

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### Hatfield is correct; amendment a sham

It has been instructive to watch U.S. Senators in Mark Hatfield's own party as they weep, wail, gnash their teeth, thrash about and threaten the Oregon senator for having the temerity to stand on principle and vote against the so-called balanced budget amendment.

Listening to them speak of betrayal, one would almost think Hatfield had committed some heinous crime and, in a way, he did. His crime won't be found among law enforcement statutes and he'll never be arrested for it, but he is guilty . . . guilty of telling the truth about another ploy designed to make people think Congress is trying to balance the federal budget.

He is guilty of telling the truth when he says Congress can balance the budget whenever it wants to—without an amendment—but won't because its members lack the courage to make the necessary hard choices.

He is guilty of telling the truth when he says an amendment that can be suspended by a three-fifths vote of Congress is the same as no amendment.

Most of all, he is guilty of refusing to pander to the political gratification of his peers. Think about it; if Hatfield acts like that, voters might expect their own representatives to tell the truth!

Thank you, Senator Hatfield, for telling the truth and standing by it. Maybe it will become contagious.

### Reporters won't, and shouldn't tell all

Several times recently, *The INDEPENDENT* staff has been asked to reveal discussions that took place in executive sessions of one public body or another. Our response is that we won't discuss privileged information but, perhaps we should clarify our reasons.

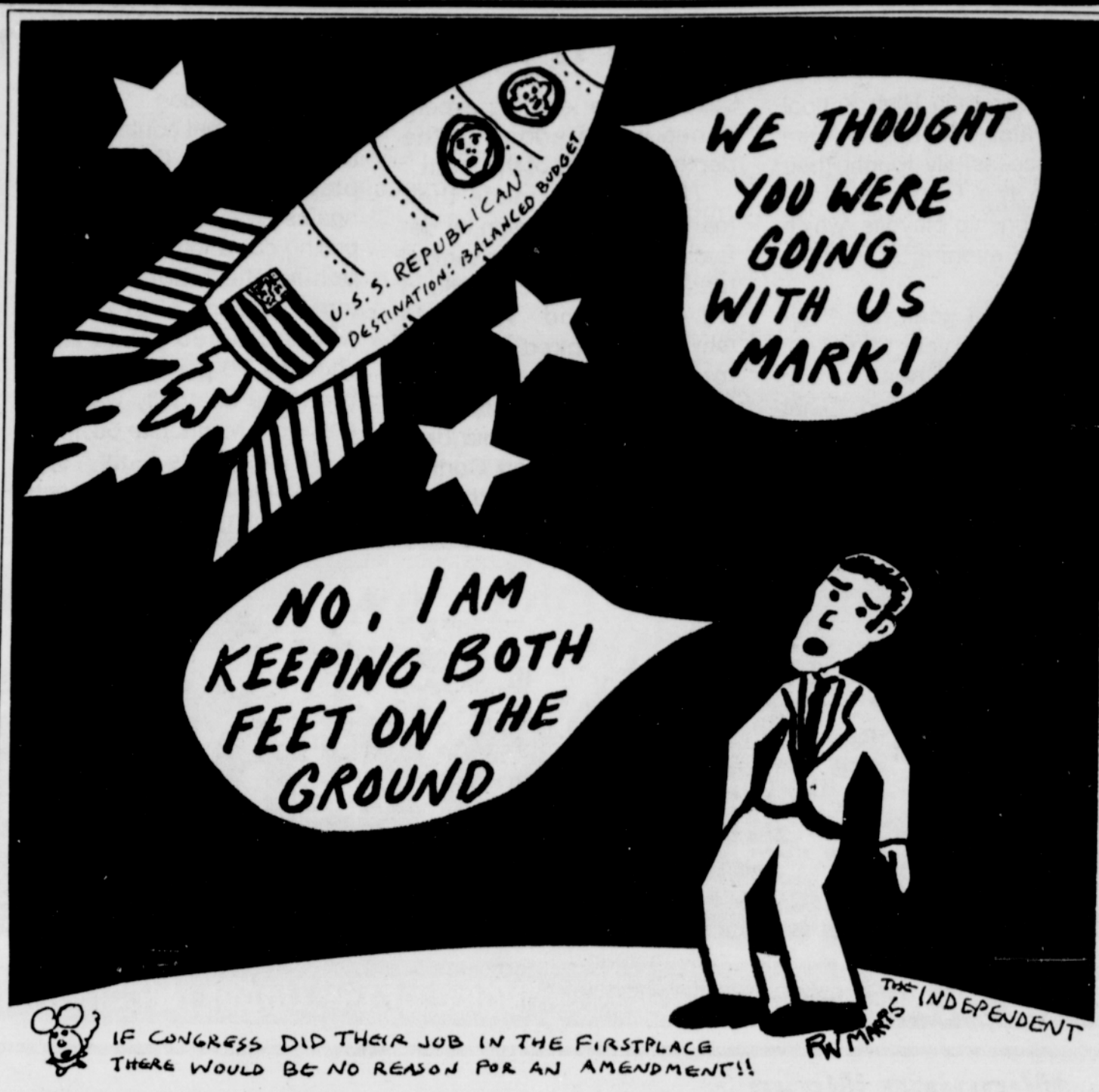
Oregon's Public Meetings Law allows the public to attend almost every meeting of elected and appointed officials. The exceptions are spelled out and include discussion of pending litigation, labor relations, personnel and other more-or-less sensitive matters.

The media, however, are allowed to attend executive sessions that are closed to the general public. The reason for the exception is that the background information is necessary in order to understand action later taken or not taken by a public body.

This is a privileged exception and an important one. Technically, we can report what happens in executive sessions if the presiding officer fails to tell us otherwise, but we won't.

That is the policy of this newspaper and it will remain that way because trust is more valuable in this business than an occasional "scoop."

So, if anyone out there wants information from an executive session, don't come to us because we won't tell.



## The Josi Report

By Rep. Tim Josi  
Oregon Representative, District 2

A year ago the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife was petitioned by several environmental groups to list the coho salmon as a threatened or endangered species due to its rapidly declining population. Last week the agency presented their decision to the legislature to not list the coho as threatened or endangered, but to continue listing the Columbia River and South Coast coho salmon gene pools as sensitive species and to add the North Coast coho gene pool to the same list.

A sensitive species is one whose population is declining in such number, due to the quality or quantity of its habitat, that it is in danger of qualifying as threatened or endangered. ODFW is charged with the responsibility of taking, supporting and recommending actions that will maintain or improve the species' status.

The agency's approach is based on several factors. In order to be listed as threatened, a species must become endangered within the foreseeable future within all or a portion of its range; an endangered species must be threatened with extinction within all or a significant portion of its range.

Biologists have identified six major coho gene conservation groups in Oregon which have been grouped together into three gene pools. While many groups of coho salmon within each gene pool are indeed showing significant declines in population, other groups within the same pool are not showing decline. For instance, a major river may not have coho in three quarters of its tributaries, while the

other tributaries are thriving. Also, on some river systems there is relatively little decline in coho populations, while the next stream down the coast may be totally barren.

While the overall population of the coho is declining, the number of adults returning to their spawning grounds has not shown a statistical trend downward, due in large part to the restrictions on pre-spawning harvest. Once the young coho return to the ocean they are subject to a variety of adverse ocean conditions, such as water temperature and predators, which affect significant growth in numbers of returning spawners.

Coho survival in fresh water is influenced by such things as harvest management practices, hatchery management policies, forest practices, hydroelectric projects, fill and gravel removal, water quantity and quality, and the overall health of the watershed in which it is bred and returns to spawn.

Because the state has already implemented action plans that will lower ocean harvest amounts and significantly decrease the risks encountered in their freshwater cycle, ODFW felt the state should hold off an additional two years to see what kind of impact these measures will have on the coho populations. If, at that time, there is no significant improvement, the agency will reexamine the listing status. If we act as a community now to save our wild coho, hopefully that will not be necessary.

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## Letters to the Editor

### Get fox out of hen-house; recall Hugo

To the Editor:

In regard to the letter, (*The INDEPENDENT*, Feb. 22, 1995,) headed, "County workers support Hugo," bearing 23 signatures. I believe that I know the reason behind the loyalty expressed, however

misplaced. Had I seen the expressed will of Columbia County voters so perverted as to result in a twenty year salary raise to me I might also be loyal.

I hope this would not be true as there are only two paths that we each must travel. The upper path is one of integrity and honor. "Honor!" an almost forgotten phrase,

isn't it? But something our forefathers held most precious. Something they lived by and died for. The lower path is one of compromise, dishonesty and confusion.

"Columbia County has a fox inside its chicken house!" An self confessed fox caught with feathers still clinging to its whiskers.

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