

Evans to discuss higher ed, veterans

Itemizer-Observer staff report

MONMOUTH — Rep. Paul Evans (D-District 20) will speak on "Higher Education in Oregon" at a town hall discussion at Western Oregon University, Werner University Center, Willamette Room.

The event, sponsored by WOU's Department of Communication Studies and the Department of Political Science, will be from 7 to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday.

A 1992 graduate of WOU, Evans has taught at a variety of campuses around Oregon, including Portland State University, Chemeketa Community College and WOU.

The event is free and open to the public.

On Monday, from 6 to 7 p.m., Evans will host a community wide veterans forum at the Monmouth Senior Center, 180 Warren St. S.

The primary purpose of the forum is to hear from organizations and citizens who support veterans issues, to listen to their concerns and to share ideas on what the nation, state and community can do better — and how to achieve it.

For more information: 503-986-1420.

Vote: Variety of concerns will influence how people vote on public safety levy on May 19

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It would cost a property owner with a home with an assessed value of \$150,000 about \$67.50 per year to restore those positions.

Opponents for the measure say there's a good portion of the county's property owners who can't afford even that amount.

Dallas lawyer Steve Mannenbach, an outspoken opponent of the measure, says he has a number of clients in that position.

"Those people, in my opinion, are the ones who will be hurt most," he said. "There a lot of those people in Polk County."

Mannenbach said he also believes residents of Polk County are already paying a high sum in taxes, from all taxing districts, not just the county, and is concerned the measure simply isn't affordable. He also is leery of the Board of Commissioners verbal promise to levy less to offset federal timber subsidy money.

"Oral statements aren't binding if it is not written into the measure," he said. "If they won't put it in writing, I see a serious issue."

Wheeler said the board will stand by its word on lowering the levy once the



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Neighbors countywide have different opinions.

final timber payment figures are known.

"We've made that promise all the way through," she said. "We will stick to that promise."

Like Mannenbach, Dallas resident Wendy Snodgrass will be voting no on the measure with others on her mind. Snodgrass said at one time, she was a single mother, and paying the addition-

al taxes would have been a hardship on her family then. She added the levy would be a burden to those on fixed incomes.

"These are real situations," she said. "Times are tough. We have a responsibility to take care of the elderly. There's got to be another way."

Snodgrass suggested the county could try to work with its employee unions to

save money. Mannenbach said he believes the county should focus more on economic development.

Commissioner Craig Pope said attracting business, while important to the future of the county, takes more time than the region's public safety system has now.

County Administrator Greg Hansen said landing new businesses, especially those that will employ a lot of people and build facilities that will increase the tax base, often require up-front concessions, including property tax breaks.

"You see the benefit of the jobs in that, but you don't see the benefit of a lot of property tax generation," Hansen said.

Pope pointed out property taxes are what the county has to live on.

"We've had people challenge us, 'Why aren't you doing those things?'" Pope said. "Because those are much bigger, much more challenging. The levy process is the first step. You ask you community, if that is what they accept. If it's not, you go after the next bigger problem."

If the levy fails, the county's budget will be status quo. Funding from recently approved timber payments will be used to pay for staffing where it is needed most.

Ultimately, it will be for voters to decide.

"Our job is to ask voters what they want us to do," Wheeler said. "If they are satisfied with the way things are now, then that is one thing. But if they are not, especially with the 10-hour coverage, then we need to do something."

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