

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Don't like how "they" do it? File nomination papers now

March 1 is the deadline to file nomination papers for election to school and fire district boards. These are unpaid positions that require time, thought and effort—when they are done right—which is not as simple as it may seem.

Banks, Vernonia and Mist will all have positions on the May 11 ballot. Let's start with fire districts:

Vernonia Rural Fire Protection District – Positions 1 and 5, held by Frank Cieloha and Steve Weller.

Mist-Birkenfeld Rural Fire Protection District – Positions 3, 4 and 5, held by Bill deJaeger, Trish Wright and Troy Horton.

Banks Fire District – Positions 1 and 3, held by Joe Evers and Steve Harr.

There are school district vacancies, too:

Banks School District – Positions 1, 2 and 4, held by Doug Nordholm, Willis Meeuwssen and Angi Duyck.

Vernonia School District – Positions 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7, held by Ed Buckner, Gienah Cheney, Cari Levenseller, Jim Krahn and Phil Doyle.

Obviously, there are lots of positions on the ballots and all are for four-year terms except Vernonia School District Position 7, which is for two years.

Some of the incumbents have indicated they will seek re-election, some do not plan to, others haven't yet decided. The questions for those considering placing their names on the ballot should be:

- Do I have the time?
- Will I do my homework?
- Am I an independent thinker or a rubber stamp?
- Am I willing to speak out when I think alternative approaches should be considered?
- Am I doing this for "glory" (a really dumb idea)?

Nomination papers and instructions are available from the appropriate school or fire district offices, and from county election offices. There will be two ways to place your name in nomination. One is to pay a small fee when you file your papers, the other is to file petitions with the required number of signatures for your district.

In any case, March 1 is the deadline for anyone who wants to try and help their community with dedicated service in important, though unpaid, roles.

I COULD NEVER GROW A BEARD OR MUSTACHE BY Dr. Lagoon



Salem Scene

By Representative Brad Witt
Oregon House District 31



I am just finishing my second week as your State Representative and I am pleased to report that our staff is hard at work and the office is running smoothly. Last Friday, February 4, I received my two committee assignments – General Government and Information Management & Technology. General Government meets Tuesday and Thursday mornings while Information Management & Technology meets Tuesday and Thursday afternoons. The General Government committee will handle all of the bills relating to state government, the relationship between the state and Indian nations, wildland fire fighting, and many other areas where state government interacts with other governments. The Information Management & Technology Committee will review the manner in which state government handles the information that is collected from each of us, including most significantly, the security of our personal information. That information ranges from taxes to driver and car licenses to hunting permits and much more.

On Monday, February 7, I voted for House Joint Memorial 1, which asks Congress to continue payments to Oregon counties from our federal timberlands. These monies are paid in lieu of property taxes. HJM1 will be sent by our State

Legislature to Congress and President Bush requesting reauthorization of the timber receipts safety net for schools, roads, and county general fund uses. In 2003, Oregon's share of these receipts totaled nearly \$270 million. With the current budget cuts at the federal level, the Oregon Legislature and all Oregonians will have to work very hard to make sure that Oregon's timber dependent counties are adequately compensated by our federal government.

While it is always busy at the Capitol, my committees do not meet on Mondays and Wednesdays. That means that Monday and Wednesday will usually be the best days to make an appointment to see me or to just drop by our office. I will try to leave Salem early on Fridays for meetings in our District. You can always contact me by calling 503-986-1431 or by e-mailing me at rep.bradwitt@state.or.us to set-up a late Friday afternoon or weekend meeting near your neighborhood.

Issues of Interest:

One of the issues the legislature will take up this session is whether health insurance policies should give equal coverage or "parity" to coverage of mental health conditions. Three bills have been introduced to address this issue: Senate Bill 1, Senate Bill 298 and House Bill 2326. These bills would prohibit insurers from being more restrictive for mental health conditions than for other medical conditions. The Senate Bills are in the Health Policy Committee, 503-986-1485. The House Bill is in Business, Labor and Consumer Affairs, 503-986-1621.