

## Letters to the Editor

### Cartoon had it right, God is in control

To the Editor:

Hats off to Mr. Wilson.

I would like to commend Robb Wilson for his acknowledgement that God is in control of the weather, as depicted on his cartoon in the last issue of *The Independent*, where he contrasts the rainfall for the year '96 and the year '01. That part is accurate, since God is sovereign over all of creation, as well as all human affairs.

There is one part of the cartoon that needs clarification. The caption at the top showing God saying through the clouds, "I can't please anyone" is not accurate, because God does not have to "please" anyone. It is true that God blesses those who have first put their faith and trust in the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only provision for salvation, and then continue to live in obedience to his word. (He doesn't always bless us with health and wealth, but peace and joy, among other

things)

We were created to bring honor and glory to God, not the other way around.

**Robert G. Huntington  
Birkenfeld**

### Citizen apathy won't serve citizen needs

To the Editor:

First of all, the following statements are my own and, in no way are intended to reflect the views of the mayor, my fellow city councilors, commissioners or any city employee.

That said, the subject a citizen survey recently sent to 745 Vernonia residents (citizens residing within the city limits). The survey had 21 questions asking citizens to rate the city on issues such as community involvement, communication between the city and the public, parking and one way streets, senior center needs, satisfaction with city services, etc.

The survey's purpose was to receive input on important subjects facing our community so

those of us on the council, different commissions and the city administration are able to guide our future based on the community's feelings.

Of 745 surveys mailed, 24 were returned as undeliverable by the post office. Of the 721 surveys that were delivered, only 66 were completed and returned.

To the nine percent of the residents who took the time to fill out and return these surveys, I say "Thank You!" To the 91 percent of citizens who chose not to respond, throw away the survey as junk mail or just didn't take time to respond, "Shame on You!" Vernonia is a reflection of its citizens and, if I was an outsider looking in, I would have to presume that the citizens are apathetic (and I dare say the percentages would back me up).

As a follow-up to mailing the surveys, and after the nine percent (66 out of 721) of the surveys returned had been tallied, a public forum was held at the Scout Cabin on February 26. This forum was open to ALL

Vernonians, both inside and outside the city limits. Not counting the mayor, city employees and councilors present, I estimate there were 30 to 35 citizens in attendance.

To those who took advantage of this opportunity for verbal public input, I again say "Thank You!" I feel that issues were raised that will help me to make more informed decisions about what the citizens of Vernonia need or want.

But I am curious—where was everyone else?

When I was elected to city council, I was under the impression it was to represent the citizens of Vernonia. Now I wonder who it is that voted for me and what it is these same citizens want or need?

One of the questions on the survey asked if "There is good communication between the city council and the community."

Response from the 66 surveys returned was about even between "agree" and "disagree." In my opinion, though, because 91 percent of the surveys were not returned, the "disagrees" won by a landslide. Who is responsible for the lack of communication? Is it the mayor, city councilors, commissioners and city administration who attend the meetings, workshops and public hearings/forums and carry on much of the mundane, as well as interesting, decisions that are made regarding Vernonia's future? Or is it those invisible citizens at city council and commission meetings, workshops, etc. who offer silent input and nonexistent ideas?

A city council candidate this past election said that, "if the council and city were doing their job properly, the public shouldn't need to be present at meetings." I took this to mean that the only time we should be seeing the public is when we err in their eyes. I strongly disagree with that viewpoint and that is one of the reasons I ran for city council. I want to have a say in what goes on in the town I reside in, but I also know my opinion is not the only one.

Based on the lack of response and involvement by the citizens, maybe the candidate who made the aforementioned statement is the one who should have been elected. I certainly don't know how 91 percent of you feel, because you haven't responded to a simple 21 question survey.

I realize it is easier to be an armchair leader and social complainer than to have to sit through (to be honest) what can be very boring meetings. Nevertheless, every decision that is made by the city council is for the city of Vernonia's benefit. This means we are deciding the course of our wonderful city's future.

A lot of time and effort is put into decisions made by the council and city administration and there are many opportunities for public input before any final decision is made.

How can we satisfy the ma-

majority of our citizen's wants and needs if only a minority of the population tells us what those wants and needs are before we make a decision!

Because we live in a small town, we are more dramatically affected by the decisions made for our community than are people in larger cities and towns. This also gives us, as a group and individually, the opportunity and responsibility to share our input and ideas on just about any subject or decision that may arise relating to the city, and have that input or ideas considered in the decision-making process.

It doesn't bode well for the future if we complain after the fact about a decision we don't like, when we were unwilling to attend a workshop or public hearing regarding that decision. Those of you on a tight schedule can use e-mail and snail mail to make your ideas known.

My family and friends know I am not one to say, "we need to do this" and do nothing after that. I believe in getting things done. (I like to think that is the reason I was elected). I also know that the success of any endeavor takes a lot of effort from many different people to plan, initiate and see a project through to its fruition.

In a public environment, the experience and knowledge that can be realized from the varied backgrounds of a community's populace is a great advantage, but only if it is shared. It is a waste of our "Social Capital" if it remains silent. (That is to say, if you remain silent.)

So, I am challenging you. Please do not hinder progress with apathy. Find the time to attend a city council meeting (1st & 3rd Monday of every month - 7:00 p.m.), Planning Commission meeting (1st & 3rd Thursday of every month) or a workshop and/or public hearing. They are listed in the "Public Notice" section of this newspaper and in many different locations around town, as well as in the city newsletter.

I would be willing to wager, and I do not gamble as a rule (you can ask my wife), that you will attend another. Take part in the development of our city's future and enjoy the satisfaction that comes from a sense of ownership in our community's success.

There are many important issues facing our city. Instead of wasting time and energy complaining "after the fact," contribute your experience and knowledge to the effort needed to bring about decisions that will benefit our community.

I look forward to working with you, side by side, and sharing our combined spirit, energy and ideas to make Vernonia a more satisfying and rewarding place to live.

THE CHOICE IS YOURS!

**Glen Purvey  
City Councilor  
Vernonia**

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## Salem Report

By Rep. Elaine M. Hopson  
Second District

MARCH 2, 2001

FEBRUARY 23, 2001

It was extremely rewarding to be appointed by the Speaker to the newly established Legislative Task Force on Funding for Senior and Disabled Services. Faced with serious budget concerns, this group is charged with identifying ways to maintain support for our seniors and disabled — some of our most vulnerable citizens. This appointment balances out my life-long passion for the education of children with my great desire to care for our seniors and those with disabling conditions. Meetings are scheduled around the state to hear problems and, hopefully, we will be able to come up with some solutions and resources to address the issues.

The need for health services in the schools was addressed in House Education. Limited funding is available for support in this area and legislation has been proposed that would continue to support some of the School Based Health Clinics currently in service. Although I strongly support health services for children who are unable to access it in any other manner, I am dismayed that we continue to fund the same schools and no District 2 schools are within the current operations. With more and more children in need of medication during the day, additional immunization requests, and routine emergency needs often encountered in our schools, we need to make sure we can meet the needs of our young people.

The Coastal Caucus continues to address the challenges of maintaining hatcheries while assessing the type of work they are doing. Keeping track of the "science" is challenging and changing, but science does that. Several other issues are pertinent to the North Coast, including a recognition of the importance of having a point person on the preparation and implementation of plans for the Lewis and Clark Celebration.

I attended a meeting with Senator [Gordon] Smith's office on March 23 to discuss some of the transportation issues on the Coast and in particular Highway 101. The discussions focused on safety and evacuation issues, but we also discussed the viability of increasing economic development with the increase in road capacity. Cooperation between and among the various agencies — U.S. Forest Service, Oregon Department of Forestry, Parks, counties, and others is critical and forthcoming. Safety issues are of first priority but the viability of communities is also very important.

Two bills related to education passed from the House this week after considerable discussion and debate. The first (HB 2682) dealt with eliminating the liability of school staff members (most often school secretaries) from prosecution when they dispense medication to students. Although we would like to be in a world where every school had a trained medical person to perform these functions, we don't. The law still requires training, oversight of these duties will continue, and all safety aspects will be carefully considered. The second bill (HB 2752) extended the timeline for the foreign language requirement for high school graduation.

It was my pleasure to speak before the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources in support of the Oregon Department of Forestry's budget. The timing was very appropriate as I had just been part of the group visiting the God's Valley sites on Saturday, February 28, where a number of people had the opportunity to discuss the State Forest issues with representatives of the Oregon Department of Forestry. Although not everyone agrees on the specifics of the management of the forest, all were heard and good discussion and education ensued.

Secretary of Education Rodney Paige addressed the legislators March 2 and described the details of President Bush's plan for educational achievement. It was very encouraging to hear the Secretary commend Oregon's educators on what they have already done in the areas of assessment and accountability. Specifically, he mentioned the Quality Education Model (QEM), a model for identifying the needs of an ideal school and then determining how to use resources to "purchase" what the local district wants. Secretary Paige also stressed that the federal government should allow flexibility at the local level and let the state legislatures do the "heavy lifting." Of great concern at the national level is the wide achievement gap between our disadvantaged and our advantaged.

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