

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Oregon Legislature is truly remarkable!

What a bunch, our state legislature! They are pleased to have come up with a "balanced" budget — and it required only three special sessions!

What courage! They actually increased the cigarette tax...well, sort of. At least they referred an increase to the voters, that's almost courageous, isn't it? And statewide special elections only cost a little bit of money, don't they?

How perceptive they are, too! The voters made it quite clear in the last election that they disapproved of budget balancing by taking \$220 million out of an education trust fund that had only \$300 million in it. But our perceptive legislature knows the voters *really* want to decimate that trust fund, so they put it back on the ballot with just a little less money involved!

And their accounting abilities are truly remarkable, too—almost as good as the accounting in those companies that capture headlines every day...Enron, Global Crossing, WorldCom, Tyco.

Our legislature is just as creative as those companies, too. After all, it takes a great imagination to pretend that this year's expenses don't matter because we won't account for them until next year.

And what's this big hurrah about education being underfunded? Hey, if schools really need money for something as trivial as education, our legislature will let them borrow it! After all, paying interest isn't really like spending money, is it? Besides, when those overprivileged kids get out of public school, they can pay for this year's balanced budget!

What courage! What perceptiveness! What creative accounting! What imagination!

Kidding aside, the budget put together by this legislature is a parody. Pretending that even a small part of this year's expenses don't exist if they aren't paid until the next biennium is nothing but a way to blatantly ignore the balanced budget requirement. Not only do those fiscal obligations exist, they will cause the budgeting process of the next biennium to start in a deep hole. This legislature not only failed to balance the budget, they left the fruits of their failure to be reaped by the next legislature.

What a grotesque imitation of a responsible legislature.

AT HOME '52

I can't believe it costs 3 cents to mail a letter now! Why that's 300 percent inflation in past 20 years.

Gosh, just think about it. At this rate in 50 years, it might cost us 12 or 15 cents!



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First meeting for new superintendent

Vernonia School District Superintendent Mike Funderburg began his tenure with a teambuilding workshop, July 11, for the board of directors and key administrators. According to Funderburg, his goal was to allow key staff an opportunity to talk frankly with board members, and help board members understand their leadership roles, improve communications and increase trust within both the district and the larger community.

Board chair Carla Strand felt that the workshop was successful and will allow the board and the staff to "go from there and accomplish great things."

A short business meeting followed the workshop.

Deputy Clerk Dawn Plews presented the board with a proposal from JBL&K Risk Services, the district's insurance agent. The district's 2001-2002 policy included triple coverage for earthquake and flood, with coverage under the district's main liability insurance, national flood insurance and additional excess earthquake and flood coverage. According to Plews, the excess coverage was purchased in 1997 at a very reasonable cost. However, the cost to renew the excess coverage has increased to nearly \$9,000. Plews explained that funds to purchase the excess coverage would have to be taken from other areas of the budget, as this cost was not included in the approved budget. The board decided, instead, to drop the excess coverage. The district will still have \$19,484,438 of liability coverage, including earthquake and flood coverage.

Funderburg brought the district's policy on out-of-district placement for students to the board's attention for review. Last year, 18 students from the Vernonia district were enrolled in other school districts, resulting in the transfer of approximately \$90,000 in revenue, because state school funds follow students to the districts where they are enrolled.

Funderburg proposed that decisions on out-of-district placement first be presented for consideration by a three person committee. The board was in agreement with the proposal and the committee was formed, composed of Strand, Funderburg and board member Randy Hansen. A second committee, with board members Jim Krahn and Tim Titus and Funderburg, will determine the topics for future board workshops.

In other business, the board re-elected Strand to the position of chairman and elected Hansen vice-chairman. They also took care of many "housekeeping" details required at the first meeting of the fiscal year:

- Designated Funderburg Chief Administrative & Budget Officer, Custodian of Funds, and Representative of Federal/State & Grant Applications.
- Designated the District Auditor, Insurance Agent, Newspaper of Record and Attorney of Record.
- Set district borrowing limit.
- Set substitute teacher pay.
- Set 2002-03 board meeting dates.
- Adopted health and science textbooks.