

ROGUE OF THE WEEK

State Rep. **Tootie Smith** rocketed into the Rogues' Gallery this week for her combination of self-serving hypocrisy and exquisitely poor timing.

Before the holidays, the Republican rookie sent out a cheery letter encouraging lobbyists and fellow legislators to buy wreaths from Meadowbrook Hill Farm, her family's Christmas-tree operation in Mulino.

By sending the sales pitch to lobbyists, who are eager to curry favor with lawmakers, Smith showed a huge lapse in ethical judgment. But it was a subsequent mailing that nudged the Christmas-wreath missive from cluelessness into roguishness.

Having asked Democrats and Republicans alike to support her business, Smith sent out another letter with a decidedly less bipartisan tone on Dec. 13. "We are under attack from the liberal inter-

ests in this state who see us as a roadblock to expanded government and increased taxes," Smith wrote to potential contributors. "As a legislator from rural Oregon, I can tell you that urban legislators and urban special interests oppose our core values and priorities."

A couple of those urban legislators who received invitations to buy wreaths



were miffed to learn about Smith's subsequent letter. "It's disappointing," says Rep. Carolyn Tomei of Milwaukie, who did not buy a wreath from Smith (and probably won't in the future). Rep. Laurie Monnes Anderson of Gresham, who would not divulge whether she bought a wreath, called the fund-raising letter "inappropriate."

Smith sees no conflict between her two mailings. "I fail to see why one has anything to do with the other," she says. "I don't see the problem."

We do. Smith's willingness to exploit urban-rural tensions in a race she's expected to win handily would be lamentable any time. It's made even more maladroit by the fact that she and her legislative colleagues will soon head into a special session. Their efforts to address the state's \$830 million budget deficit, and remain true to their core values, won't be made any easier by Smith's election-year cheap shots.