

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Measure 53 corrects inequity in voting

Measure 53 on the May 19 ballot would repeal the provision in Measure 50 that requires a minimum of 50 percent of registered voters to cast a ballot in order to pass most local option money measures.

There is no doubt that more people need to vote, whether on money measures or candidates, but the problem that Measure 53 would correct is counting absent voters (not absentee ballots) as if they had voted "no". Measure 50 rewards voters who don't bother to mark a ballot and penalizes voters who are conscientious.

If the problem is that too few people vote on tax issues, the solution is to make those people realize that they need to mark a ballot. People who fail to vote should be considered non-voters; that is what they are, nothing more, nothing less.

As an example, in the Vernonia Fire District bond election last March, voters overwhelmingly approved the request for new equipment. But if just 19 of those voters had decided not to vote, under Measure 50, that overwhelming approval would have been just an exercise in futility.

Most Oregon elections are now held by mail, eliminating the need to go to a polling place. Even in the elections that are held the "old-fashioned way", registered voters may request and use absentee ballots.

Vote yes on Measure 53. If people don't vote, they should not be allowed to interfere with those who do.

Differences sometimes are hard to determine

Candidates in the First Congressional District race seem fairly elusive, at least from Vernonia.

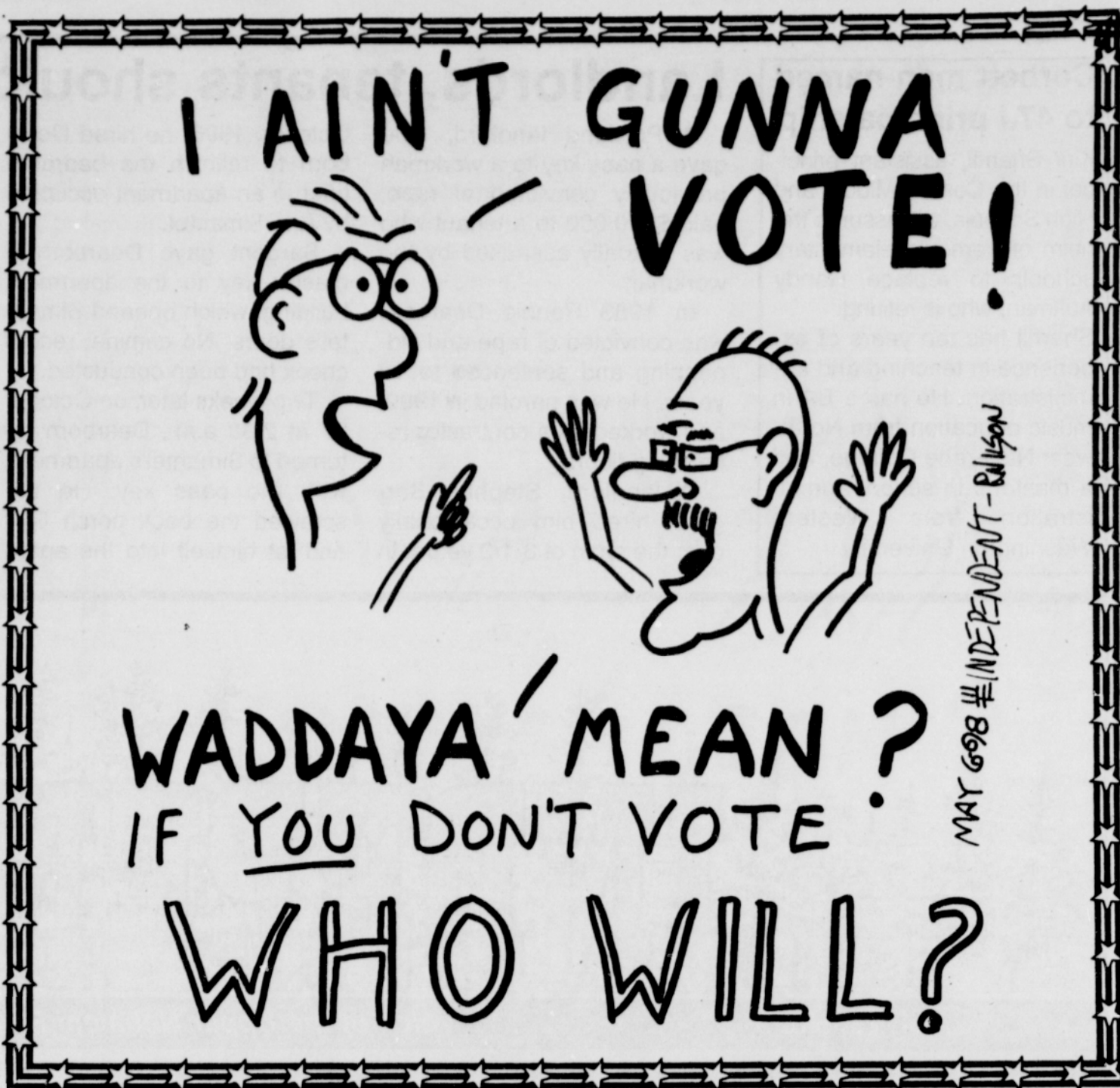
The choice between Democrats Linda Peters and David Wu isn't clearcut in many areas, but there is one factor that makes us prefer Peters: She is from Mountaineer and knows our area. Many of you remember that Peters helped lead the battle several years ago to prevent Metro from siting a landfill on top of Green Mountain, where it would have polluted the watersheds of both the Nehalem River and Dairy Creek. Peters demonstrated leadership then and later, when she was elected to the Washington County Board of Commissioners.

Wu, on the other hand, doesn't seem to move far from the urban part of the district except to attend candidates' forums.

On the Republican ballot, Molly Bordanaro has campaigned in Vernonia while her opponent, developer John Kvistad, has not. Kvistad may not be interested in the problems of rural areas.

Bordanaro, on the other hand, made some really scary statements when she was in Vernonia. In one, she said that all federal education funds should be turned over to local school districts to do what they want, without strings attached. What would happen to special education or women's sports?

No recommendation in this race.



City Scene...

By Julius Dalzell
Vernonia City Council

"A Time for Action"

When the Vernonia Community Development Corporation was established, it was apparent to at least some of us that, to "truly make development happen" was not going to be a simple matter. The size of the community, location, condition of the infrastructure — both municipal and privately held — and the mix of our economic activity, all present challenges.

The City is attempting to upgrade the public infrastructure, albeit we have a long road ahead, no pun intended. We are now addressing the water system needs, and yes, undoubtedly upgrading the streets and roads is a comparable priority. An equal partner in the equation of development is of course the private sector. From this segment of the community comes the business interests, plans and investments in economic activity that eventually provide the basis of economic health. It is the business owners and operators, building owners and investors who, through their commerce, make available the goods and services so important to the community's eventual economic status.

What we are talking about, of course, is the substance of our downtown business district. Some of the problems recently brought to the CDC's attention include buildings not meeting code requirements, a lack of retail space for ventures wishing to open, financial resources to meet these needs and for new building construction. The fundamental question to the CDC has been, can you help? That is a major part of the organization's role and, yes, we are trying.

By the way, this is not an appropriate role for City Hall! The City can assist in some regards but should not be directly involved or responsible. Several grants are in place to provide funds

for downtown revitalization in areas such as benches, banners, street lighting and improved pedestrian and traffic flow planning and implementation. But it is the business community that has to work on business issues.

In the CDC's attempt to be responsive, we recently received a boost and an opportunity in the form of the Oregon Rural Development Council (ORDC), which met here in Vernonia on March 27th.

Since 1989 this organization—composed of Federal and State agencies as well as private sector interests—led by the Oregon Economic Development Department has been meeting with rural Oregon. Their role is to bring resources to bear, when possible, to solve problems. The needs may be regulatory resolution, solution of a land use problem or, most frequently, financial requirements. We have all of these issues, and others, to deal with.

The ORDC agreed to work with us and, in fact, to make downtown revitalization in Vernonia the basis of a pilot project. A June meeting is tentatively planned at which interested parties will be given the opportunity to meet with ORDC members who may be able to provide direction. The business community is encouraged to participate; the date has not yet been set.

Separately, the ORDC was instrumental in bringing assistance in the area of business recruitment. Greg Jenks, Regional Development Officer for the Oregon Economic Development Department, is bringing to bear other resources in our attempts to attract employment opportunities to the area. One of our goals is to make available an industrial facility in which an employer could locate. There is much work to be accomplished; however, if the effort is successful and job opportunities are made available, it will be worth it.

County, State Rep. districts and a few others

Recommendations without explanation are frustrating, but we're out of space.

Columbia County Board of Commissioners:

Joel Yarbor, Rep.; Rita Bernhard, Dem.

State Rep. Dist. One:

Sam Patrick, Rep.;

Jackie Taylor, Dem.

State Rep. Dist. Two:

Elaine Hopson, Dem.; Scott Bushnell, Rep.

Sup't of Public Instruction:

Stan Bunn or Margaret Carter.

Judge of the Supreme Court, Pos. Seven:

William Riggs.

Many candidates who are running unopposed are not mentioned at all because they have no opposition.

No matter who you prefer, please vote!