it to those who did better than we did and those we perceive to be inherently evil, as one might recall Tim Robbins in Team America: World Police going on about how the “corporations sit there in their corporation buildings and they’re all corporation-y and they make money.” But first, we should examine a few things.

I’m pretty convinced that the state Legislature hopes you don’t know math. As do the proponents of Measure 66. Because they will say the bill raise the taxes on couples making $250,000 or more per year by 1.8 percent and couples making more than $500,000 by 2 percent, respectively. This increase from the existing 9 percent remains in affect until 2012, where it will then fall to 9.9 percent, which is still permanent 0.9 percent tax increase from where it currently stands.

At the same time, the bill also eliminates income tax on the first $2,400 of unemployment benefits, which are usually considered taxable income. I won’t even go into how backwards it is to be paying people not to work while also rapidly expanding public works projects, but I wonder how we are to cause cohesion locally, statewide or nationally, when we make different laws for different people.

Now I’ll be fair. I’m not convinced that 66 is the worst decision we could make. It’s unfair, predictable and another tiny stitch to a gut-shot wound of a problem we have in Oregon’s tax structure. I am, however, convinced that the proponents of Measure 67 also hope you don’t know terminology. It might be the worst thing we could do right about now.

Let’s take the bill apart. Raising the corporate minimum tax to $150 from $10? Sure, why not. That’s not going to hurt anybody. But that’s not what this bill really does. What it does is tax revenue rather than profit, and if you do make a profit, it taxes you more still. So you could lose money or barely scrape by and the state will gouge you either way. For instance, if you’re an incorporated trucking company with razor-thin margins and you have a gross revenue of, say, $50 million a year within Oregon, with this 0.1 percent revenue tax, that could end up costing you several jobs. And then they’d have to go on unemployment, where they wouldn’t be taxed for the first bulk of the unemployment benefits. So it seems the state is willing to lose jobs and put people on unemployment. Which again, seems backwards.

Now I know this seems confusing and that’s because it is intentionally. There were a number of court fights on the wording of these bills because it is worded in such a way as to make the impending fiscal apocalypse inevitable and to try to confuse voters as to the nature of the bills themselves. However, if these bills do not pass, this does not automatically mean cuts to higher
education. It simply means the budget gets sent back to Salem and they have to rework the numbers. I’m not saying higher ed won’t get cut. But contrary to liberal hype, cuts are not inevitable.

Now to be fair to the state Legislature, they made cuts to the General Fund since the last budget, contrary to what opponents of the taxes say. The reason our budget went up almost 10 percent is because of the massive influx of federal money (up from $9.29 billion in ‘07–09 to $14.022 billion for ‘09–11). However, there are issues at work here and the Legislature really doesn’t want to examine it. So let’s start some frank discussion.

Why on earth doesn’t Oregon, which prides itself on sustainability, have a consumption tax, aka, sales tax? If you want to get a tax from someone, how about those who consume the most amount of goods? This way, everybody chips in to the state rather than a wealthy few. A sales tax also taxes those normally un-taxable otherwise, because at the end of the day, everyone needs to buy something. Even a small sales tax would go a long way instead of basing most of our state funds off of income and property taxes. All this does is make the state reel more than it should in a recession. In this way, the wealthy who purchase more will indeed pay more taxes than those who do not.

Also, state unions? Like TriMet, for instance? Your FTE hours have scarcely gone up and your hours on the road have actually gone down over the past few years (from 2001-2008) and yet your wages and fringe benefits have ballooned, and even your benefits are far higher than any other transit union in the nation. The highest rising cost to the state is entitlements to public workers and while they do a valuable service, we need to reexamine these contracts and the governor has the power to force a renegotiation of contracts. I do not understand why public workers are exempt from feeling the squeeze like the rest of us.

The state needs to have the general tax structure re-worked. Almost exclusive reliance upon income taxes has not lead us in a good direction and makes the hard times that much harder. Proponents of this bill have offered us all the easy roads and ASPSU voter advocates are giving you their admitted one-sided (though they term it “non-partisan”) perspective on this bill.

To sit and raise taxes on rich people and corporations is the feel-good, easy answer that simply prolongs glaring errors and bad practices. Instead, I encourage you to reject these bills, send them back to Salem, and tell our Legislature to find a real solution. This one only encourages hard working men and women in razor-thin margin industries to lose their jobs and encourages the wealthy to simple ford the Columbia to Washington state where they can enjoy much lower property and incomes taxes and then drive into Oregon so as to not pay sales tax either. Really, this is enough. We don’t need a Band-Aid anymore. We need surgery.
The Future of Fitness

PSU now has its own gold certified gym, and the price is right, too. Find out what makes it so special.

By Megan Kimmelshue

Top An artists rendering of the completed center.

Left and Above The facility boasts a pool, weight room, and climbing walls designed to simulate Smith Rock.

Photos by Clara Rodriguez
After trying unsuccessfully for a year and a half to work my schedule around the sporadic and inconvenient hours of the circuit room at the Stott Center, and after having an extremely annoying experience at L.A. Fitness, I welcome the new Student Recreation Center and its 100 pieces of exercise equipment available seven days a week with open arms. The road to building this facility has been long and fiscally controversial, and after the doors opened on January 3, the longevity and planning of this facility will be put to the test.

In 1987, Portland State had 14,000 students and was classified as an NCAA Division II school. That’s when a PSU Presidential Task Force was asked to look at the recreational facilities and concluded that “the current facility [Peter Stott Center] does not meet the needs of today’s students and serious thought must be given to the creation of a new building if we are going to meet everybody’s needs.” As the student body grew the need for a bigger and more versatile facility became even more evident, and funding was eventually assembled for the center through student fees, $3 million of student building fees and $42 million in Oregon XI-F bonds. These types of bonds are granted by the state of Oregon specifically for higher education building projects, and according to the Oregon Constitution, they are required to be “wholly self-liquidating and self-supporting from revenues, gifts, grants, or building fees.”

The Campus Rec Center houses a two-court gymnasium, a three lane running track, a synthetic floor gymnasium equipped for floor hockey and indoor soccer, a large cardiovascular and weight training facility, two multi-purpose group fitness rooms, an aquatic complex including a lap pool and whirlpool spa, new locker rooms, a bouldering wall, and working space for intramurals, the Outdoor Program and over 30 student rec clubs. The new building also offers Open Recreation, Fitness programs and GroupX classes. Four classrooms and a large lecture auditorium on the second floor contribute additional space for academic courses. Other tenants include the School of Social Work, the high-powered Oregon University System (OUS) Chancellor’s office and the City of Portland Archives.

Voter Approved Workout

In April of 2004, the PSU student body voted to recommend a Student Recreation Center Fee to be assessed at $41 per term for each student taking at least one credit. Starting fall term 2009, every enrolled student has this fee automatically added to their term bill and gains free access to the building and many of its amenities. The $41 fee doesn’t cover the entire cost of running the building and its programs, but pays for the construction debt service, the bonds and eventually the long-term maintenance of the Center. PSU estimates that the break down will be about $23 a month - or about $5.75 a week. This is lower than most gym memberships around Portland, and with the ease of accessibility, this could turn out to be a steal for PSU students. PSU faculty, alumni, their dependents and spouses will also have access to the Rec Center for a reasonable fee of $25 to $45 per month, depending on status. In addition to the $41 per term, a portion of the student incidental fee, which by our estimation will amount to about 1.9 million, will cover the remainder of costs. How much of the actual student fee will be allocated is to be determined at the SFC budget meeting on January 13. Because the Rec Center is another university-funded program, it has the potential to be subject to budget cuts like any other department. Campus Rec states that, “Building operations, fees, and programs are all subject to change based on usage patterns and budget allocations.”

ReRev it Up

The Rec Center will be a marked achievement towards reaching PSU’s sustainability goals. The facility will ultimately reach LEED Gold-certified status and utilizes water conservation, air quality control, daylighting, and construction debris management. The sport courts are made from Forest Stewardship Council-certified wood, and other rooms use natural linoleum.

One of the more interesting strategies is using a system called ReRev to capture the energy generated by elliptical machine usage to power the building. The ReRev Web site explains that, “Each retrofit has a controller box which feeds back through a processor and into a central-grid tied inverter, tapping directly into the building’s electrical system—creating free electricity with no maintenance required.” ReRev estimates that a typical 30-minute cardio workout can produces 50 watt hours of clean electricity.

Legitimizing the costly investment in the Rec Center is the rate of student involvement. The Director of Campus Recreation, Alex Accetta, agrees. “The more students are engaged, the more they want to stay on campus,” he told the Daily Journal of Commerce. The more students that choose to stay on campus teams a more vibrant University District that may attract new students and faculty to PSU. The administration is striving for this—the university expects to add lodgings for 2,000 students in the next 10 years and expand its FYE program. In fact, initial plans for the Rec Center included student housing accommodations. If PSU wants to transcend its reputation as a commuter school, new Rec Center may be the gateway towards moving in this direction.
Climate Change Legislation is a Fact

Cap-and-trade or carbon tax? Weighing the pros and cons could turn into another ugly debate.

By Molly Shove

One school of thought on global warming believes that it is an immediate threat to the future of our planet, and if we don’t deal with it soon, we are all going to die horribly. I don’t know about you, but I’m not fond of dying horribly. Whether it’s a slow death of having my lungs systematically digested into blackish goo, or the more abrupt death of sudden heat stroke, I’m not a fan.

Other people believe that global warming is another evil ploy by environmentalists to mess up capitalism. Both say they have the science to back up their points, and will continue to carry on about how their side is right despite any evidence that might suggest otherwise. Thankfully, that’s not what I’m writing about. Regardless of whether climate change is hoax or great truth, politicians are going to try to do something about it.

The popular catchphrase in Congress right now is “cap-and-trade,” for several reasons. Most importantly, it doesn’t contain words the government likes to avoid, such as “tax” or “mandatory.” Secondly, it gives people the feeling that something is being done about the issue of climate change, but is vague and open-ended enough so most people can’t grasp exactly what it is. To refresh your memory if you happen to fall into that category, a cap-and-trade system involves the government setting an ever-decreasing limit on nationwide carbon emissions, then auctioning off permits to companies that allow them to emit set amounts of carbon.

A popular alternative to cap-and-trade is the carbon tax. This is as the name suggests an ever-increasing tax on CO₂ emissions, theoretically targeted at large energy companies, with the revenues paying for green energy development or cleanup of natural disasters.

So which is better? Cap-and-trade has a very impressive fan club, including the president of the Pew Center on Global Climate Change, president of the Natural Resource Defense Council and President Obama himself, along with several other politicians right and left. This is partially because it allows the market to set a natural price for carbon, rather than the government placing an arbitrary price tag on polluting the earth. Another important advantage of cap-and-trade is the clear limit it sets on carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. While a carbon tax has to guess on an amount that will dissuade over-consumption while still allowing the market to function properly, a cap-and-trade system does this automatically by definition. Another important and overlooked advantage is its political viability. Nowhere in “cap-and-trade” is there the word “tax,” which is a word that scares most Americans. This doesn’t mean that the American people won’t end up paying extra because of the cost of carbon, but this makes it easier for politicians to sell to thrifty voters.

A carbon tax sounds like Uncle Sam peeping in your window to see if you use the energy saver setting on your dishwasher, then heartlessly raising your tax bracket if you don’t. The truth is that the U.S. government would be taxing large energy companies for emitting large quantities of carbon. Impacts for the average voter would most likely be seen in an increase in utilities and gas prices. Advocates of a carbon tax, such as Jeffrey D. Sachs, director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University and Charles Komanoff, co-director of the Carbon Tax Center, argue that it would be a simpler system, making it far easier to regulate and adapt to whatever problems may arise. They also believe that companies might try to distort the carbon market. For example, a large company may be able to scalp carbon permits issued through the cap-and-trade system like ticket scalpers for concerts, buying them in bulk and then raising the prices and extorting money out of smaller companies.

Tax advocates believe that the government is neither experienced nor effective at regulation of such a market (financial crises is case and point), and have proven themselves very effective at taxing and fining companies for doing bad things. A last warrant for supporting a carbon tax is the relative simplicity. Setting up a tax would take a fraction of the time spent setting up a cap-and-trade system, and there are less potential loopholes to be exploited with the tax without voters noticing.

The truth is that both schools of thought essentially boil down to saying, “The system I don’t favor is overly complicated and easily distorted.” Both a carbon tax and the cap-and-trade system have the potential to be an effective tool to combat climate change. Both also have the potential to be a pet project for a greedy senator handing out exceptions for free vacations funded through a Swiss bank account. Looking at the cap-and-trade bill that recently passed in the House, I’d say a lot of congressmen are enjoying the islands this holiday season. Whichever system ultimately ends up being seriously considered, voters (i.e. you) should look out for overly complicated systems, earmarks and its strategy for dealing with the international market, since all have the potential to move business out of the U.S. The last issue to watch out for is employment in CO₂-heavy states. For example, states like Virginia, where coal mining is a significant part of the economy, will be more adversely affected than Oregon, who has no coal mines to speak of. Lawmakers need to make sure that these states get a larger chunk of whatever revenue comes in so these economies have the means to grow and adapt to the new regulations.

Climate change legislation arriving soon is a given. What matters is that the legislation’s contents are elegant and without big loopholes or excessive pork. A good economy beats sending your congressperson to the islands any day.
State funding for Oregon’s largest and most diverse institution, Portland State University, has declined by 40 percent in consumer price index (CPI) adjusted dollars over the last twenty years. Today, state funding accounts for only 16 percent of the annual operating budget compared to 48 percent twenty years ago. To fill the void created by the drastic drop in funding, students and their families have become overly reliant on both federal and private student loans. The intention of the Federal Pell Grant was to relieve some of this burden, but the spiraling costs of education in the state of Oregon have hindered its impact significantly. Similarly, the increases in the need-based Oregon Opportunity Grant in the last few years have helped affordability for students attending 2–and 4–year institutions in Oregon, but the grant program remains under funded with a waiting list of thousands each year and early cut-off dates when funds run out. As University of Oregon President Dave Frohnmayer stated in his report, The Coming Crisis in College Completion, “we also are a state that too quietly allowed crises to develop in institutions that are vital for the creation of an abundant future.”

The sobering reality is that over the last ten years enrollment at Portland State University has doubled while state funding has declined. Unless changes are made soon, many students will face the realization that a college education is not attainable. To stem the tide and halt the erosion of Oregon state universities, a new governance structure is being proposed in the form of a public corporation. The Oregon University System (OUS) and Dave Frohnmayer are promoting the Independent Public Corporation Act of 2010. Under this act, the Oregon State Board of Higher Education may create public corporations for our state’s higher education institutions.

Frohnmayer believes that under the current form of state funding, Portland State University, as well as other institutions, cannot possibly receive the funding needed to adequately prepare students for future careers, recruit and retain quality faculty and upgrade the needed infrastructure to accommodate more students. Before the economic crisis government funding was available, however, that has all changed. With unemployment nearing 11 percent and home foreclosures on the rise, Oregon’s tax base is dwindling. Frohnmayer stated in his most recent report, “The prospect of a ‘jobless economic recovery’ or at least an extended period of high underemployment in Oregon appears real, and will slow the pace of state government’s revenue rebound, at least for several more years.”

Under our current state funding mandate, K–12 education, Medicaid, state corrections facilities and public transportation get priority over higher education when it comes to receiving tax dollars. From 2009–2011, K–12 and Oregon community colleges will receive 71.6 percent and 58.9 percent of the state general fund, compared to 14.3 percent that OUS receives for higher education funding, according to the Frohnmayer report of November 2009.

With our current system, even if tax revenues increase, the money would go to previously passed prison funding measures and the refunding of the Public Employees Retirement System (PERS). Another obstacle looming in January is whether voters will overturn nearly 750 million dollars in taxes approved by the Oregon Legislature. Simply put, the volatility of Oregon’s personal income tax and the ups and downs of state revenue make it unrealistic for Oregon schools to be able to depend on state funding from the general fund. As Dave Frohnmayer said, “These larger political trends, as well as the revenue-draining and expenditure-forcing mandates in Oregon, suggest that simplistic solutions to state financial problems in the short run will be elusive, if not politically impossible to devise and deliver.”
The Public Corporation

There are several models in which a public corporation can be formed, but two appear to be the most likely. One is the current model used by the Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU). The hospital-plus-university institution is a freestanding public corporation with an independent governing board. This board has the ability to issue bonds as well as control personnel, purchasing, tuition, auditing, and banking functions. Board members are nominated by the governor and confirmed by the Oregon State Senate. Biennial budgets are submitted to the governor and approved by the State Legislature.

Under the second model, which is called the Oregon Hybrid, the Oregon University System (OUS) would be given the authority to create one or more public corporations with independent governing boards similar to OHSU. The OUS board would function as a coordinating board, working with all of the individual boards to insure that standards are formed and met. In addition to the benefits received by the OUS model, this system would have the ability to go to voters for additional funding and to the state for bonds.

Whatever model is chosen for Portland State University, it will contain the basic attributes that every Public Corporation for Higher Education (PCHE) model is required to have. It will promote the public welfare of the people of the State of Oregon through excellent, efficient, accountable and accessible public higher education. It will be governed by a board of directors, two of which will also serve as members of the Board of Higher Education, and will be considered an instrument of the state and will enjoy protection from suit under Article IV, Section 24. The board of directors will be considered trustees of the PCHE’s assets. They will report to and be held accountable by the governor and Legislative Assembly. Most importantly though, it will have all the powers necessary to effectively accomplish what we have failed to do so far: insure availability and high academic standards for future students. As Frohnmayer suggests, “these actions would leave Oregon’s public research universities better positioned to meet the formidable challenges of collegiate degree attainment and research discovery that are crucial to our future.”

The best part of this proposed restructuring appears to be its flexibility. It can be tailored to meet the specific needs of each institution, and all of the schools would be overseen by the Oregon State Board of Higher Education. Academic standards would also be increased, forcing college students to perform to higher expectations and creating a more educated and achieving student.

The Point

College students make up a small percentage of the taxpaying public. To many taxpayers, the thought of allocating more tax dollars to higher education is not in their best interest, or more simply put, “It does not benefit them.”

However, it is important to not forget the impact a college graduate has on their surrounding community and state. According to Frohnmayer’s report, in 2007, the average full-time U.S. worker with a four-year degree earned $68,176 per year, 75 percent more than the $39,038 earned by workers with a high school diploma. The increase in salary relates to a larger tax payment as well. The tax-increment of college graduates is enough to pay for theirs and everyone else’s educational costs. On top of these sobering statistics, workers who receive a college degree are less likely to rely on public assistance, have a lower rate of unemployment and a much lower rate of poverty. Dave Frohnmayer points out “the level of a state’s educational attainment and its economic development are interrelated and connected in many ways. A highly educated work force is cited frequently by business and industry representatives as a key factor in where they choose to locate and how they are able to expand operations.”

It is time to radically modify the current economic structure pertaining to funding of our state’s universities. If we hope to maintain, let alone expand, the quality of education we can provide to Oregon residents in the near future, it will require students, faculty, administration, and state agencies to recognize the dilemma we are in.
Klan Legacy or School Security?

Oregon teacher Tedrib Ahmani teaches math in a Portland-area public school. Her job could be in jeopardy at any time. She will not be the victim of lay-offs or budget cutbacks, but of an Oregon law dating back to 1921 and Kasper K. Kabuli—a notorious Oregon lawmaker and open supporter of the Ku Klux Klan. The law bans Oregon teachers from wearing “religious garb,” and Ahmani wears an Islamic headscarf. With history of anti-Catholic bias and Klan association, it is baffling that removing this antiquated law is so difficult. Admittedly, this subject is dear to my heart, and this writer has been very involved in exposing the law to the public eye; however, it is a law that would ban me and many of my friends from teaching based simply on the wearing of a fashionable scarf or long skirt.

Recently, the biggest supporter of the teacher clothing ban has been the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). In the ultimate ironic twist, the ACLU will support and defend the access to an abortion as a constitutionally protected right, defend gay-straight alliances in schools, and has even applied for the rights of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay to have free exercise of religion, but not the rights of Oregon public school teachers. The protection and acceptance of alternative sexual lifestyles or access to abortion are intertwined with a social acceptance of sexuality, but apparently the ACLU does not accept covering for modesty as a free sexual choice. A religious headcovering is a personal choice not meant to impose upon others; it is a simple cloth and not a religious message.

A strange dichotomy exists when the ACLU does not support something so liberal as a personal freedom. Groups that would side with the ACLU and who favor liberal values, such as accepting alternate lifestyles, should also favor protecting the rights of minority religious groups. However, there are a few major barriers according to the ACLU, primarily the belief that allowing religious clothing would spark discussion and therefore religious teaching in schools. It should be noted that district policies sufficiently protect children from proselytizing teachers without the clothing ban. There is a marked difference between a “Jesus Saves” T-shirt with a religious message or a child’s history teacher wearing a Yarmulke because he is Jewish. Should teachers be faceless and without personality, all wearing similar clothes? According to the ACLU, who fights for American civil liberties, the answer is yes.

Among conservative individuals I would think that religious freedom and the right to maintain religious beliefs in public life should be favored among the religious right. However, due in part to the focus on Muslim women’s clothing and the inevitable discussion of coercion and repression that the hijab and the burqa espouse lead even the conservatives to shy away from supporting women who cover for religious piety. I find this attitude surprising in conservatives or religious Christians, as the Virgin Mary
has always been represented in modest clothing and the church has had a long history of requiring modest clothing. For example, some Orthodox Christian and Jewish women today wear head coverings in church or the synagogue.

This year, the Oregon speaker of the house, Dave Hunt (D-Gladstone), is leading the way to overturn this 89-year-old law, which came to light last year while passing the Workplace Religious Freedom Act of 2009. The Act guarantees all Oregonians the right to wear religious garb and take religious holidays off, yet leaves the ban for Oregon public school teachers still in effect.

The law is set to be repealed in February with sufficient support in the Oregon Senate. Rep. Hunt met with various area religious organizations, the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (a multi-faith religious organization) and a few representatives of city officials on December 7 to cover the current situation regarding Oregon bill 342.650 (the original law from 1921). According to Hunt, the revision of 342.650 will be complete in the first few weeks of January, and the repeal will be proposed in the February session.

Many states have strange and outdated laws still in standing. Idaho has laws governing the use of headlamps on horse carriages in town. In Alabama, you cannot carry an ice cream cone in your pocket at any time, and in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, it is illegal for housewives to stash dirt under their rugs. While outdated laws are often amusing, some laws are downright harmful. Laws banning interracial marriages remained on the books in many states until the 1980’s and Oregon’s law is one of two in the nation banning teachers from “wearing religious garb while performing the duties of a public teacher.”

While some oppose lifting the ban because of the separation between church and state, the Department of Justice is now investigating Oregon’s law as a violation of Title VII rights. A violation of constitutionally protected rights is a serious matter in our democratic society, and our nation was built on the idea of the “free exercise of religion” as stated in the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. A teacher should be valued for their actions and effectiveness as an educator and not their personal pious clothing.

The question remains, will Oregon repeal its old law or will the ACLU win in continuing the legacy of Kabuli and the Klan?

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**Religious Garb**

A. Turbans originated in Arabia.

B. The Yarmulke is worn by Jewish men.

C. The coverings worn by nuns of the Catholic Church.

D. The Hijab is worn by Muslim women.

E. Bonnet worn by Mennonite women, a conservative sect of Christianity.
The Spectator’s Rearbuttal

Editor’s Note: Through June, The Rearguard and The Spectator will each feature a column of banter, in a civilized manner, on issues of concern to the reading public at Portland State University.

It’s Full of Holes and It Just Cussed at Me
By Molly Shove

“We exist to provide a voice for the unrecognized, oppressed, and marginalized at PSU and the greater world community. We believe in a democracy that is fueled by truth, parity and justice. We believe it is the people who will ultimately act to create a lasting, structural change. We believe that actions speak louder than words.”

After reading this lovely message, I began to wonder, “What publication is this? Surely it’s not the paper with “HOLY SHIT!” emblazoned on the front page (as if it’s trying to offend people), the paper that throws insults at anyone not as cool or trendy as they are, or the paper that has staff so dedicated that they failed to print a December issue?

I remember that fateful first day I cracked open the profanity-laden pages of The Rearguard. I uttered my fair share of profanity being that somehow I expected, being a freshman, to find news hidden somewhere in its pages. I looked in the front, but only found profanity. I looked in the back, and found a review of some band. Then, finally, I discovered why there was nothing of substance inside. Online, I found things that vaguely resembled reporting, but they didn’t have actual facts. They had analogies, jokes, and painfully overextended metaphors about vague news-like topics, but no actual news.

This is not to say that The Rearguard never provides its readers with news. While researching this article in the online archives, I stumbled onto some amazing reporting. There were numbers, there was sound logic, and it was beautiful. However, the vast majority of the time The Rearguard doesn’t provide news, it provides commentary. What major “news” outlet does this remind you of (cough, cough, Fox News)?

So they don’t provide actual legitimate news. That still leaves us with the question of what exactly they do at The Rearguard. Flipping though one of their more recent issues, the answer came to me. Emblazoned on its pages was the label, “The gateway drug to real news.”

I thought this statement defined their mission far better than the lovely paragraph at the beginning of this article. They use the word “drug” to show how dark, edgy and controversial they are while taunting you with the possibility of real substance, without actually doing the work to create any. Often it seems that The Rearguard strives to be controversial for its own sake rather then to spread the message of diversity and acceptance.

For example (because we at The Spectator like to back up our points, rather then throwing them out there and feeling repressed when people disagree), “If a degree from Portland State doesn’t score you a sweet job in the real world and you can’t find someone from a better country who is willing to marry you – Just remember you can always live in the Smith Student Union with all the other homeless people.” Hmm… is this a narration on the disenfranchised homeless so we can have tolerance, peace and love in the world? No, this is an excerpt from an article on the job market. Was the “HOLY SHIT!” on the front cover of The Rearguard a narration of the state of the proletariat in a time of need? No. It was a gimmick to increase circulation, and a way to define them as controversial and edgy without them having to actually make any kind of point.

When it comes to being the dark and edgy voice on campus they really do excel. Its pages are strewn with profanity, drug references and the occasional racial slur. Even the news piece I read opened with the author making his mother cry, and I’ve been hard pressed to find a single article that doesn’t contain a swear word (I’ve found a few, but it was a challenge). Memorable headlines include, “Swine Flu is a big hunk of Bullshit,” and “Generation Screwed.” On the other hand, there are articles such as “Preventative Healthcare,” which I will have a hard time describing for you civilly. I think they were trying to be ironic? They were talking about how disappointing it was that “death panels were taken out of the healthcare bill.” I felt grieved that I would never have the 979 words of my life back after reading it.

So good job Rearguard, I guess you have an identity. It’s not what you promise in your lovely mission statement, but it’s something. However, if I want to be dark and angsty, I’ll play my Shins discography and cry. If I want to hear someone scream news-like nonsense with no actual base in reality, I’ll listen to Rush Limbaugh. If I want someone to yell profanity at me, I’ll watch the Boondock Saints. The Rearguard doesn’t do much for the PSU student body and frankly, the students at PSU deserve better then reading pointless articles full of quotes like “fuck you, old man” and “You’re the one on wheels, you can roll your ass to the back of the bus. Prioritized, bitch.” The mission statement of The Rearguard is something I feel is a good use of my student fee money. What currently gets published once a month is a waste of resources.
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