

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Recall unfortunate, Hugo should resign

Columbia County Commissioner Bruce Hugo has forced the taxpayers to spend about \$13,000 on a recall election because he sees no reason why he should resign after admitting that he used a county credit card for cash advances for gambling. The \$13,000 is a lot more money than he admitted misusing, but both situations contain the element of choice.

Part of Hugo's defense is that he made a mistake and should be forgiven, but he ignores something very important. He had a choice and his choice was to take money illegally. Then he compounded that behavior by choosing to instruct the county accountant that his charges should be paid—without proper documentation.

Now he has chosen to use more tax money in an attempt to retain his \$43,000 position.

Every choice has shown how little regard he has for either the people who elected him, or for the office he holds.

Another of Hugo's defenses is that he has an addiction to gambling, but is now getting treatment for his addiction. Is addiction a justification for breaking the law? Is addiction a justification for behaving irresponsibly?

The claim of addiction seems to be very popular, as long, that is, as people ignore the obvious: It's only another self-serving excuse for lack of personal responsibility.

The third part of Hugo's defense is that the people of Columbia County need him because he's such a great commissioner and has done so many wonderful things for the county.

There is no doubt that Hugo is an intelligent person; that isn't the question, even though he hasn't done as much as he claims credit for. The question is: Can the people of this county afford a smart commissioner who admits to theft and misuse of his office for personal gain?

Holding public office isn't easy, but no one forced Hugo to seek the position and no one forced him to gamble and no one forced him to instruct the accountant to pay his personal debts.

Also facing Hugo, no matter what happens in the election, is the investigation underway in the Oregon Government Ethics Commission.

Bruce Hugo has lost his ability to be a leader in this county because he lost sight of his responsibility to the people of this county. Yet, in his arrogance, he claims the people need him at the helm.

No one is indispensable and the voters should recall Hugo.

Fire season is soon here

A brief reminder may be in order because the weather has been wet enough to let us forget that fire season starts Friday. Starting Friday, June 16, backyard burning will be illegal and permits will be needed for any outdoor burning.

If you have any questions, please contact your fire district office. Let's keep Oregon green.

SALUTING THE AMERICAN WORKING CLASS OF 1995 - EARNING A LIVING -



The Josi Report

By Rep. Tim Josi
Oregon Representative, District 2

Education has been a hotly debated topic this legislative session. Regardless of where one is on the political spectrum there seems to be a pervasive belief that our public educational system is failing to produce citizens who are prepared for the demands of the future. Some believe that we should concentrate on teaching the "basics", while others believe a broader approach to learning is necessary.

There are even those who believe that our public system of education has deteriorated so far that it is not salvagable. These groups have introduced legislation that would permit public tax dollars to be spent on voucher programs at public or private schools and on the formation of charter schools.

Before we, as citizens and taxpayers, make a decision to allow public money to fund these types of programs, we need to examine several fundamental issues. Our country has prospered over our short history for a number of reasons, one is our public education system, from which any person with the aptitude and desire could graduate with a high school degree. It has been a major part of the "melting pot" process for our society, as each successive immigrant population learned our common heritage and language there. It has also been the place where we have rubbed elbows, rich and poor, abled and disabled, brilliant and not so brilliant. It is the place where, hopefully, we continue to learn tolerance for differences, while building pride in our national identity.

I am not proposing that being taught in a private school is un-American. However, is it in the public interest to provide tax money for programs over which we have little or no control? If we give money in the form of vouchers to private religious school pupils we are, in effect, promoting certain religious views. The public also has no input on who may or may not attend private schools or what is taught in their curriculum. Everyone has the right to attend our public schools and society asks that they take advantage of that right. The decision to send a child to private school is a choice, a privilege. Should taxpayers support that choice monetarily?

Charter schools are being promoted as non-religious based "public schools" that will create competition for the traditional public school system. The idea is that if enough people establish their own schools this will spur public schools to provide a better education to their pupils. If we have a major flight from public schools to private and charter schools—who have control over their pupil selection—what we will end up with in public schools will be students who were not "chosen" for these special schools. This population will be comprised of high maintenance children: the poor, the learning disabled, the behavior problems, and the unmotivated.

It is not right, just, or in our collective good to do this. We must put our energy and tax money into improving our public schools so all may benefit to the greatest degree.

The Oregon House of Representatives voted this month to recriminalize the possession of less than an ounce of marijuana, so people arrested for this offense would be charged with a Class A misdemeanor. The fine would be at least \$100 per gram, but not more than \$5,000 total.

As with so much legislation that has come before us this session, this bill represents the will of just a few people in the state. However, because of political game playing, this bill not only reached the House floor, it was passed. To begin with, the bill was run through the House and Senate Rules Committee after the regular committees that would normally discuss the bill had been shut down for the session. It was sent through Rules with little notice or a full public hearing. This was done because two bills of similar nature had failed to be passed out of the Crimes and Corrections subcommittee, after close scrutiny by committee members and public hearings determined them to be neither necessary nor desirable.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Jerry Grisham, R-Beavercreek, wants to send a message to Oregonians regarding marijuana use. He claims that marijuana is not the same drug it was in 1973 when possession was decriminalized. He believes that marijuana has become much stronger, and that people are risking future involvement with more dangerous drugs if they are not kept, by law, from using

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