

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### Missing information makes news wrong

A conversation with a knowledgeable person can still result in mistaken information if, as *The INDEPENDENT* displayed last issue, a key part of the information was missed.

The item about extending a City water line to Cedar Ridge should have explained that there is already a water line that is old and too small (two inch diameter), and what is being requested is an upgrade in the service.

Some citizens feel the city should not spend tax dollars for improvements outside the city, but Vernonia has owned and maintained the line since it was installed many years ago, and users outside the city limits pay twice the rate for water that City residents pay, because those outside the city do not pay city taxes.

Mayor Parrow made an important point, too, noting that Cedar Ridge is designated – and has been used – as an emergency center, and that an adequate water supply is a necessity.

The council acted appropriately in directing staff to negotiate with Cedar Ridge owner Larry Steele regarding costs and potential future annexation.

### School board vacancy should attract interest

It seems that everybody knows what schools "should do", especially those who never volunteer in the schools or attend a board meeting. Now is the time for those who *are* genuinely interested to step forward.

There is a vacancy on the Vernonia School District Board of Directors that will be filled by appointment at the August 12 meeting. Board members meet at least once a month, for regular meetings, and sometimes have workshops or special meetings at other times.

The position requires considerable attention and thought when the director is doing a good job. It really does take more than one hour each month.

If you are interested, pick up an application at the district office. Fill it out and return it to the office no later than August 6th. It can't hurt and it might help.

### Gail Steele, 1923-1999

Gail Steele, the long-time editor and publisher of *The Clatskanie Chief*, died July 12 after a long battle with heart disease and diabetes. But this isn't an obituary; that's on page 14.

This is just a note of appreciation for several characteristics: The example he set in checking out the details of how government works. His unflagging support of his hometown and an understanding of how important "home" is. His courage in continuing to work and contribute to his community after losing his eyesight. And his acceptance that regardless of differences people may have, they can work together in areas of mutual understanding for the good of the community.

I'LL SURE HATE IT  
WHEN THIS DOWNTOWN  
CONSTRUCTION IS OVER...



... I'LL HAVE TO START YELLING  
AT THE TRUCKERS AGAIN TO  
SLOW DOWN!

## Salem Report

By Elaine M. Hopson  
State Representative, District 2

The end of the session is near and the focus is on money with a special emphasis on education since it consumes the major portion of the budget.

Senate Bill 428, which also passed the House, mandates that high schools allow students to take classes at colleges or trade schools. By itself, this might not be a bad idea and I believe that many, if not most, school districts are already providing such opportunities. These programs come in a variety of ways and I argued that local school districts should make these decisions in cooperation with their local institutions of higher and vocational education.

Even more objectionable to me is the fact that the bill mandates the school districts to pay for these classes up to a maximum of approximately \$4,000 per student per year. At a time when we cannot get enough money to adequately fund our schools, a bill has passed taking millions of dollars right off the top of K-12 funding.

The speaker of the House brought forward House Bill 3633 – "Project Success." This bill sets up a large committee "to make recommendations to the appropriate governmental entities about goals with accountability standards that may be understood by all Oregonians." On its face, this seems like a good idea. However, I opposed the bill because I believe we have a great deal in place that we need to review and evaluate before we move forward with more recommendations and another committee.

I argued that we already have several committees addressing this and we are still implementing the 21st Century Schools Act from the 1991, 1995, and 1997 legislative sessions. Last session, a broad-based committee developed the Quality Education Model that related and connected expenditures with program needs. Unfortunately, this excellent project was under the leadership of former Speaker Lynn Lundquist and did not receive legislative action or support. Each session does not need to begin reinventing the wheel. Although strong arguments were provided against the bill, it passed with majority Republican votes.

A major issue behind the scenes, and as reported in all the newspapers, is the lack of discussion and movement in regard to K-12 funding. The Democrats have consistently supported a K-12 budget of \$4.95 billion dollars. Starting at \$4.73 billion, the Republicans came up to 4.81 billion while the Democrats came down to \$4.89

billion, at which point the Republicans refused to negotiate any more. Instead, they brought forth the threat of ballot measure referrals that would limit state revenues even more. One referral would cut middle and upper income households' taxes by increasing from \$3,000 to \$5,000 the amount of federal income tax that can be deducted from the income taxable by the state. This has already headed for the ballot through the efforts of Bill Sizemore. The other referral would put the tobacco settlement money into an interest bearing account and thereby lock it up for any expenditures. At this point, the discussions are at a stalemate although there is a strong interest from the Democrats and the Governor to open dialogue. However, with the needed votes in hand to pass a budget with school funding at a lower level, the Republicans are moving forward.

It appears that more critical issues are being addressed but, at this point, the final education budget has not been determined, nor is there a transportation package in place.

The education-funding bill passed out of the House, although there may still be some negotiating with the Governor as the bill goes to the Senate. The current amount of \$4.81 billion dollars will not meet the identified needs of many districts throughout the state. Although this is a substantial increase in the budget amount from last biennium, there have also been increases in the number of students, the challenges of many students, the condition of many facilities, and the cost of doing business in general.

Several other budgets have been passed, including that for higher education. Although everyone, including the Governor, agreed this was a good budget, it had been vetoed earlier because of uncertainty on the rest of the budget. Higher Education folks have developed a new model for the allocation of funds that will allow money to be directed according to the needs and strengths of each of the institutions.

The budget for the Department of Human Resources passed out of the House and will not meet all the needs in our state. However, tough choices are necessary in order to stay within the amount of money without a burdensome impact on taxpayers. This budget has many components that address the needs of our seniors and others who have encountered difficulties and need help.

SB 5515 allocating money to the Oregon State Fair passed the House. There was a little controversy as to why the State should pay for

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