

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Next four years very important to schools

Oregon schools are at a crossroads, facing critical demands in both the quality and the cost of education. While the composition of a school board has always been important, at this time, that importance is magnified.

While brief profiles of the candidates start on page one, here are some other considerations.

Position No. 1: With two candidates on the ballot, a write-in candidate is superfluous. If Don Skinner was really interested in returning to the school board, he should have filed nomination papers.

Gene Winningham has been a very generous mentor to students interested in computer technology. He has helped them financially and by providing them with opportunities to learn. That is a vital role, one we hope he will continue. This strength is also his weakness, though, so far as the school board is concerned. His avid interest in technology is too close to a one-issue interest. Working one-on-one with students is great, but a broader, consensus-based approach is needed on the school board.

Shelly Stevens is, admittedly, a novice on a public board, but everybody has to start somewhere. Stevens' interest in quality education, combined with a background in a results-oriented, production/management field, could make her a valuable addition to the board.

Position No. 6: Again, there are two candidates. In this race, however, there is an incumbent and a challenger.

It would surprise no one, including incumbent Steve Ellis, to say that he is not a team player; indeed, he prizes his independence. The problem is his inability to accept decisions reached by the majority of the board, and a need to constantly complain that "...it wasn't my decision." Another negative is his public criticism of district employees. If the board has problems with district employees, the appropriate place to discuss them is in executive session. It is also necessary to develop professional procedures for all situations dealing with personnel, including complaints and job descriptions.

Kim Tierney, with her strong management training and experience, can bring to the board expertise the district couldn't afford to buy. This district has to deal with increased enrollment, decreased income and tougher educational standards. Tierney could bridge the gap between the staff and the board; a gap that has been created by poor administrative practices and inappropriate criticism.

Carla Strand, Susann Ragsdale and Jeff Blum have already demonstrated their ability to work toward a consensus that will serve the district well. Regardless of their personal preferences, they understand that the district cannot achieve its goals (actually, can't even set goals) with bickering and petty complaining.

A lot of hard work faces this school board. To achieve successful results, *The INDEPENDENT* recommends casting your votes for:

Shelly Stevens, Position 1; Carla Strand, Position 2; Susann Ragsdale, Position 4; Jeff Blum, Position 5; Kim Tierney, Position 6.

1 YEAR LATER

THE FLOOD IS BUT A

MEMORY!

OR IS IT?

LAWSUITS - CLEANUP - MUD + WATER
STILL HOMELESS - LITIGATIONS DAMAGE
FEELINGS - UNCERTAINTY - WONDER

REALITY 4 SOME, STILL
A PROBLEM 4 OTHERS

The Josi Report

By Rep. Tim Josi
Oregon Representative, Dist. 2

"Oregon's transportation system is at a crossroads. It's becoming more clear with each passing year that growth and traffic congestion are outstripping our ability to serve the needs of Oregon's traveling public."

This statement is taken from a report prepared by a statewide advisory committee appointed by Governor John Kitzhaber. Based upon their recommendations, the Governor has proposed dramatic changes in the way Oregonians pay for transportation. Kitzhaber believes the old standby of hiking the gas tax a few cents will not help us cope with traffic congestion and growth, and is fundamentally unfair. For example, the gas tax charges an urban commuter, driving a small car on the Terwilliger curves at 8 a.m., less than a farmer in Tillamook County driving his pickup truck home in the afternoon. But the urban commuter is the one contributing to traffic congestion and the need for new road capacity, and should pay more. HB 2213, sponsored by the Governor, would encourage less solo commuting, more transit use, more compact growth, and could also help shift traffic away from peak periods.

The bill has four components and is drawing considerable attention. They are:

- A Vehicle Mile Tax (VMT), which would be collected for all vehicles in excess of a mileage allowance, specifies that revenue be used to finance projects that add capacity to the transportation system.
- A studded tire surcharge of \$10 per tire would help pay for damage caused by studs.
- A Transportation Access Fee which would be collected from businesses and households. These monthly fees would be \$2.00 per household and \$1.65 per employee for businesses, beginning January 1998. The tax is aimed at tapping a larger base to pay for transportation-related items such as senior and disabled transit and state police.
- A small annual increase of the gas tax, estimated at 1 cent per year — indexed to inflation — and a corresponding increase of the

weight-mile tax for trucks. The entire tax would be reserved for road preservation and maintenance. Currently, 4 cents goes toward new projects.

We have learned from Los Angeles and Seattle that simply spending money on new road capacity does not work — it's too expensive and ultimately ineffective. Holding the line on congestion will provide a good return on investment. For example, an 18-wheeler costs \$66 to operate for one hour. If that truck paid for going 40 miles in one hour, the cost in VMT tax would be about 80 cents. When we save that truck five minutes on his operating time, using the money raised by the VMT tax, that carrier's benefit in one hour is \$5.50.

Oregon's gas tax is close to the highest in the nation while our Vehicle Registration Fees are the lowest. Taken together, Oregonians pay 27.2 cents in equivalent cents/gallon. Our bordering states use a much broader taxing methodology to pay for their highway systems. In equivalent cents/gallon this is what their citizens pay: Washington — 92.8, California — 84.8, Idaho — 45.4, Nevada — 76.3, Arizona — 64.7 and Montana — 53.2.

We are lagging far behind our neighboring states when investing in our transportation system. I fear the result will ultimately lead to a stagnant economy because we will no longer be able to efficiently move people, goods and services. Is the Governor's transportation proposal flawed? I believe many issues need to be addressed. For example the higher number of miles driven by rural Oregonians is a concern. However, the Governor is encouraging us to "think outside of the box". Developing an equitable plan which adequately finances our transportation needs and successfully changes driving patterns will take time...and political courage. I hope we are up to the task.

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