

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

School funding is not getting better

Measure 5 has been in effect long enough now to cause economic pain in many school districts. Even in Vernonia, with a property tax rate that falls well below most districts, the revenue replacement system set up by Measure 5 has resulted in economic discomfort, if not distress. The strangest thing about all of this, is that there are still so many people who don't understand what has happened.

When Measure 5 passed and put a cap on property taxes that could be levied for schools, the state was told to make up the difference from the general fund. What Measure 5 didn't explain is that the general fund is derived mostly from income taxes and no property tax goes to the state.

People are still saying, "Well, my property taxes haven't gone down so I just don't believe there isn't enough money for education. What is the state doing with it?"

Once again, all together: No property taxes go to the state.

Some goes to the schools (that part under the Measure 5 cap), the rest goes to the county, city, fire district, emergency dispatching district, 4-H and Extension district. . . but it doesn't go to the state.

That's why it's meaningless to say you won't vote for roads or law enforcement or parks until the schools are taken care of. The schools can't be taken care of with local taxes whether the rest of local government is properly funded or not.

Of course the health club owner from Gresham who initiated Measure 5, has reaped a tremendous benefit, just as he wanted. If the schools are harmed, it really is not a concern of his and he can laugh all the way to the bank.

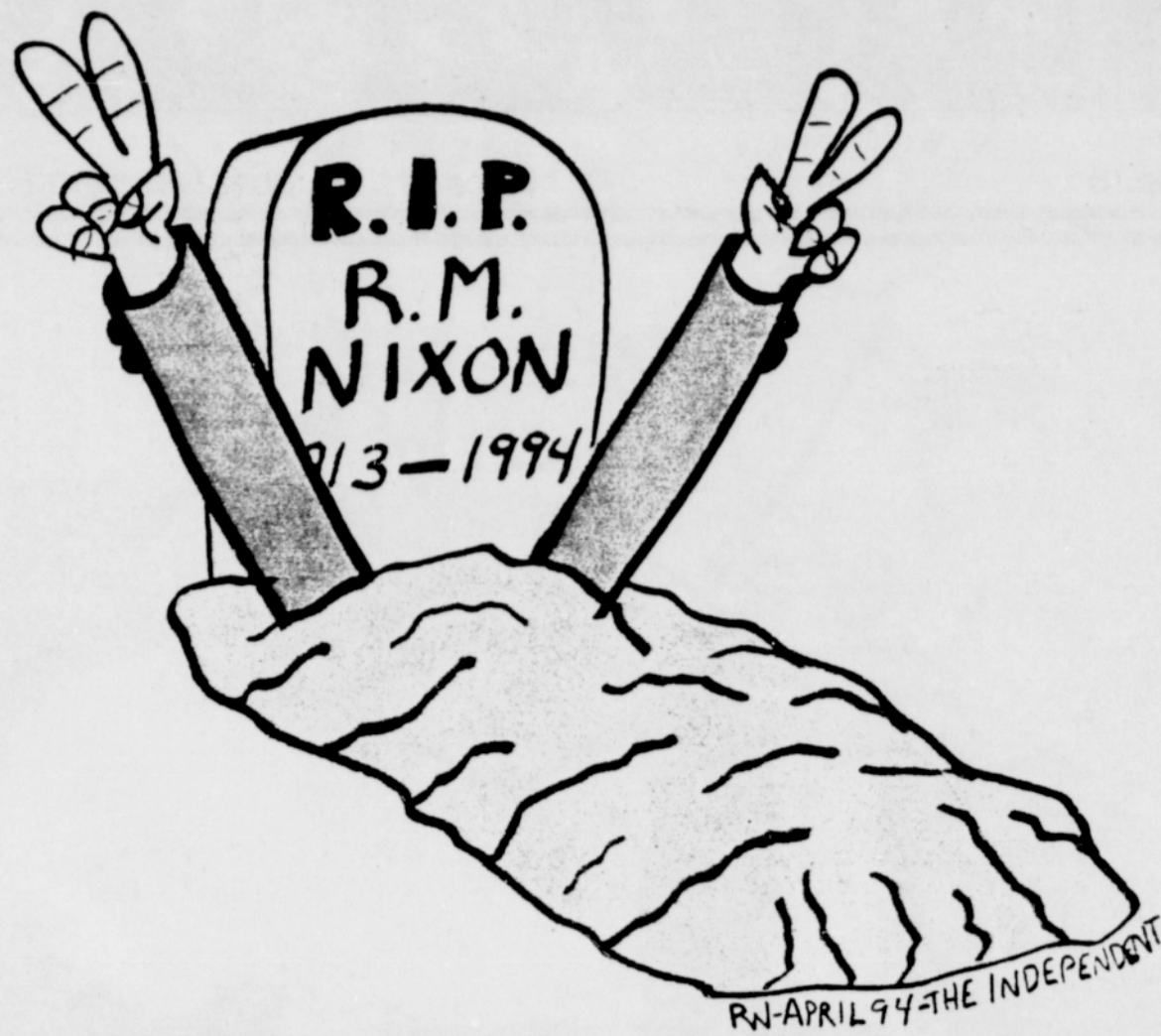
An interesting twist is that property taxes are based on market value so, obviously, the easiest way to reduce property taxes is to lower the price of any property you sell. The only reason that doesn't work is that everybody wants to sell for the highest price they can get. Nevertheless, if market value drives the selling price of property, it also drives the appraisal for property tax purposes. So, as property values increase, our property taxes increase, too. But that doesn't help the schools because—one more chorus—no property taxes go to the state.

The only way we can help funding for education, at this time, is to decrease funding for other services in order to send more money to the schools. But what should be decreased? Law enforcement? Prisons? Highway maintenance? Mental Health Services? They have all had their funding cut and they are already working with fewer personnel.

Each of us can identify areas of state government that we wouldn't mind seeing cut, but for each decision, there's someone on the other side of the fence, strongly defending that particular agency or service.

Measure 5 didn't pass in Columbia County. It is, nevertheless, absolutely necessary to understand ballot measures and not be taken in by simplistic statements or solutions.

I AM NOT DEAD!



Ike Says

By Dale Webb, member
Nehalem Valley Chapter, Izaak Walton League

Oh what a feeling success is! A few issues ago I reported that Bear Creek, which runs through Vernonia, had a run of adult Coho Salmon return to it and spawn about a mile above town. That was very good news since these fish are probably returning hatchbox fish that were raised here in Vernonia and released by our school children in an educational program run by the Izaak Walton League.

The return of these fish is of even more significance now, due to the closure of the ocean sport and commercial fisheries. These closures were instigated by the lack of these Coho Salmon. Now, for even better news, it appears that the juvenile hatch was very successful and Bear Creek is now alive with Coho fry. Juvenile fish have been observed from the headwaters all the way down into town.

Betty Wall, who lives on the inside corner of Weed Ave. and Maple St., has been gracious enough to allow me to place some instream structures in a couple of Bear Creek pools on her property. These structures consist of Christmas trees anchored in place to provide shelter for juvenile fish. I kept telling Betty that there were going to be some Coho juveniles using her pool. I knew that the fry would emerge from the gravel toward the end of March, but a survey at that time found no fish. About the middle of April another survey found juvenile fish, but they seemed to be stopped at the old Eddie Miller Pond. I started sweating, fearing that I may have misled Betty and she wasn't going to have any fish in her pool. But, a few days later, my fears were allayed when we observed at least nine juveniles in the first pool below the culvert. Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife standards for a fully stocked stream are placed at two fish per

square meter of pool habitat. Using this standard Bear Creek appears to be fully seeded.

Bear Creek is not what you would call a pristine stream. The headwaters of the stream were clearcut with no buffer being left (maybe an oversight by Oregon Dept. of Forestry or even the Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife?). The stream runs through the timberland that stands above town and has good pool habitat formed by a fair amount of woody debris that is instream. It is hampered by a heavy sediment load, typical of so many of our local streams, that most likely is left-over from the first logging era. Once the stream reaches town, the fish must contend with Miller's Pond, which is a hindrance to upstream migration for both adults and juveniles. In fact, it is most likely a death trap, because the fish use the pond until the stream starts to dry up in the summer, then they cannot escape back up stream and they succumb to lethal water temperatures. The lower section of stream is nothing more than a series of culverts and backyards that are pleasing to humans but not to salmon (except for Betty's place).

Despite these odds, the fish seem determined to survive and, with a little bit of help, they will. Some people out there are probably asking "well, what can I do?" The best answer I can give you is to be aware that these fish are there. Secondly, please be sure that any sprays or substances you may use around the creek are not lethal to fish. Thirdly, if you want to provide some habitat on your section of stream, please give me a call and I will give you a hand. Also remember, even if you live blocks away, that what you allow to enter the storm drains can end up in Bear Creek.

Now, get out back and look in your section of creek to see if you have any of Oregon's next most likely threatened or endangered species.

Letters to the Editor

Doesn't want to pay for law enforcement

To the Editor:

What's \$.03 more? Why not go one step further and allow property owners outside of "the cities" to pay all costs

for county sheriff. He would then be our sheriff; and then, when a summons is served in "the cities," or when a "city citizen" is stopped in our area for a violation of our rules, our county sheriff could fine and collect enough (plenty) to

cover his services and defer our costs.

If you don't like that one, then —

We will pay all costs for running the sheriff's office but—the money the county

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