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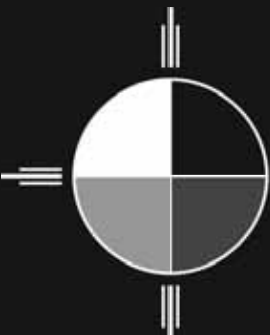


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**SLANT**

• April Fools was the day that U.S. District Court Judge Michael Hogan announced a **possible settlement in the Seneca timber-funded lawsuit** against county commissioners Rob Handy and Pete Sorenson. If Coos County Circuit Judge Michael Gillespie accepts the mediation brokered by Hogan and Lane Circuit Judge Lyle Velure, then the county pays the plaintiffs and/or Seneca and other secret backers of the political lawsuit \$350,000 in attorneys' fees. After wasting \$600,000 in county money, the lawsuit's perpetrators would then "donate" \$75,000 of the settlement back to county public safety services. Handy and Sorenson would each pay the county \$20,000 in attorneys' fees over three years but admit no fault. The good news is that the absurd finding of "willful" misconduct by Handy and Sorenson for violating a future novel interpretation of the public meetings law would be removed. The bad news is that there would be a declaration that the county violated public meetings law and Gillespie's strange ruling on emails and "serial meetings," rather than helping keep the doings of our public officials in the light, will continue to make it unclear what sort of communication they can have.

What's the take-away lesson from all of this? The serial meeting "misconduct" described in the lawsuit has been routinely practiced by conservative elected officials for decades. The only difference is that Handy and Sorenson worked for the public interest and pissed off some people with deep pockets to fund a lawsuit.

• Did someone put a **"KICK ME" sign on the back of the nation's teachers?** As they turn to the blackboard to do their tough jobs, they're getting pummeled from class clowns. Even the normally good kids are joining in on the abuse, launching spitball after spitball. Enough is enough. Settle down and learn something about the facts as demonstrated by copious research. Teachers aren't overpaid. They have far more education but earn far less than firefighters, prison guards or cops and have far more accountability. They didn't go into teaching to get rich. Charter schools aren't inherently superior to public schools. Standardized tests distract from actually learning. Bubble tests measure student income and parental education levels better than they measure teacher performance. Class size and funding matters, just ask the expensive private schools. China's illiteracy rate is 10 times higher than the U.S. Just because you are a billionaire and went to high school yourself doesn't make you an expert on education. Just because you are a Democrat or Republican politician and went to school yourself doesn't make you an expert on education, despite your urge to demagogue the issue. The teachers can and should defend themselves from all this bashing, they are adults. What we're worried about is the kids. With so much time and effort wasted on the politicians and high-tech and hedge fund billionaires shooting the "reform" spitballs, it's getting hard to actually learn.

• Is it just us, or have **Legislatures across the country gone wild?** As Obama announces his reelection bid, we can only hope that the wellspring of silly bills cropping up sounds a death knell for the Tea Party. Oregon's House passed a resolution calling for Oregon to adopt the 10 principles of the "Code of the West," leaving us wondering just what is involved if you "ride for the brand?" In Florida, the Republican-dominated House has banned the word "uterus" from being spoken. Apparently while they debate a bill that would make a woman look at ultrasound of her fetus before having an abortion they will refer to the offending part as "the baby garage." Meanwhile back in Oregon, Repub Sen. Ted Ferrioli's bid to make the border collie the state dog is languishing in the Senate General Government Consumer and Small Business Protection Committee.

On the national level, the GOP has introduced bills that would prevent environmental nonprofits from recovering legal fees when they successfully sue under the Equal Access to Justice Act or the Endangered Species Act. Hey, Tea Party, we thought you wanted a more accountable government, what gives?

• This month Boise kicks off a drive to raise \$500,000 to \$1 million for what the *Boise Statesman* calls a permanent, **covered space for a public farmers market downtown**. Their dream building "would mean a longer season and provide offices, restaurants, a commercial kitchen, cold storage and more. Sounds like the conversation we should be having in Eugene. "Locally grown" in the Willamette Valley is more exciting than "locally grown" in the Magic Valley.

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