

The INDEPENDENT

Serving the upper Nehalem River valley. Published twice monthly, on the first and third Wednesdays of each month, by Public Opinion Laboratory Ltd., 725 Bridge Street, Vernonia, OR 97064, as a free newspaper. Editors and Publishers, Dirk & Noni Andersen. Phone/Fax: 503-429-9410, e-mail: noni@vernonia.com

Opinion

Public service is not personal preference

Public service is not always easy, but it is a choice — and those who choose it need to remember they are working for the public, not just their own philosophical preferences. Though examples abound of public servants who line their pockets, most selfish public servants have a different vice: They line their egos.

There are two good times to find out what a politician is really like — one is when he is caught in wrongdoing of some sort, the other is when money is tight. Difficult times are when private principles overwhelm public proclamations.

With the state budget reeling from a recession, we have found out what the Republican leaders in Salem are like. They won't increase taxes on cigarettes because poor people would buy fewer cigarettes and taxes would decrease. But it's okay to reduce funds for the Oregon Health Plan, elder assistance and education (These are the same people who publicly proclaimed support for education while seeking election.).

They also claim fiscal responsibility while a.) taking principal from an education trust fund; b.) taking principal from the tobacco settlement fund for health care; and c.) pushing some payments into the next fiscal year *and* taking most of the cash reserve that was to provide operating capital at the start of the next fiscal year. Next year's budget is \$500 million in the hole before they even look at it. This is the "Buy Now, Pay Later" school of fiscal responsibility!!

At the idea of raising taxes, these same leaders say, "We shouldn't raise taxes when the economy is bad." While the economy was booming, they said, "We shouldn't raise taxes when the economy is good." Well, if the state's credit rating is reduced, we will lose a lot more than we would have with increased taxes.

Our county commissioners aren't playing shell games with our taxes, but they need to require a great deal more accountability from their department heads *and themselves*. We're seeing a lot of money spent in the Road Department; lots of equipment, lots of employees, even office remodeling — but little pavement on the ground. Some county roads, including Mellinger and Knott St., aren't even on the maintenance schedule! Real fiscal responsibility is never easy but it is both satisfying and necessary.

THE LIGHTS ARE ON...



BUT NOBODY'S HOME !!

March 2002
Public Opinion Laboratory Ltd.

Ike Says . . .

By Dale Webb, member
Nehalem Valley Chapter Izaak Walton League

Many of you may have been following the tuberculosis (TB) outbreak on the captive elk ranch near John Day, in Eastern Oregon. While this outbreak is a long way from Vernonia, the threat to hunting in all of Oregon is real. Elk ranching is currently in operation in 16 locations around Oregon, including an operation in the Saddle Mountain Unit.

The history of the outbreak in the John Day herd, so far, is that only one elk has tested positive with TB and that was after the animal's death. This animal had been tested for the disease numerous times before and the results had been negative. It is obvious that the TB test is deficient in detecting the disease in a timely manner. Currently, testing is being done to determine the exact strain of tuberculosis in hopes that the contact location can be determined. The elk that tested positive came from an elk ranch in Montana that had been quarantined for a TB outbreak.

At the time of the discovery of the outbreak there was talk of destroying the remaining elk and cattle from the herd that the infected elk cohabited with. At press time none of the animals had been killed, but two more elk died of unknown causes. If the animals are depopulated the ranch owners will be compensated for their losses at fair market value. A prize bull elk could be worth \$10,000 and the total cost for depopulating both the elk and cattle herd involved could be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. This cost will be borne by you, the taxpayer.

Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife is also

talking about conducting expensive testing of surrounding wildlife that may have come in contact with the diseased animal. In fact, it has been documented that wild elk came in contact with the infected herd on two occasions in the last two years. Originally, ODF&W planned to conduct an aerial gunning assault on the surrounding deer and elk herds, and collect the animals for testing. Originally slated for collection were 250 deer and 100 elk, but a review of the state statute prohibiting shooting from an aircraft does not provide an exception in cases like the ongoing one. (This raises the question of how federal animal control has permission to shoot coyotes from the air on the behalf of the cattle and sheep industry?) Now a more laborious ground collection method will have to be conducted and a viable sampling of animals will not be collected before the wild deer and elk return to their summer ranges. If testing is positive for TB among the wild deer and elk, a massive depopulation effort may be in the future to try and remove the infected animals. Hunters may be included this fall during deer and elk seasons by having samples taken from their kills at mandatory check stations in the surrounding hunt units. The cost for all this extra effort will most likely come from sportsmen, who fund ODF&W.

It is interesting to note that ODF&W is in charge of regulating elk ranching in Oregon. Funding for this operation comes from both elk ranchers and sportsmen. Currently, each elk rancher pays \$5.00 per year for a license, bringing in a grand total of \$80, while sportsmen pick up the rest of the tab, estimated at \$25,000 per

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