

ADVERTISING

# Letters: Measure 11, salmon plan, Egypt, Oregon school funding

By **Letters to the editor**

on February 15, 2011 at 8:00 PM

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## **Measure 11 convictions**

Regarding the story "Plea bargains blunt Measure 11" (Feb. 14): Is it possible that the reason only one in three defendants who face a mandatory sentence is convicted of a Measure 11 crime is because maybe only one in three is actually guilty? Measure 11 charges can be used by prosecutors to scare people into pleading guilty to a lesser crime, thus resulting in plea bargains.

The Criminal Justice Commission draft report says that seven out of 10 people charged with a Measure 11 crime had never before been convicted of a serious crime and that defendants who retain a private attorney are 30 percent less likely to be convicted of a Measure 11 crime. This leads me to question whether Measure 11 is really being used as voters intended. We pay more money to incarcerate more people, some of whom may only be guilty of the crime of poverty (unable to afford a private attorney), and many of whom do not have prior serious convictions.

I regret voting for Measure 11 and wish instead that we Oregonians invested those much needed dollars in real crime prevention -- our children and their education. It costs much more to incarcerate than to educate.

MICHELLE KAMPSTRA

Troutdale

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"Plea bargains blunt Measure 11" concludes that prosecutors are offering plea bargains involving non-Measure 11 charges to defendants who have, in fact, committed crimes that could have been punished under Measure 11. I am a criminal defense attorney, and I can assure you that prosecutors routinely overcharge. They charge a Measure 11 crime when the evidence is just good enough to get an indictment, but not likely to get a conviction at trial. Then the prosecutor offers a plea bargain for the lesser crime.

Many defendants are afraid to take the gamble of a trial when a loss means a mandatory minimum prison sentence. For a defendant to take a Measure 11 case to trial takes tremendous courage. For a prosecutor to overcharge a case is easy and routine, and it usually results in a plea to a lesser charge.

As to the statement that defendants with private attorneys are 30 percent less likely to be convicted of a Measure 11 crime: The fact is that people who can afford retained counsel are a different group than people who rely on public defenders. They have better family and social connections, and they are likely to have other advantages in plea bargaining, trial preparation and sentencing.

MICHAEL REES  
Southeast Portland

### **Salmon plan**

A lengthy oped on salmon ("The reckoning," Feb. 13) decries the state of the science used in the federal salmon plan before the court and spins conspiracy theories about decisions leading to that plan. While artful and clever, the piece floats untethered from fact. The fact is that the "best available science" is prevailing in the federal plan. Myriad passage improvements are showing results; for instance, last year more sockeye (386,525) returned to the Columbia than any year since Bonneville Dam was built.

Those who have destruction of dams as their mantra are frustrated that this president is now the third to support a reasoned, science-based approach, and that three out of four states and almost all of the tribes in the region agree with the president. Last-ditch exercises in creative writing should not hold much weight with a judge who has played such a personal role in shepherding the creation of this massive science-based effort that commits the region to a path of improvement for these fish far into the future.

SCOTT CORWIN  
Northeast Portland

*Corwin is executive director of the Public Power Council.*

### **Democracy in Egypt**

In 1947, as a GI Bill student at the University of Oregon, I heard Randolph Churchill, member of Parliament and son of Winston Churchill, speak on early postwar challenges for Great Britain and the free world.

Two Egyptian students asked when their country could enjoy self-government free from British military occupation. Churchill excoriated them for their ingratitude at the great progress and stability their protected status gave them.

The editor of our Oregon Daily Emerald condemned Churchill for his insensitivity to the pursuit of freedom by these proud Egyptians. Churchill expressed great dismay that a student newspaper would treat an invited guest so rudely.

PAUL J. NAGEL  
Southwest Portland

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Egypt has shown how to effect change not by using the system but by rendering it useless. When will our own disfigured electoral and legislative apparatus be relieved of its charge?

MATTHEW SPROUL  
Southeast Portland

### **Kudos to Ferrioli**

State Sen. Ted Ferrioli should be commended for focusing on the protection of his Oregon constituents' lives and livelihoods instead of special interest groups ("Wolf input from EU gets Oregon hackles up," Feb. 10).

Every single elected official in Oregon ought to act as if he were elected to watch out for the people of his jurisdiction, whether it is on the city, county, state or federal level.

MARY PACE-WENTZ  
Gladstone

### **Need for speed**

An ironic juxtaposition in Sunday's paper highlights an aspect of society's conflicting attitudes. In the Metro section appeared a piece about Marion County Deputy Ryan Postlewait, who arrested two drivers in less than four hours for speeding in excess of 100 mph on Interstate 5. On the back page of the same section is a quarter-page ad for a charity auction urging people to bid on cars advertised as being capable of going 130 mph.

Don't we have greater priorities than overengineering the vehicles we drive? Since I-5 in the midvalley is wide, flat and straight, I suspect Postlewait will continue to deal with people who insist on endangering the innocent by driving twice the posted speed limit.

LARRY WESTERMAN  
Northwest Portland

### **Oregon's schools**

The governor's education budget plan reminds me of a roofing company that says it could finally succeed in fixing my roof if only it had a little more time and money.

I applaud Steve Duin's column, "Does Oregon need reform or revolution?" (Feb. 13). Just because Gov. Kitzhaber says he won't "kick the can down the road" does not make it so without conviction and a plan. How stupid does the governor think we are? Stupid enough to vote him in for a third term, I suppose.

THOMAS FOY  
Southwest Portland

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