

## EDITORIAL

### *Problems of Abundance*

November—it's gratitude month. So is the cup half empty or half full? In the following pages we have some fun with the state's biggest policy turkeys over the decades. Our apologies in advance if your favorite didn't make the list. Our apologies as well if we make light of a policy that was all too real and painful for you or your business. For our part, the PERS fiasco and the coercive political dominance of public employee unions seemed too serious to be included in a lighthearted list.

For many, born or raised here, or who made their way to Oregon over the past few decades, it was freedom that beckoned, and freedom might still top the list of reasons to be grateful this November to live in this great state, in this great country.

Other reasons to be grateful? Well, let's see. Surely some come to mind.

**You can fight city hall.** Mega-shoe and sportswear giant Nike has been able (so far—but never underestimate the persistence of government) to quash plans by the city of Beaverton to annex the global company's Oregon headquarters. In court, Nike forced Beaverton mayor Rob Drake to turn over computer records that might prove the city had secretly planned a forced annexation, though Drake had earlier denied it. Drake's computer hard drive was "mysteriously" damaged before the handover to Nike. But sure enough, a memo finally emerged that demonstrates pre-planning on Beaverton's part. Be grateful; be encouraged. In the great state of Oregon it is possible to uncover government scheming and stand up against the dreaded "planners," that is if you're a mega-giant with enough money to buy a team of legislators, lobbyists and consultants to fight for you. The rest of us are out of luck, but the big guys are on our side, so it's all good.

**Furniture fascism has arrived.** Shoppers of Oregon, be grateful—Ikea has arrived. Portland's urban elites apparently find the big box store to their psychographic liking. Unlike demographics, which measure age, income, education (those old-fashioned things), psychographics measure personal traits, values and behavior trends. Ikea stores have found their match with the faux-green, faux-socially conscious personal leanings of Portland's *uber*-left yuppies (there will be no Wal-Marts or Targets or poor people with poor taste in their world). Apparently it isn't the big box that bothers yuppies; it's what's in the box, or what they'd like to think is in the box. In reality, the Netherlands-based Ikea, like most other big box stores, purchases more goods from China than any other country. And they print *145 million catalogs* every year— that's a lot of paper, ink, energy, etc. Can't these yupsters shop on the Web?

**Parking abounds.** We might survive another year of that scourge of holiday shopping—finding a parking place. Even though the big box Ikea store will be built in what planners call a transit-oriented development, or TOD, parking will prevail. TOD planners hate cars, and in turn they despise parking lots. But, oops, city planners had a problem. Using light rail, how would urban yuppies carry home couches, chairs and dining tables from the Ikea store? On their backs? Under their arms? Answer: planners allowed *1,200*

parking spaces for the store. The new, and successful, suburban retail developments understand that shopping needs to be both pedestrian friendly *and* auto friendly. Be ever so grateful that *real* retail planners aren't as psycho, ...er into psychographics, as TOD planners. Maybe they can dictate where we shop, but we can still *drive* them crazy.

**You can still get a good deal on real estate.** At least if you're cozy with the Portland Development Commission. Just ask Eric Saito, president of Group Mackenzie. The lucky businessman just closed a deal to purchase the Holman Building on the central eastside from PDC. PDC spent \$1.3 million on the old warehouse and then spent another \$700,000 in remodeling efforts that brought new tenants for the ground floor. Saito was, conveniently, in need of new office space after his company's land in the South Waterfront development area was rezoned, upping its market price. Even more conveniently, Saito headed the PDC committee that did the rezoning. Then, proving that good deals are still out there in the hot Oregon market, Saito bought the Holman Building for \$400,000. Good for him, but bad for the taxpayers, who by our math, lost at least \$1.6 million.

**Sunshine and blue skies ahead.** Those sunny skies and warmer temperatures though could be the result of "global warming." And Oregon would have to take its share of responsibility for global pollutants, having poured countless tons of ash and particulates into the sky through spectacular forest fires—fires caused by lack of cutting and thinning over the years. The Biscuit Fire alone burned 500,000 acres of CO<sub>2</sub>-consuming trees and has yet to be salvaged or replanted with young trees (the heaviest consumers of CO<sub>2</sub>). But that's okay, chirp environmentalists, with the timber industry devastated, 130,000 jobs gone, and 900 mills closed, at least skies are sunnier for the tourists the enviros claim will fill the economic hole. Of course those hoards of tourists are trampling our "pristine" forests, and the new service jobs earn half the wages of mill jobs, but remember the glass is half full, not half empty.

**The home team.** Remember the expression, "Love the one you're with." The Trail Blazers are the only one—still after all these years, the only major league franchise for the state. When you're the only game in town, it should make loyalty a little easier. So what's not to be grateful for? New coach, new players, new image; time to get onboard. Even Zach Randolph, who can't quite make it to work on time despite his \$84 million contract, makes the adjustment to the team's "new look" a bit easier for old fans. Be grateful for him, that one last reminder of where we've been, and where we never again want to go. Be grateful for that absolute confirmation that money can't buy everything.

There are so many reasons to be thankful for our abundant lives in Oregon. And perhaps what stands out most of all is that many of our problems are "luxury" problems. The vast majority of Oregonians have a roof over their head, food to eat, access to health care and education, and hopeful futures. And Oregonians are big-hearted enough to help those who don't. Independently and individually we are sometimes overwhelmed by the day-to-day problems we face. But standing back, and in light of recent devastating events around the world, it becomes clear that Oregon is an abundant state. Proof of our "problems of abundance" is in the photo on this page. How else to explain a teachers

union lobbyist who spends a career complaining about understaffed classrooms, low pay, poor benefits, and poverty-stricken schools but drives around in a Beamer with vanity plates?

Problems? Maybe. But right about now it beats a cruise in the Caribbean. And for that, we are thankful.