

EDITORIALS

Kindergarten tests leave us wondering

Kindergarteners statewide were tested during the first few weeks of school in September. Last week, the Oregon Department of Education released the results of those tests.

The assessment is intended to show where kids are on the first day of entering the public school system, more of an analysis of pre-kindergarten education than anything having to do with K-12.

Children are given simple math problems and asked to answer them. Their score reflects how many they got right out of 16. They are then shown a sheet of 100 English letters, including duplicates, uppercase and lowercase letters. The teacher points to a letter and notes if the child can recall the name of the letter. However many they can recall in 60 seconds is their score. State average for this test is 17.7. So, on average, Oregon children can recall 68 percent of the alphabet.

Having such a large choice for letters and sounds seems unreasonable. Even when using both lowercase and uppercase letters, why not give children just 52 choices?

ODE representatives say children are not expected to score 100 on these tests — even though two Oregon kindergarteners did score 100 — but that is how the score is listed: 0-100.

We wonder about the methodology and timing of an assessment such as this. Because the results aren't released until halfway through the school year, most of our local teachers cannot use the information to guide curriculum. They continue, instead, to do what kindergarten teachers have done for decades: their own assessments.

The state and our public schools are so obsessed with testing and assessments, we wonder if they are not failing our children. It makes us long for the days of stressing the three Rs, "Sesame Street" and "School House Rock."

PUBLIC AGENDA

Public Agenda is a listing of upcoming meetings for governmental and nongovernmental agencies in Polk County. To submit a meeting, send it at least two weeks before the actual meeting date to the *Itemizer-Observer* via fax (503-623-2395) or email (kholland@polkio.com).

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 21

• **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.

• **Polk County Extension Service District Board** — 12:30 p.m., Polk County-OSU Extension Service Office, 289 E. Ellendale Ave., Suite 301, Dallas. 503-623-8395.

• **Polk County Public Safety Local Option Tax Hearing** — 6 p.m., Monmouth Public Library, 168 Ecols St. E., Monmouth. Polk County Board of Commissioners-hosted public forum to discuss proposed countywide public safety levy. 503-623-8173.

• **Luckiamute Valley Charter School Board** — 6:30 p.m., Luckiamute Valley Charter Schools, Bridgeport Campus, 17475 Bridgeport Road, Dallas. 503-623-4837.

• **Monmouth Planning Commission** — 7 p.m., Volunteer Hall, 144 S. Warren St., Monmouth. 503-838-0722.

THURSDAY, JAN. 22

• **Polk County Public Safety Local Option Tax Hearing** — 6 p.m., Chemeketa Viticulture Center, 215 Doaks Ferry Road NW, West Salem. Polk County Board of Commissioners-hosted public forum to discuss proposed countywide public safety levy. 503-623-8173.

FRIDAY, JAN. 23

• **Polk County Health Advisory Board** — Noon, Academy Building, Room 214, 182 SW Academy St., Dallas. 503-623-9289, ext. 2332.

MONDAY, JAN. 26

• **Dallas School Board** — 2:30 p.m., Oakdale Heights Elementary School, 1375 SW Maple St., Dallas. 503-623-9664, ext. 2334.

• **Independence Library Board** — 4 p.m., Independence Public Library, 175 Monmouth St., Independence. 503-838-1811.

TUESDAY, JAN. 27

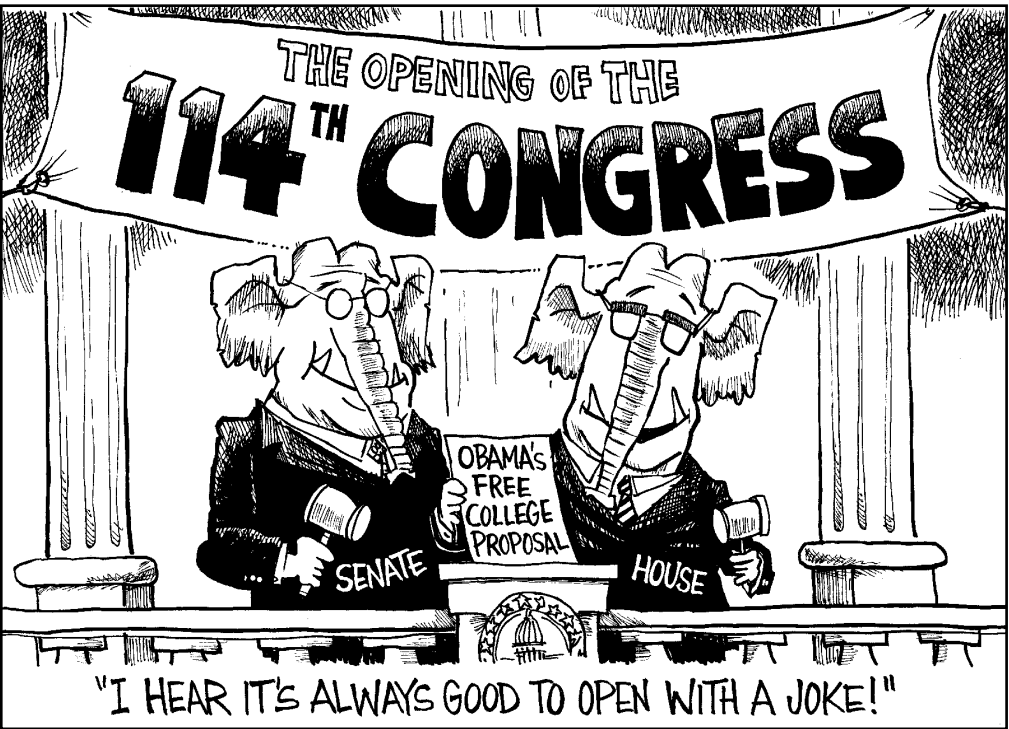
• **Independence City Council** — 7:30 a.m., Independence Civic Center, 555 S. Main St., Independence. 503-838-1212.

• **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.

• **Polk County Public Safety Local Option Tax Hearing** — 6 p.m., Roth's Fresh Market, 1130 Wallace Road NW, West Salem. Polk County Board of Commissioners-hosted public forum to discuss proposed countywide public safety levy. 503-623-8173.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 28

• **Polk County Board of Commissioners** — 9 a.m., Polk County Courthouse, 850 Main St., Dallas. 503-623-8173.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Public safety levy must get on ballot

Someone is trying to break into your house. You call 9-1-1. The person says, "sorry, there's no one on duty to respond." Wait, it's only 11 o'clock (a.m. or p.m. — doesn't matter).

A drunken driver nearly sideswipes you as he or she weaves from lane to lane well over the speed limit. You pull over, stop and report it only to receive the same response.

An apprehended felon does not get prosecuted because the district attorney's office does not have adequate staff.

The foregoing may sound like the plot for a scary movie. It's not. It is reality.

Polk County public safety funds are at an all-time low. There are too few patrol officers to cover the county full time. There are too few prosecutors to handle what arrests are made.

The remedy for this situation is relatively simple — get the public safety levy on the ballot for the May election. Proposed cost is 45 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Do the math. On a \$200,000 home, that would be \$90 per year. That's 25 cents a day, folks. Pretty inexpensive for peace of mind.

For all the facts, attend one of the commissioner hearings on the issue being held in the next week (see schedule under "Public Agenda" on this page).

*Russ Noll
West Salem*

Don't blame police for recent car thefts

This is in response to the letter "Public responsible for crime in area" (Jan. 7 *Itemizer-Observer*).

I believe that the residents of Polk County are tired of having their taxes increased to fund public safety measures. When the county would like to sit down and disclose what it spends its money on and why it is short when it comes to having 24/7 patrols on the street, then the citizens of Polk County may just pass your public safety measure.

To blame the sheriff's office for the theft of these two Toyota trucks is wrong. These were stolen within the city limits. This would be Dallas Police Department's jurisdiction. I do believe that the officers of Dallas do a fantastic job preventing

crime in the Dallas area, but again can't be everywhere at the same time.

It is great to blame the police in the time of reduced patrols, but let's look at the circumstances as to when and how these trucks were stolen. I am sure it came to a great shock to the owners, but yet did they contribute to the reason these trucks were stolen?

In times of shorten patrols, we must come together as a community and start policing our own neighborhoods while at the same time we should stop using this as a scare tactic to vote in a levy to raise our taxes for increased patrols.

*David Christensen
Independence*

Wrestling event at DHS was first-rate

At a time when we often hear from correspondents regarding what our schools are not doing right, along comes the Brunner Invitational Wrestling Tournament, held Jan. 10 at Dallas High School, to prove just the opposite.

The tournament featured several of the state's top teams from recent seasons, including Dallas, Crook County and Willamina. An abundance of great wrestlers were competing.

However, the most impressive aspect of the event, named to honor Janet Brunner, arguably the best wrestling tournament director ever, was the atmosphere of good sportsmanship and positive attitudes. Everything about the tournament was first-rate: wrestling, coaching and officiating — even the clam chowder, among other items at the concession table — was top-notch.

Alice Bibler did a wonderful job as tournament director. Coach Tony Olliff and his staff did their share in insuring a positive atmosphere.

*Well done, DHS.
Paul Mannen
Dallas*

No excuse for not supporting levy idea

I view citizen refusal to fund countywide law enforcement to be a self-centered logically flawed excuse perpetrated by those who seek local government flexibility or personal political power at the expense of other county residents. Polk County residents can no

longer wait for someone else to pay for our law enforcement services.

Yes, there are those of you who view a public safety property tax levy as a pig in a poke. The excuses I have heard include:

- Let someone else pay for county services — community responsibilities are not mine.

- At the final hour someone else, federal grants or increased timber harvest severance taxes, will once again fund Polk County public safety services as they have in the past — wishful magical thinking.

- There really are adequate funds tucked away to support Polk County public safety needs — distrust and flawed information.

- I have been the victim of an unjust application of the law by county law enforcement personnel, so I refuse to support any public safety tax measure — injustice collecting.

- Increases in property taxes are never a good thing — anti-government thinking.
- I am land rich but cash poor — cannot afford \$90 more a year on a \$200,000 home to fund the sheriff, the district attorney, parole/probation, the county jail, etc.

Sadly, such reasoning does not bring back the levels of law enforcement and public safety the citizens of Polk County deserve. Join me and support law enforcement and public safety in Polk County by asking our county commissioners to once again submit a public safety levy to Polk County voters.

*E.M. Easterly
West Salem*

Warm clothing drive a success

We would like to thank all the people who made our "Warm & Fuzzy" clothing drive for 2014 so successful.

Every year we are amazed at the generosity and the amount of warm clothing that is donated for those in need in Polk County. We received coats, sweaters, hats, gloves, scarves, socks and cash to buy needed things to make someone's winter warmer.

Thank you Starlite Lanes staff for once again allowing your business to serve as a drop site for our mission.

*Deb Darr
Falls City*

(More LETTERS, Page 5A)

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