

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Law enforcement: too much or not enough?

It's not easy being a police officer. Some people complain about over-zealous law enforcement, others about insufficient police response. Sometimes both points of view are right and sometimes they're both wrong.

Some actions, however, will always bring criticism and they are totally unnecessary.

1. Treat people as though they have no right to complain. In other words, treat citizens (who may also be taxpayers) as though you are too busy or too important to be bothered by their petty problems. Act as though they should be impressed with *your* position, not as though you are a public employee.

2. When you are confronted by someone who is upset, use abusive language and posture, especially when you know you can make them even more upset. If the person is using abusive language to you, respond with more of it, that way you can show them how professional you are.

3. If there's a problem you don't want to deal with, ignore it. Don't want to bother with nuisance abatements? Ignore them. Don't want to bother with noise complaints? Ignore them. Don't want to bother with making sidewalks safe to walk on. Ignore it. Don't want to bother with animal complaints. Ignore them. Save yourself for the important matters.

4. If someone actually ignores all of the above and finally complains publicly, act shocked.

Seriously, being a police officer isn't easy but, no matter what your job, the head in the sand routine just doesn't work.

Equally ineffective is for the public to spend a lot of time being mad at the police...whether they are paying attention or not.

It is time for the Vernonia City Council to make some decisions. If officers need further training, provide it. That's a lot smarter and more cost effective than replacing an officer.

If more oversight is needed, bring in someone who knows how to set up the situation so it works for both the officers and the public.

It is foolish to let the current situation continue. If the council doesn't act, the result will be exactly what we have now: Complaints are made and after the council talks a lot about the complaints, nothing happens.

Look at No. 3 and 4 above. Leadership starts with the policy makers, not with city employees.

Letters are backed up

Only 10 inches of letters from readers are printed in this issue of The INDEPENDENT, and more than 50 inches are waiting, a situation we find frustrating.

Also waiting are a feature on the Vernonia Youth Corps, and one on a watershed recovery effort. We don't let things back up on purpose, but sometimes we have no choice.

We should be able to get all of the letters in the June 20 issue, but we can't guarantee it. Nevertheless, your letters haven't been tossed; they will be published.



Salem Scene

By Rep. Elaine M. Hopson
Second District

The need for a state "savings account" or "rainy day fund" has long been discussed. However, it is very hard to set aside money for an emergency when there aren't enough funds available to meet identified needs. (Most of us can compare that with our personal budgets and needs.) HJR 33A would refer a constitutional amendment to the voters and HB 2057A would create a statutory plan to set up an Economic Security Fund (ESF). Either (constitutional amendment or statute) would appropriate money from the general fund and put it into a state savings account. Both plans establish specific criteria that would have to be met in order to use the fund in time of an extreme economic downturn.

I voted for both of these bills because I believe it is irresponsible to not have an emergency fund. I would prefer the statutory method for time to evaluate the method; however, I would not be opposed to a constitutional amendment if that were chosen.

A bill was presented that would have closed the polls two hours earlier on election day, so folks would have to make it to the polls by 6:00 p.m. The bill passed out of committee but was stopped on the floor and sent back to committee. The carrier said there were "slight Constitutional problems" which means there weren't enough votes to move it. Thank goodness. Many folks need the hours from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. to get to the polls after work. In fact, 140,000 of the ballots cast last November were turned in between 5:00 and 8:00 p.m., and that was a vote-by-mail election.

The House again took action to ban the raising of gamecocks for shipment out-of-state to be used in cockfighting. The bill passed the House 49-11 and was sent to the Senate, where it was not going to receive a hearing. Then the House received a bill from the Senate banning animal sexual abuse, saw an opportunity to reintroduce the ban on gamecock raising and selling and combined the two. After passing overwhelmingly in the House, this new bill covering both issues is now back in the Senate awaiting a decision as to whether or not the Senate will accept the House amendment banning the raising and selling of gamecocks.

After months (even years) of discussion regarding the need for improvements in our transportation system, a compromise plan seems to

be emerging. The current plan has the support of former competing factions and does not implement a gas tax, reflecting the will of the people as indicated by the election a year ago. It does raise title fees to \$30 on new cars and when used cars are sold. In addition, title fees for trailers of more than 8,000 pounds and trucks of more than 26,000 pounds would be \$90. These fee increases are to raise monies to pay off bonds used for a variety of road projects.

We have been dealing with "environmental" issues. By that, I mean potential laws that strive to balance the need to protect our valuable environment with the demands we all place on the environment to live our lives and produce our livelihood. This battle will never end and it should not. Several bills dealt with the distinction between and support for hatchery fish and "native" fish. Also in the mix is a definition of what "native" fish are and what the definition of "science" is.

It was refreshing to find a resolution to the issue of State Accident Insurance Fund (SAIF) versus Liberty Northwest (and others). It has long been a contention that SAIF had an unfair advantage in providing employer insurance due to its quasi-governmental status. Private corporations felt they could not compete, while those receiving SAIF services were very satisfied, and LNW said they could no longer afford to operate in Oregon. After a great deal of work, both sides agreed to a bill that allows some oversight of SAIF operations and financial status. This will provide time for careful analysis of the situation without a rancorous investigation.

The budget and the issue of the kicker continue to take top billing and that will no doubt continue until the final gavel is tapped (sooner rather than later, I hope). It now appears the federal retirees will be paid from next years' budget. The important issue here is that they are paid and that is going to happen. The second issue is that it appears that money will be taken from the overall K-12 budget. Although the number may appear to remain at \$5.2 billion, other funds may not be forthcoming. For example, new money from the federal government for special programs (disabled students, English language instruction), may be used as part of that \$5.2 billion rather than being additional money as intended by the federal budget. There is also a reduction in the projection of local revenues that would amount to about \$18 per student per year. (Local revenue is included within the \$5.2 billion.)

As always, I look forward to hearing from you.