Letters to the editor

**OFRI is vital** The Oregon Legislature should reject a slew of proposed bills that eliminate or de-fund the Oregon Forest Resources Institute. OFRI is the commodity commission for the Oregon forest products sector, one of Oregon’s largest industries, and is virtually identical to more than 20 other grower-supported commodity commissions in Oregon, including the Oregon Blueberry Commission, the Oregon Wine Board and the Oregon Beef Council.

I have seen the benefit of OFRI’s work personally and can say with certainty that without its programming, Oregonian students would be worse off.

I’m a retired business owner and volunteer my time with the local community and Forest Today & Forever. One of OFRI’s three primary program areas is K-12 education, focusing on professional development for teachers, in-class educational programs for students, field-trip transportation reimbursement and grade-level publications for teachers and students that meet or exceed state science standards.

Don’t eliminate OFRI – its funding doesn’t even come from the general public; it comes from forestland owners who pay a tax on timber when it’s harvested in the same way the Oregon Dairy and Nutrition Council is funded by dairy farmers. Do not be misled – OFRI is a vital resource for Oregonians.

*Walter Woliver, Eugene*

**Bring back the severance tax** Thanks for Tuesday’s front page story regarding Wall Street Real Estate Investment Trusts making mincemeat of our forests and climate. They have done well the last 10 years. Revenue growth in September 2020 was 26.3% and December was 33.3%. So yes, Weyerhauser is making money and it appears to be off the backs of rural counties.

Thank you, Paul Holvey for HB 2379, which would reinstate the 5% severance tax. It’s also appropriate that reparations be made to the rural counties of approximately $3 billion. That extraordinary amount of money that could have funded public services the last 20 years. As for job loss: It takes a couple people to run a feller buncher. Timber companies have been eliminating jobs for years.

*Merrie Kelly, Eugene*

**Be gone with climate condescension** Councilor Alan Zelenka likes to tout his climate bona fides, infamously reading his resume at a city council meeting and then chastising youth climate activists for not using the proper tone when discussing the existential threat of the climate crisis. Yet, when the councilor continuously spends more time criticizing his constituents than he does advocating for material solutions to get the city of Eugene off of fossil fuels, we have to ask: Which side is he on?

Zelenka represents what is arguably the most progressive ward in Eugene — a ward made up of primarily young professionals, professors and college students like myself — yet he continues to demonstrate a cold indifference to the dire calls for reform from the progressive left whether it’s regarding climate, housing or policing issues. If you were to ask me, I’d say it’s time that council did more than criticize politically engaged young people — who are inheriting climate chaos — and actually started pushing for the solutions that we so desperately need. If you were to ask me, I’d say it’s time for someone in our ward to primary Zelenka in ‘22 before he has a chance to become the next ineffectual mayor of Eugene.

*Stuart Steidle, Eugene*

**Out of the frying pan** An anti-natural gas stance is not the right direction for Eugene. As a restaurant owner and operator, I see the benefits of...