

EDITORIALS

Are you ready for disaster?

It's not too late, but don't delay

The time to get ready is now. We may not know when the Cascadia subduction zone off the Pacific Northwest Coast will go, but we know when it does, it won't be pretty. Federal, state and local officials are taking the threat seriously and playing catch up to prepare for it. Residents living in the areas that will be most affected by earthquake, including the Willamette Valley, should do the same. If you need extra motivation to prepare for a threat that doesn't have a specific due date, consider this: in 10,000 years of history, the "really big one" has occurred on average every 243 years.

The last quake of that magnitude was in 1700 — 315 years ago. In a sense, we are existing on borrowed time as the fault line has remained calm. This isn't to frighten you, but inspire you to think about your family, your home and to make a plan.

What should be a terrifying thought is realizing you don't know where your loved ones are after the quake, if they are OK and how you can get to them. Add to that the fact that if you are able to find your family, you only have what is on hand at your home to sustain you through what could be an extended crisis. Help will not be on the way for most people. Without supplies, the reality is you will probably be evacuated to an unknown location, possibly out of state. Remember Katrina?

Local officials and those who have already begun preparing urge you not to think of it as gathering everything you need at once, but thoughtfully planning for what would work best for your family.

There are plenty of resources available to help you prepare. The American Red Cross and www.ready.gov are good places to start.

But it really begins with a conversation. Talk your family, make planning a priority. When and if the time comes, you will be glad you did.

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 (ionews@polkio.com).

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 23

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

MONDAY, SEPT. 28

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

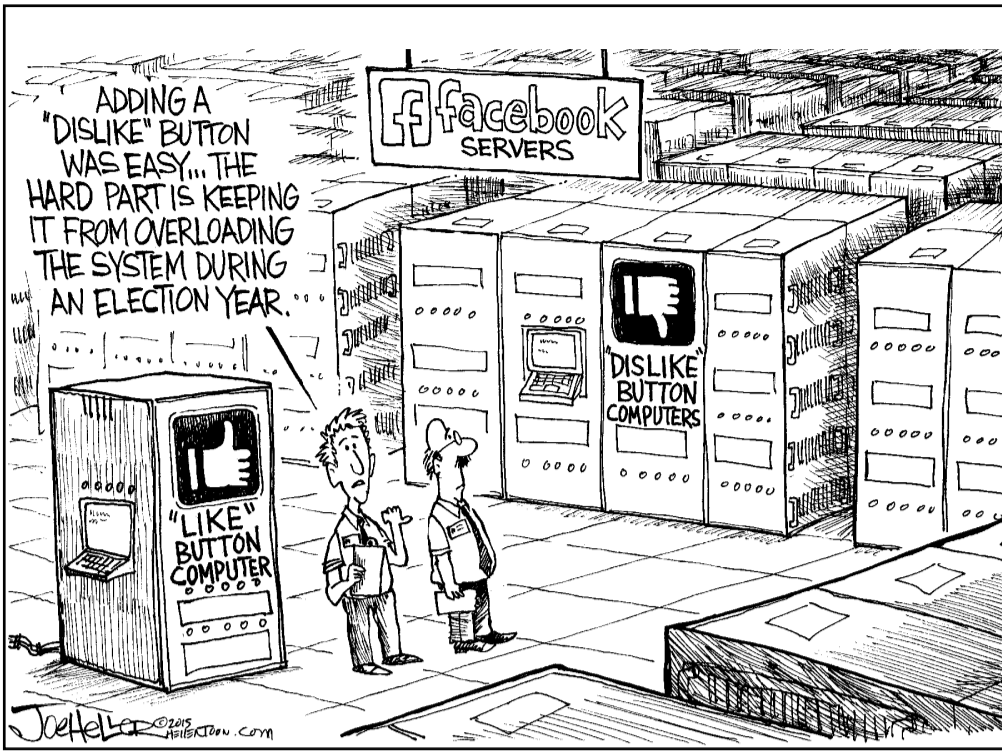
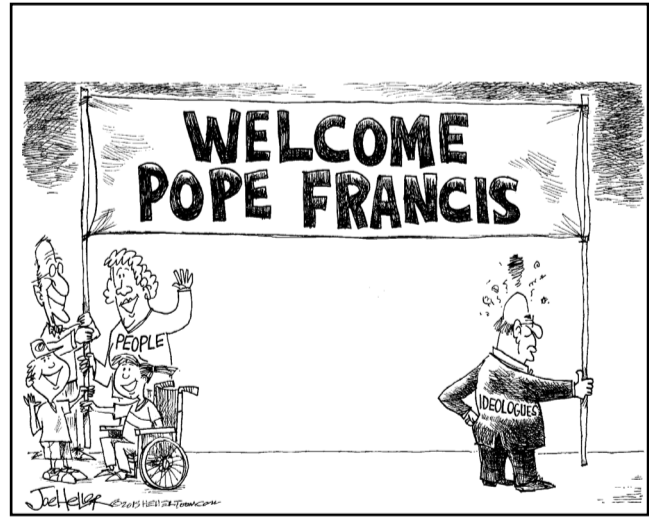
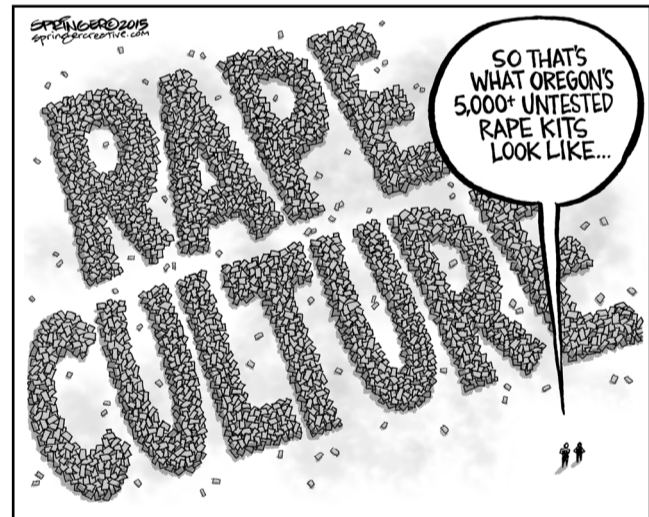
TUESDAY, SEPT. 29

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

• **Monmouth and Independence joint city council meeting** — 7 p.m., Polk County Fire District No. 1 Station 90, 1800 Monmouth St., Independence, on the border of the two cities. 503-838-1212 or 503-838-0722.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 30

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



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sanders shows he is progressive

We believe President Barack Obama has been a very good president, considering the catastrophic mess he inherited from the Cheney-Bush administration.

Among many problems, Harvard University's Kennedy School has estimated that the Iraq and Afghanistan wars will ultimately cost we taxpayers \$4 trillion to \$6 trillion. Regrettably, the "Tea Publicion" Party shows no inclination to pay this debt. It is true that Obama Care is not good enough. It should be single-payer (Medicare E for everyone who is a legal U.S. citizen). Taking the profits out of health care would create many economic benefits. Employers would not have to pay for expensive health insurance.

Of course, there is no "free lunch." All participants would be required to make some payments, like we currently on Medicare do now. Bernie Sanders is one of our current progressive leaders who believes in this system.

Walden and Betty Joura
Dallas

Commissioners out of touch with public

As a tenured public servant to those with disabilities in Polk County, a home owner/taxpayer, and mother of three, it's my intent to raise concerns regarding issues created as a result of an out of touch county commission. I hope that more civic engagement and support for public service workers will result due to my outreach.

My concerns, which mirror the concerns of the majority of my coworkers, are as follows:

Recent changes created by the Affordable Care Act have adversely impacted Polk County public service workers. Under the conditions required by Obama Care, which increased people who qualify for Medicaid by one-third of its previous level, county workers have greater obligations to see more clients and increased workload associated with each client.

These workload increases have come with additions to county funding from the state. The county's budget increased by almost 19 percent this year — the mental health budget alone of \$10.9 million last year changed to a little over \$14 million during this fiscal year.

While finances and workload have increased, Polk County commissioners run operations with little input/concern for the interest of the public.

In previous years, these caseworkers took cuts to staffing and minimal wage adjustments; far lower than many county law enforcement employees, with the intent of saving jobs and ensuring enough social services were available to those in need.

Currently, commissioners plan to deal with the addition in work requirements and caseload by providing inexperienced temporary workers and increased management. Their plan also includes providing the highest percentage raises to levy-funded law enforcement positions. The county's leadership is prepared to force requirements on its social service providers over ob-

Thanks to all who got in spirit of walk

Last Friday night in Independence there was a Ghost Walk.

The very best part of the Ghost Walk is the people. Friends and neighbors lead groups, tell stories, and open their buildings. Everyone gets into, if you will, the "spirit" of the evening.

The walkers come from near and far for a little shiver and a lot of fun.

You all give substance to the evening with your willingness to entertain anecdotal history and suspend belief (or not!) to talk about the more spectral side of Independence.

I learn right away when something spooky happens. Friday night in front of the Pink House Café, a photo was taken showing a large person-sized orb standing next to a walker. Maybe spirits like the stories, too?

I am in awe of the people who help with this event every year, continue to enjoy their roles or open their businesses. It takes over 50 volunteers to put on a good Ghost Walk for our hundreds of guests.

Thank you to everyone who participated.

Marilyn Morton
Independence

WANT TO WRITE A LETTER?

Letters to the editor are limited to 300 words. Longer letters will be edited.

Election-related letters of all types are limited to 100 words. Writers are limited to one election-related letter per election season. Election letters from writers outside of Polk County are not accepted.

Each writer is restricted to one letter per 30-day period. Letters that are libelous, obscene or in bad taste will not be printed. Attacks by name on businesses or individuals will not be printed.

Letters to the editor that are obvious promotions for a business, products or services will not be printed.

The *Itemizer-Observer* does not guarantee the accuracy of facts presented by letter writers; dissenters are welcome to respond. Letter writers who disagree with other published letter writers should maintain a civil discourse and address the subject, not the author.

Letters, like all editorial material submitted to the newspaper, are edited for length, grammar and content.

Letters must include the author's name, address and telephone number. This includes letters submitted via the *I-O's* website. Names and cities of residence are published; street addresses and telephone numbers are used for verification purposes only.

Letters must be submitted from individuals, not organizations, and must be original submissions to the *I-O*, not copies of letters sent to other media.

Letters of thanks to businesses, individuals and organizations are limited to 10 names. The deadline for letters to the editor is 10 a.m. Monday. Letters submitted may not be retractable after this deadline.

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