

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Education is goal of 47J board candidates

Endorsements are difficult when there is more than one good candidate for a particular position; this year's Vernonia School District election reinforces that situation. Nevertheless, for what may be the only time it will ever happen in this Opinion column, *The INDEPENDENT* recommends returning all of the incumbents to the school board. There are many reasons for this recommendation; here are some of them:

Having watched the district's board of directors for over fifteen years, it is a pleasure to see how professionalism, for lack of a better word, has come to bear in many areas. Board members now arrive at meetings prepared. They have studied the issues on the agenda and they avoid making snap judgements of issues that may come before them without prior consideration. In other words, they have eliminated "knee-jerk" reactions.

Instead of just carping, or blaming the administration or staff, the board has been willing to make changes in policies and procedures when changes are needed. In addition to monthly board meetings, they attend monthly workshops in order to improve their "boardsmanship" and they all attend the annual school board convention, taking different workshops in order to share the knowledge gained.

If this happened before, it was more than 15 years ago.

Position 1 — This one is a slam-dunk: When it comes to educational issues, Schann Nelson may be the most knowledgeable board member in the county. She understands the Education Act for the 21st Century, CIM and CAM, federal forest payments inside and outside the formula, problems of declining enrollment, equity funding, unequal ESD funding and much more. As a dedicated school volunteer, she also has been involved in more facets of local schools than many of the staff members.

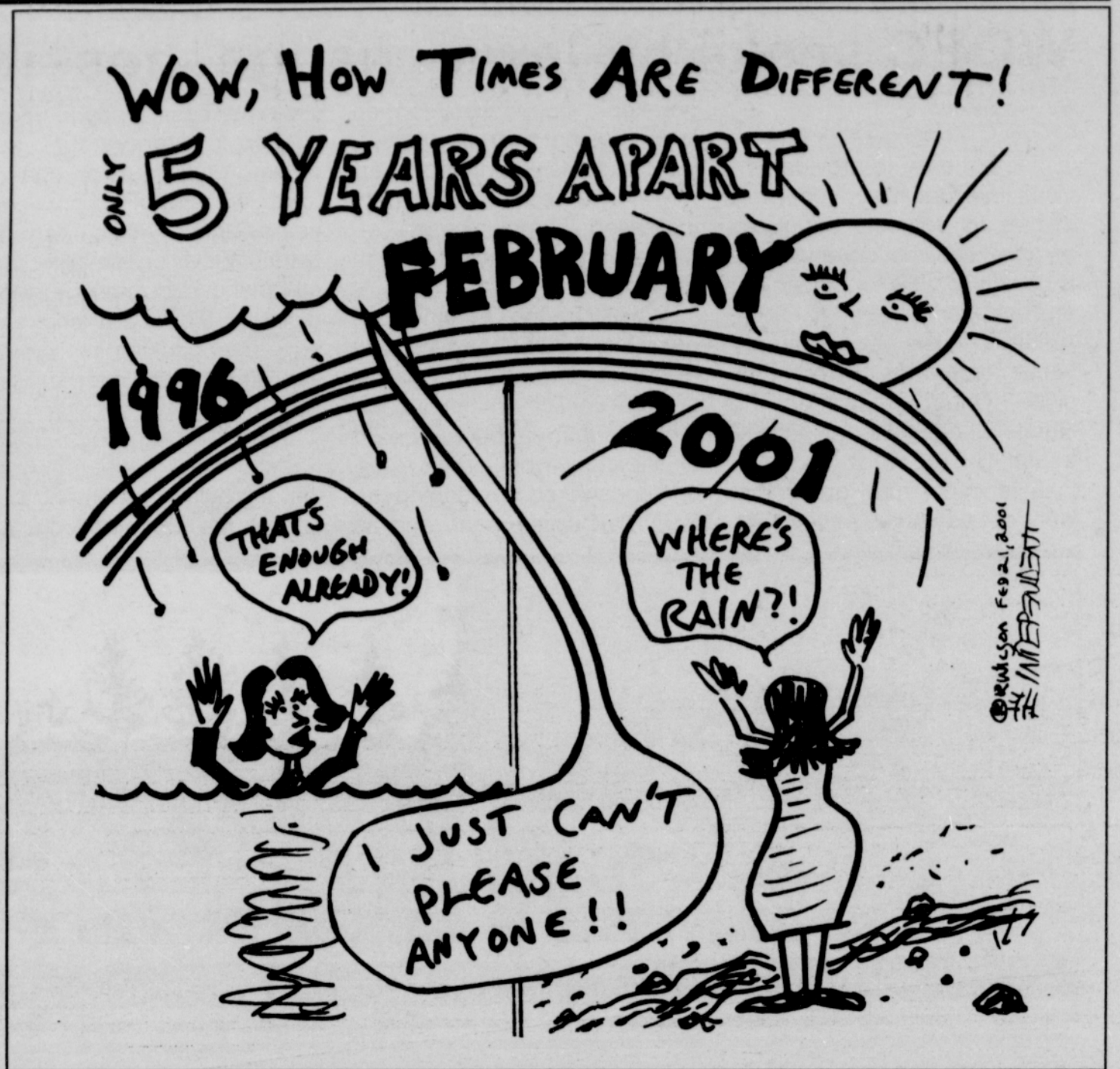
Position 4 — Leslie O'Leary's outstanding experience and skill at fiscal analysis was a factor in making her the top choice among 10 applicants for an appointment to the board. She also uses that analytical ability for non-fiscal considerations.

Position 5 — Cari Levenseller, another appointee, has brought some youthful enthusiasm to the board, but don't confuse her enthusiasm with cluelessness. She studies the issues, she talks with staff and parents, and she comes to the table prepared.

Position 7 — Jeff Blum has quietly become a leader on the board, demonstrating patience and balance as chairman, and his construction background will prove valuable as the new long-range plan gets underway.

It is regrettable that no one from Mist or Birkenfeld applied for appointment to one of the three openings last fall. The people who were appointed have worked hard to earn their position. They deserve to stay on the board and they won't ignore the needs of any part of the district.

There is a lot of work to be done in other areas and it would be good to see someone from the Mist area get involved in the long-range planning that is starting.



Salem Report

By Rep. Elaine M. Hopson
Second District

Good programs continue to come forth in regard to schools. For example, the Oregon Historical Society wants to work with the Department of Education to provide historical information and opportunities for all children in the state, particularly those in the rural areas. The bill passed out of the Education Committee although funding will (as usual) be a problem.

Programs to promote after school activities are coming forward including one to fund programs sponsored by the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. Although a wonderful program, my concern is that this limits the flexibility of communities without formal Boys and Girls Clubs to access the funding. Other bills with more flexibility are also coming through the system.

In Forestry and Agriculture, we passed a bill out that would lift some restrictions on governmental bodies using pesticides on other governmental land. In addition, a professor from OSU presented extensive information on biotechnology issues in regard to agricultural products. Al-

though we have been using science to modify and improve agricultural products for years, new science greatly expands the opportunity for increased quality and quantity of production.

Measure 7 continues to lurk in the background even after the release of the Attorney General's opinion. There continues to be such confusion that it is unclear whether or not the legislature will even attempt to address some of the controversy this session. Twenty lawyers spent three months writing more than a hundred pages in an effort to clarify the issues raised and there are still more questions than answers.

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47J School Board candidates

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More community participation is needed at school board meetings, Jones says, though he has seldom attended the meetings. He has no volunteer experience in the school district.

Leslie O'Leary
Pos. 4
Incumbent
Personal:
Age 39
Married
one child
Education:



B.S. in Economics, with minor in accounting.
Occupation/Background:
Bookkeeper for Gwin Logging; prior, Financial Director for City of Vernonia, budget manager for \$40 million biotech company, Training/Documentation Specialist for accounting software company

With a diverse business background, an awareness of school district issues, and a commitment to education, O'Leary wants to "help the cause."

The strong sense of community and school spirit among staff and students is one of the district's strengths, O'Leary says, as well as the difficulty of a student getting lost in a small district. She feels the district needs to seek more public input and participation to eliminate communication problems.

It is the role of board members to establish policy and set goals, O'Leary says, and those goals should include smaller classes in primary grades. She would also like to see the district pursue non-traditional funding sources.

O'Leary volunteers at Lincoln School one day each week. In the past, she voluntarily put her skills to work helping

district staff on accounting issues.

Randy Hansen
Pos. 4
Personal:
Age 42
Married to a teacher
2 children
Education:
A.S in Forest Engineering
Occupation/Background:
Longview Fibre Company since 1978



A school board member needs to make sure both taxpayers and students get the most for their investment of time and money, Hansen says. Also children's attitudes about education need to be improved and taxpayers should be invited to feel good about being partners in the education process.

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