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Subscription \$42 per year in Hood River trade area. \$68 outside trade area.



NATIONAL NEWSPAPER
ASSOCIATION

OREGON NEWSPAPER
PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION

Printed on recycled paper.

Official Newspaper, City of Hood River and Hood River County
Published Every Wednesday & Saturday by Hood River News,
P.O. Box 390, Hood River, Oregon 97031 • (541) 386-1234 • FAX 386-6796

Governor's Exit

Kitzhaber served well, but now serves by ending the distraction — for now

The circumstances surrounding Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber's decision to leave office today remain cloudy at best, but the governor made the right move. Kitzhaber was simply a distraction at a time when state lawmakers need focus.

Kitzhaber and his fiancée Cylvia Hayes are part of a federal criminal investigation, as well as an Oregon Department of Justice criminal investigation. The baggage of those investigations prompted requests by Senate President Peter Courtney and House Speaker Tina Kotek for the governor to resign because he was a liability.

Kitzhaber admitted as much during his resignation statement. "I understand that I have become a liability to the very institutions and policies to which I have dedicated my career and, indeed, my entire adult life. As a former presiding officer, I fully understand the reasons for which I have been asked to resign."

Among the charges: that Hayes benefited financially from her personal relationship with the governor (and thusly, that Kitzhaber also benefitted because they were living in the same household); and that Hayes didn't properly disclose all the consulting fees she had been paid.

Part of Kitzhaber's legacy will be determined when the criminal and ethics investigations are complete. Despite that outcome, Oregon's only four-term governor should be remembered, in part, for his ability to cross the political aisles that often ground the state's governing process to a halt.

Things were hardly amicable within the marbled walls of the Capitol during Kitzhaber's first two terms as governor. But the past four years things have brought about marked improvement in this regard, and more of a collaborative atmosphere in Salem — for that, Kitzhaber deserves at least partial credit.

That said, nobody — not even, arguably, the most popular governor in Oregon history — is above the law. There should be no pardons — no backroom deals in the criminal and/or ethics investigations. If he is true to his word; if he has the deepest respect for that office; that's how Kitzhaber himself would want this situation to play out.

WHERE TO E-MAIL

For letters to the editor, guest columns, news items and press releases, the e-mail address is:

HRNews@hoodrivernews.com

For e-mail letters to the editor, please include your name, address and daytime telephone number.

Our readers write

See 'Full Monty'

Over the past few years, thanks especially to the Columbia Center for the Arts, HRVHS, and the Hood River Middle School, we've been offered excellent theatrical productions focusing on women and our body images, our insecurities, and ultimately our self-acceptance.

Some of the stories shared or enacted have been tragic, some comic. Currently we have the opportunity to see body image, self-acceptance, and much more through the lens of male experience ... in the very adult comedy playing for two more weekends at the CAST Theatre, "The Full Monty." Opening night last Friday brought a lively audience to its feet, and rightly so.

Kudos to director Bruce Ludwig, a terrific cast (with some very brave men in the spotlight!), great musicians, and ingenious crew. Stereotypes around race, class, gender roles and sexual orientation are surfaced by the story ... and transcended. Love of family and friends is the bedrock theme.

In case all this sounds too serious, the bottom line is "It's a hoot." If you're a grownup with a sense of humor, don't miss "The Full Monty." Once again, our dedicated all-volunteer arts community enriches us.

Tina Castañares
Odell

Nestle clarification

In response to a recent letter on the proposed Nestle Waters project in Cascade Locks, I want to clarify misperceptions and reiterate our invitation to address questions and comments from anyone interested in the project.

Nestlé Waters is not an applicant in the water rights process, and under either the Cross Transfer or Exchange, all water rights would remain with public entities — no water rights go to our company.

Claims have been made that the cross transfer process would eliminate the opportunity for the public to discuss and/or protest this project.

That is not the case. The cross transfer is another regulatory option that still provides for public input while reducing staff time and re-

sources spent on the process. This includes, but is not limited to, a 30-day public comment period after the applications are first filed and a 30-day protest period on the preliminary determination to address any assertions of injury to existing water rights. All the entities involved in the proposed project — the City, ODFW and Nestlé Waters — are conducting due diligence to ensure the project makes sense, operationally, environmentally and economically.

Since we first came to Cascade Locks in 2008, we've worked with a wide range of stakeholders to answer questions and address concerns. We believe strongly in transparency and have worked continuously to keep the residents of Cascade Locks and other stakeholders informed through six town hall meetings and one community newsletter to date, as well as a project website (nestlewaters-pnw.com), toll-free phone number at 1-877-441-0444 and frequent office hours in Cascade Locks.

We have a strong positive track record in the communities where we operate, and representatives from those communities including Kingfield, Maine and Mecosta, Mich., have independently noted that our hiring practices reflect the promises we made during the project planning phase. We have always tried to be as direct and forthright as possible with information on this project, and remain available for questions and comments from the public.

David Palais, Nestle
Redding, CA.

Thankful for vaccines

I read the measles vaccination report with great interest.

As one born in 1934, I was expected to have and indeed did have measles, mumps, and chicken pox in first, second, and third grades. There were no vaccinations in those days. The recoveries were in dimly lit rooms to protect your eyes, with bad-tasting medicines and warnings of "Don't scratch!"

Then came the vaccines, And by then our age group were having children.

And we didn't want our kids to have to go through what we went through. We had had firsthand experience.

Our kids grew up with no firsthand knowledge and only our direct parental experiences to fill them in.

And now, many years later, our kids have kids and we have grandkids who have never really seen or heard about these all-but-eliminated diseases.

The point of the article is that more education is needed. This is, in my opinion, absolutely right. I am afraid that because the diseases are not seen as common occurrences, they have been relegated to the status of "not a problem" or "a vaccination is worse than the disease."

Will polio (formerly "infantile paralysis") be the next disease to have its vaccination deemed unnecessary?

Dick Swart
Hood River

100 percent immunity

The article (Feb. 14) on measles and "herd immunity" is somewhat misleading. Parents who choose not to vaccinate their children might assume that as long as 95 percent of the Hood River community is vaccinated, their children are safe.

But, actually their risk is greater. Anti-vaccine families tend to cluster together — going to the same schools, belonging to similar groups — so their risk is significantly higher. If a measles outbreak begins among these families, their children are more likely to get it and to pass it on to others.

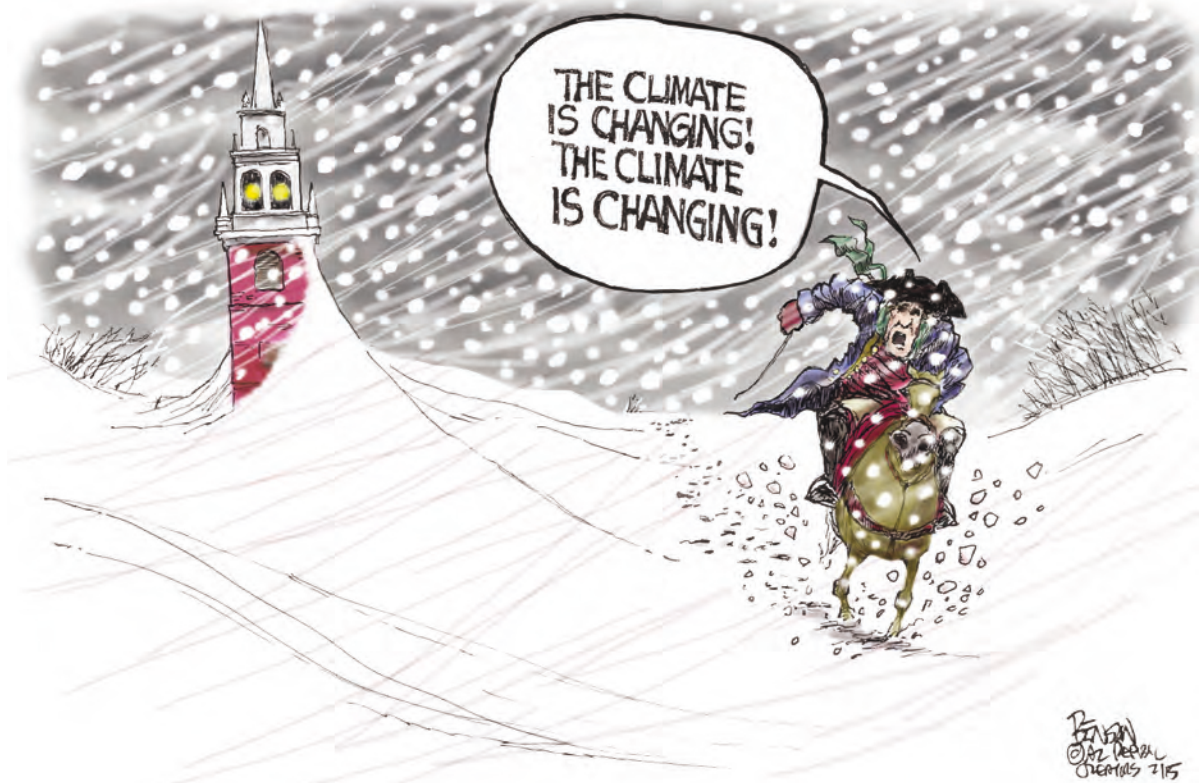
For more on this topic, and why this "goal" of 95 percent underestimates what's really needed (a goal of 100 percent), Google "Washington post, marcel salathe."

Measles is a highly contagious, serious disease. A personal example: I had it when I was about six, before the vaccine was available. It permanently closed one of my Eustachian tubes resulting impaired hearing, numerous infections, eardrum lancing, mastoiditis, and major surgery. In a way, I was lucky.

The complications can include pneumonia, fits or convulsions, mental retardation, and inflammation of the brain (encephalitis), hospitalization, and death.

The right message is 100 percent "Community Immunity." Let's do it Hood River!

Lawrence Jones
Hood River



ANOTHER VOICE

Assessing a new opportunity for improving Oregon education

By NANCY GOLDEN

Oregon Chief Education Officer

As Chief Education Officer, one of my roles is to listen to feedback about what is working well and where there are opportunities to improve our systems to better support students. One of the concerns often voiced as I travel across the state is about over-testing.

As many of you know, Oregon's current system of assessment is largely based on one significant test at the end of the year. This assessment offers valuable information to use as we set state priorities, but doesn't offer any real-time indication of student comprehension or effectively support educator instruction.

In response to the concern about over-testing, I worked in partnership with the Oregon Education Association to convene a group of teachers and school administrators from across the state along with leaders from the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and a national expert on assessment, to propose an "ideal" system of assessment for both students and educators.

The group has met regularly over the last year to examine current assessment practice in Oregon as well as strategies used in

other states and ultimately worked towards a co-created shared vision for assessment that beset supports students and educators.

We've written a white paper from which came a list of 12 recommendations that span policy, systems building and educators' professional development and effectiveness. I believe that we have a tremendous opportunity to weave assessment more deeply knot the teaching and learning process to more effectively meet the needs of each learner in real time. Through a variety of approaches we are recommending a shift to a more balanced system, of assessment where formative (while teaching is happening) and interim assessments are conducted more often to support teaching and learning.

Over the course of the next few months we'll be engaging extensively with stakeholders and educators across the state seeking feedback on the preliminary recommendations and a proposed timeline for implementation.

This work presents a critical opportunity to take the steps necessary to ensure the success of every student in our state. It represents our commitment to make the systemic changes necessary to close the opportunity gap and support our educators in being more effective in their practice.

I am grateful to the educators, state leaders and in particular, OEA President Hanna Vaandering who contributed countless hours toward this important work.

According to Golden, the draft recommendations identify factors to consider in transitioning to a new system of assessment for student learning, developed by members from Oregon Education Association (OEA), Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB), Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and school district advisors. (See education.oregon.gov the full text of the recommendations.)

Recommendation 1: Advocate and prepare for reauthorization of ESEA that allows states to develop a system of assessment that truly supports student learning through greater emphasis on "valid, reliable and unbiased high quality classroom, interim assessments and addresses the role of accountability in the system."

Recommendation 2: Support the "Student's Assessment Bill of Rights" to ensure students know and understand the purpose of assessments...

Recommendation 3: Develop, fund, and implement extensive professional development, with a commitment to a multiyear program, to develop and enhance as-

essment literacy of educators ...

Recommendation 4: Create a taskforce to conduct an audit of the type and number of assessments currently administered in Oregon schools.

Recommendation 5: Advocate for state and federal funds to initiate and maintain statewide classroom and interim assessment banks for formative and summative use.

Recommendation 6: Invest in the technology necessary to administer high quality formative, interim and summative assessments focused on learning not just for administering standardized tests, and to ensure students have access to technology for college and career readiness.

Recommendation 7: Examine the current state of accommodations for special education students, English language learners, and other populations of diverse students to determine the impact of the additional testing and determine an appropriate level of assessment for every subgroup of students, constructing a new system of assessment

Recommendation 8: Research the feasibility of reducing the frequency of administering the annual statewide standardized summative assessment while ensuring accurate yearly disaggregated data by subgroups ...

Recommendation 9: Advocate for state and federal funds to develop and use high quality formative and interim assessments chosen by educators from a menu of options vetted at the state and district level that meet the needs of their students and high standards of quality ...

Recommendation 10: Allow high school students to opt-in to the Math or ELA section(s) of the Smarter Balanced Assessment earlier than 11th grade so that they take the assessment as it coincides with their actual academic course load ...

Recommendation 11: Enhance and expand options to demonstrate essential skills. Determine if other measures of essential skills exist and promote them as options for students.

Recommendation 12: Suspend the use of Smarter Balance Assessment results during 2015 for school ratings on report cards, but allow students to use their 2015 ... results to demonstrate Essential Skills for high school graduation and allow for comprehensive analysis of Smarter Balance to determine the value in relation to student learning. Continue to suspend the use of Smarter Balance Assessment results for educator evaluation during 2015-16 while developing a more balanced system of assessment.