

USE OUR HEARTS

It will not be long before the IRS levies my bank account. I sadly do not voluntarily pay my federal income taxes. I am a conscientious objector to war taxation. The taxes that I do not pay, I either give to life-giving groups, or put in savings, so that interest can for a time be similarly used. Were federal income taxes truly used to meet the basic, life-giving needs of my country, I would gladly pay my share.

It is a travesty that this wealthy country permits over a million people to be homeless! It is a travesty that so little of our federal income taxes are used for services for vulnerable populations, for infrastructure, public transportation, health care and shelter for all, environmental protection and education.

Instead, the wealth of this country is being used to destroy. From Iraq to nuclear weapons in space, we are causing death, poverty and hatred around the world. The "war on terror" creates terror, and we as a nation are ever more vulnerable. Our precious young adults are losing their lives, their limbs, their health in wars. Our government is trillions of dollars in debt, a debt that will devastate our children and our grandchildren.

My heart yearns for policies of caring and compassion. We cannot rise easily from the morass that we are in. We will have to suffer the consequences of our actions, just as innocent people in many parts of the world now suffer the consequences of our economic and military policies. But we must begin to use our hearts as we formulate and carry out foreign and domestic policies.

*Peg Morton
Eugene*

SUPERIOR CANDIDATE

Proven experience and seasoned skills over many years are qualities my family looks for in a medical doctor, electrician and in our east Lane County commissioner; that's why we will be voting for our current Commissioner Don Hampton.

With more than 20 years in east/south Lane public policy — including five years as local mayor, 10 years as city councilor and one year as our independent voice for rural Lane County on the Board of Commissioners, Don Hampton has been a stabilizing and calming influence. His balance, knowledge and maturity are sorely needed qualities at the courthouse!

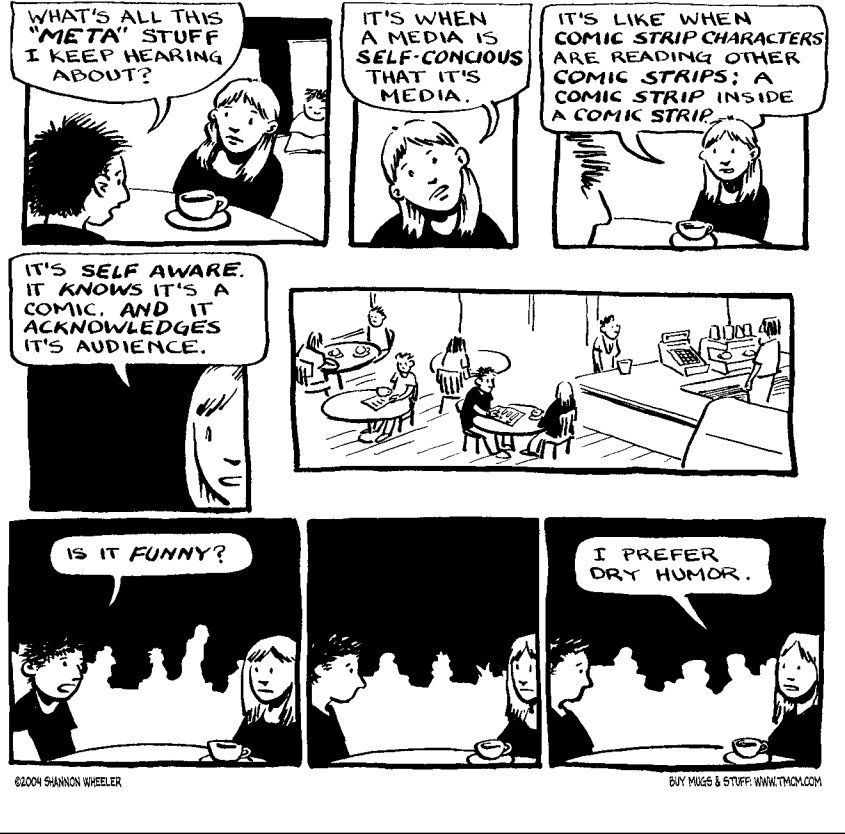
Hampton deserves our vote because he has earned it with his vastly superior experience and record of volunteer county and regional committee service to that of his inexperienced opponent Faye Stewart II — who sadly has not devoted even one single minute of membership on any county-issue committee or task force.

When Lane County is looking at millions of dollars of cuts in vital services, I like Hampton's priorities of public safety and economic development. Hampton's recent success in securing 24/7 deputy patrols and funds to prosecute 1650 felons resulted in virtually no cut (0.71 percent) to the sheriff's budget.

Stewart may be a nice young man, but he should serve on city council or school board before he thinks of running our county government and its sober mix of life and death issues. Hampton is our best bet!

*Alice Doyle
Cottage Grove*

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



VOTE NO ON 37

Reading the "arguments in favor" of Measure 37, one gets the impression that local governments have been inconsistent and unfair in applying land use restrictions to some landowners. Credible, yes. But let's not throw out the baby with the bathwater.

Measure 37 is sweeping in doing away with all land use regulation including local government comprehensive plans, zoning ordinances, land division ordinances and transportation ordinances. In the post-37 Oregon,

nothing can prevent your neighbor from building a motorcycle park or a drug addict halfway house next to your property. What would that do for your property values?

We enjoy living in Oregon because its cities have residential neighborhoods separate from commercial, institutional and industrial activities, and because our forest and farmlands are protected from incompatible development. The Voters Pamphlet (p. 103) states that currently the Oregon Constitution already requires government to pay "just

viewpoint BY JODIE L. WIZE RN, BSN

We Need Real Reform

Eugene nurse opposes Constitutional Amendment 35.

As a nurse, I've dedicated my life to helping people. In my current role as a consultant, I talk daily with people who are trying to understand why their medical care went so wrong. Sometimes there are no clear answers, however, there are times when it is clear in the record that a patient has suffered an egregious medical error.

These are the people who have been seriously injured by the negligence of a health care practitioner. These are the people who would be most directly affected by the passage of Constitutional Amendment 35. I'm opposed to this change in Oregon's Constitution because it will hurt the very patients I have dedicated my career to helping.

For those who have not studied this issue, I think it's important to first look at the language of Amendment 35. It says, "Limits noneconomic damages recoverable for patient injuries caused by health care provider's *negligence or recklessness*."

Notice the words "negligence or recklessness." Oregonians are being asked to approve an amendment that would protect health care providers who are negligent or reckless.

There's *no* language here providing that insurance rates will go down. *No* language that says health care will become less expensive or that access to health care will improve.

It is clear why the insurance companies advance these proposals: It limits their expenses when a provider does something negligent or reckless. I just can't believe they would ask Oregonians to change our Constitution to help the insurance companies generate greater profits.

Four years ago, Oregon voters overwhelmingly said "no thanks" to a similar measure sponsored by the insurance industry. I hope voters can see through this proposal and again send the message that this approach is the wrong solution.

Amendment 35 proposes a constitutional limit of \$500,000 in non-economic damages. Cases that get to this level are extremely rare. But they happen. And when you're

talking about brain damage, birth defects or severe permanent injury, sometimes \$500,000 is not enough. These are quality-of-life issues. Juries should make those decisions on a case-by-case basis, not insurance executives using a one-size-fits-all approach.

Sponsors of this measure claim malpractice rates have created an exodus of doctors from Oregon, causing a "crisis." That's just not true. In fact, a study out this year — based on figures from the Oregon Board of Medical Examiners — found the number of Oregon doctors actually increased 11 percent between 2000 and 2004.

Sponsors also claim rural doctors are leaving. Again, not true. Last year, the Legislature created a new fund to help rural doctors pay their malpractice premiums. The fund was set up in January and two-thirds of rural doctors are now receiving help — up to 80 percent of their premiums are reimbursed. Let's give this bipartisan solution a chance to work before we limit people's rights with a change in our Constitution.

I know there are states where limits have passed. And guess what? They don't work to reduce the cost of insurance. From 1991 to 2002, rates went up 48 percent in states that had adopted caps. Rates also went up in states without limits, but not as much.

We're lucky in Oregon to have so many excellent nurses and doctors. But we also have a few bad ones. The National Practitioner Data Bank reports that only 5 percent of physicians are responsible for a majority of medical malpractice cases.

I'd like to do something more in this space than just oppose this Constitutional Amendment. So here's something that sounds a lot more like a solution to malpractice rates. It's called insurance reform. Let's ask insurance companies to open their books and tell the public how they justify rate increases. The PUC holds hearings on utility rate increases — why can't we do the same thing with insurance companies? If we want real insurance reform — let's direct our efforts at just that — insurance reform.

On behalf of all patients and all Oregonians, I'm voting no on Constitutional Amendment 35.

Jodie Wize of Pleasant Hill earned her RN from LCC and her bachelor's of science and nursing from OHSU. She has been working as a nurse for 18 years. She currently works in Eugene as a nurse consultant.