

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### Nonvoters make travesty of democratic elections, II

A letter on the opposite page makes the point that the 9-1-1 levy failed because some registered voters didn't cast a ballot. The writer also recounts some of the reasons why voters approved the measure that, basically, counts the non-existent ballots of registered voters.

Obviously, those who didn't vote are responsible for failure of the levy, but the reasons given for approving the double majority system are not valid because there are effective ways to guard against either sandbagging agencies or block voters, without penalizing those who care enough to vote.

A "super majority," which requires a minimum of 60 percent (or 66 percent) voter approval for fiscal measures, is not at all unusual. This method provides incentive for both proponents and opponents. Another method, that isn't quite as common, is requiring that elections on money measures be held only at specified times...general elections or primary elections, as a rule.

The point intended, but obviously not made clear, is that each vote should count, which can't happen when non-voters can invalidate an election.

### Economic development interests local businesses

It was no surprise that turnout for the recent Town Hall meeting on economic development was somewhat smaller than the number who turned out to complain about the police department. After all, it is much easier to complain than it is to deal with something as amorphous as "economic development."

Nevertheless 35-40 people spent an evening getting started on the process — then asked for another meeting to continue working on plans.

Those in attendance included local business people, council members, and some folks who either want to or plan to open businesses in Vernonia. Another small, but very important, segment of the audience was composed of students who are taking an economics class at Vernonia High School. They may have been bored stiff, but they were attentive and responded well when asked questions.

*All Opinions on this page are written by the editor.*



### Opinion: A spoonful of money is no cure

It is no longer possible to be surprised at the fiscally irresponsible government in Washington, D.C. After all those years of loudly decrying the "tax and spend Democrats," the Republicans refuse to be outdone.

No, they don't want taxes to cover the costs of government, this group just borrows and spends. Of course, that's a great way to pass the debt on to someone else and they sure aren't shy about saddling future generations with megatons of debt.

Sometimes, though, they do get just a little bit annoyed when their addiction to spending money they don't have is mentioned in public. Then they do something grand...like loudly proclaiming the wonders of a Medicare drug benefit that won't benefit anybody except pharmaceutical and insurance companies.

So what is this wonderful thing congress is doing for our senior citizens?

As of Nov. 19, 2003, the agreement on a Medicare drug bill would cost an estimated \$400 Billion over ten years, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and much more in succeeding decades as drug prices continue to rise. Because the legislation is not

paid for, it will contribute to our long-term fiscal problems — and we already have the largest deficit in our nation's history.

Do our senior and disabled citizens need help with drug costs. Yes, and so do the rest of us.

Nevertheless, this legislation has no provisions to rein in the escalating cost of drugs. These legislators don't want to use Medicare's huge purchasing power to negotiate lower prices, as is done by the Veterans Administration and Medicaid.

There is one section called "cost-containment" that will actually pass on increased costs, not just to seniors, but to low- and middle-income households. This is because of a provision that will increase premiums and payroll taxes even if Medicare costs increase *more slowly* than projected.

Price gouging is okay. Excess profits are okay. Getting rich off of workers' stolen pensions is okay.

Our poorest elderly will pay more. Working people will pay more. We will be told how wonderful this is. Honest legislators will be castigated for refusing to buy this hogwash.

Ah, Republican "cost-containment."