

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Is it a fee or is it a tax?

More than 50 percent of Columbia County voters did something remarkable this month...they voted!

The result of the vote was to overwhelmingly defeat a proposed increase in the mineral depletion fee that is paid to Columbia County by sand and gravel companies. Most of the 15 cent/ton fee is used for road maintenance so it was surprising to see the resounding defeat.

It would be instructive to know whether people voted against the increase because they felt it was exorbitant, or because they believed the gravel industry ads that called the measure a tax. There could well be many other reasons, also, but there are no exit polls in Oregon because we vote by mail and no longer have polling places.

Is it DSL or is it not DSL?

At the Vernonia Council meeting last Monday, City Administrator Mike Sykes said he was told by Merle Gallagher, the local (and very competent) Verizon representative, that approximately 300 Vernonians are now using DSL services.

The following day, a local woman stopped to ask if DSL is, or is not, going to be available here, because she wanted to sign up. We assured her that it is available now.

We weren't exactly correct, however, because she had called Verizon last Monday and was told, "DSL isn't available in Vernonia."

Obviously, the person she talked with made an error, but the result was the same as if DSL weren't available. So, depending on who you talk with, DSL either is, or is not, available in Vernonia.

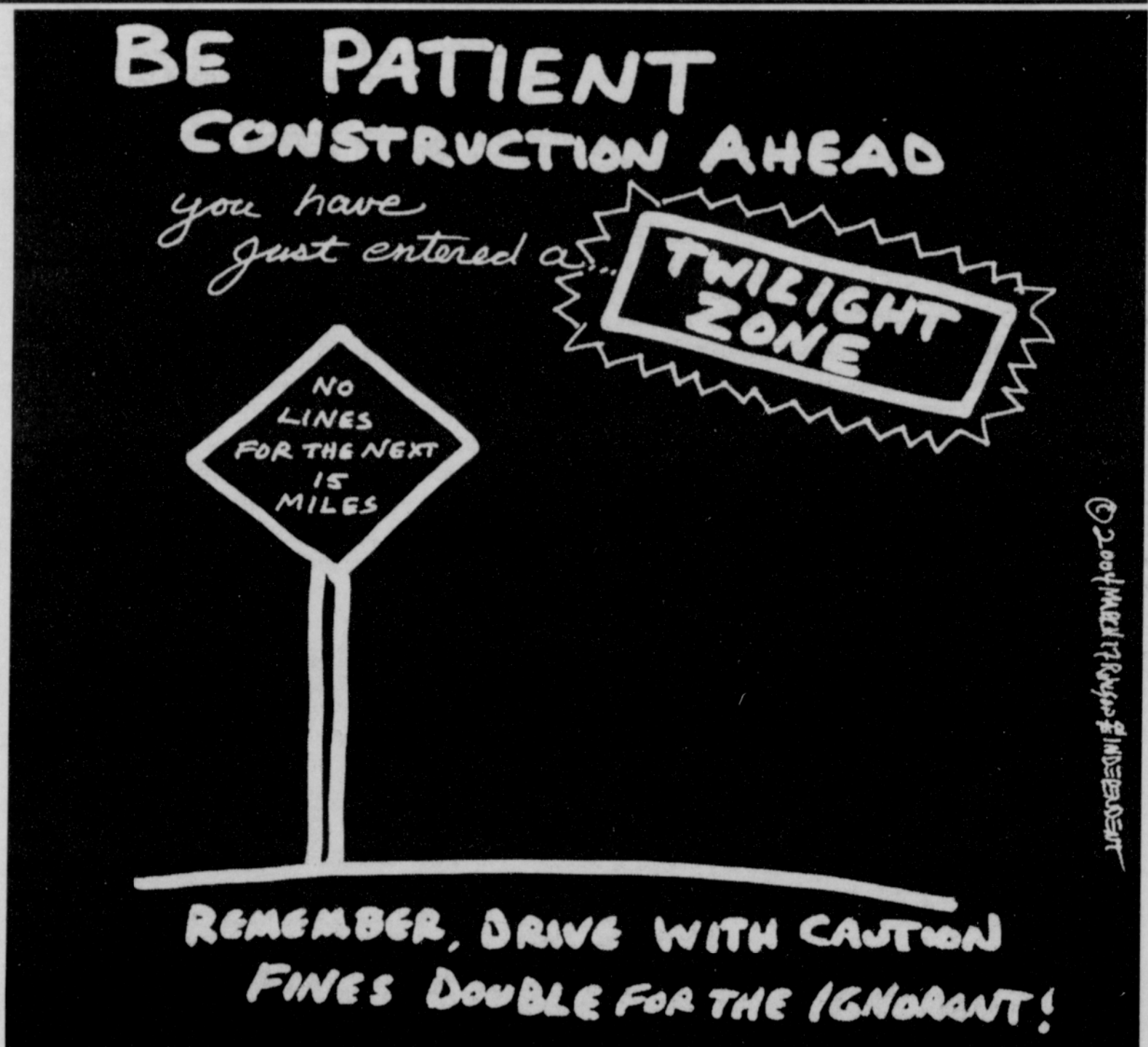
Don't give up. We really are part of the 21st century.

Can't afford to save this way

On a personal note, I have experienced something interesting since passage of the Medicare prescription bill.

The cost of a medication I must use daily, increased by 129 percent from December to February. At this rate, it will soon be impossible to pay for "affordable" prescriptions.

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Candidates seek Commission positions

Seven candidates have filed nomination papers for one of the two open positions on the Columbia County Board of Commissioners in the May 18 Primary Election.

On the Democratic ballot, Commissioner Joe Corsiglia, the incumbent in Position 1, is being challenged by Gary H. Heide. Both candidates are residents of St. Helens.

Two Republicans are also seeking Position 1. Colleen DeShazer of Warren, who is president of the board of directors for the Port of St Helens, will face Glenn E. Dorschler of Scappoose.

Republican Tony Hyde, Position 3 incumbent, will be unopposed on the Republican ballot.

Three Democrats are seeking the opportunity to run against Hyde in Novem-

ber - Rosemary M. Lohrke of Scappoose, William R. Daemke of Deer Island, and Steven Sickles of St. Helens.

Incumbent candidates for two additional elective positions in the county are unopposed in the primary - Sheriff Phil Derby and County Surveyor Phil Dewey.

Also unopposed is Treasurer candidate Ruth M. Baker, County Financial Officer. Baker has been performing the duties of the treasurer as an appointee, since the resignation of the prior treasurer.

Following are additional candidates who will be unopposed in the primary election:

- Circuit Court Judge, 19th District, Berkeley Smith, of Warren.

- State Representative, District 31, Betsy Johnson, of Scappoose.

I believe there are more instances of the abridgement of the freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpations.

- James Madison