

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Work of volunteer officials should not be overlooked

It is easy, and wrong, to overlook the efforts of elected officials, particularly the volunteers who fill city councils, school boards, fire district boards and all the other positions that are vital to the citizens who are affected by the actions of these officials.

Conversely, those who seek these positions should not overlook their responsibilities, either. These positions are not ceremonial; they require a lot of study if the officials are to do their jobs adequately.

It is frustrating to citizens who attend public meetings in hope of learning how their city or district operates, when they feel that decisions have been made in private and are voted on without public discussion. This is most likely to occur because volunteer officials don't want to say anything publicly that might upset anyone. Nevertheless, public discussion of public affairs is absolutely necessary if the goal is public trust.

Also frustrating to citizens are decision-makers who abstain from voting on a particular issue. Again, this is usually because they don't want to upset anyone, but (unless there is a conflict of interest, which hasn't been declared) it is an abdication of their responsibility. An issue that is sensitive, requires clear responses.

These positions are important. The volunteers who use their time and effort to fill them deserve respect. The voters who elected them, however, also deserve respect, in the form of conscientious office holders.

No reason for boredom

There are some very interesting public presentations scheduled locally.

The next Chautauqua program at the Vernonia Public Library is "Coyote Tales from the Northwest" on Saturday, January 21, at 2:00 p.m. Curt Yehnert, a professor of English at Western Oregon University, combines aspects of folklore, mythology and anthropology as he retells and creates a cultural context for Coyote tales told in the Pacific Northwest.

The Vernonia Pioneer Museum has scheduled "Museum Talks" throughout the year. January 29 will feature stories about Nettie Lloyd, who was a midwife in Vernonia, and the grandmother of Nancy Dailey, who will present the talk.



Salem Scene

By Representative Brad Witt
Oregon District 31



On the move in Oregon—Senate Bill 71

One of the hallmarks of the 2005 Legislative Session was the concerted effort to pull this State out of the economic doldrums. Oregon sank deeper and stayed longer in the recession that gripped us in 2003 and 2004, than any other state in the union. With this in mind, Senate Bill 71 was introduced at the request of Governor Kulongoski. This bill came to be known as the Connect Oregon proposal, and its intent was to address serious transportation problems throughout the state and at the same time create jobs. SB 71 authorizes the issuance of lottery bonds to establish a Multimodal Transportation Fund to be used to provide grants and loans for air, marine, and rail transportation projects.

It is encouraging to know that SB 71 provides that 15% of the funds generated from the bond sales will be allocated to projects in each of five regions in the state. This means that projects will not just be concentrated in large metropolitan areas, but that rural communities will benefit as well. Those of us in outlying communities often suffer from inadequate services, and our low-income workers, the elderly and those with disabilities depend on organized transportation to ac-

cess employment, medical services and other life sustaining resources.

I'm pleased to have been able to support this bill, and I encourage those of you involved in transportation projects to submit applications to the Oregon Transportation Commission for review.

Stop the Outsourcing – House Bill 2924

This decade has been marked with an outpouring of jobs from the United States to points unknown. It is difficult to forbid private industry from engaging in this activity, but we can limit what your state government does. Rep. Diane Rosenbaum and I were chief sponsors of a bill to prohibit state agencies from awarding contracts for services that would be performed outside of the United States, except under special circumstances.

I feel that international outsourcing exacerbates unemployment and workforce dislocation, deprives Oregon residents of job opportunities and deprives Oregon of industries and jobs this state has expended resources to attract. It erodes state and local revenues, and it may also jeopardize the protection of personal information in the course of delivering the service.

This bill was a good idea that, unfortunately, did not make it through the process. But it is an issue that is on everyone's mind and it is not going away. Again, it is an economic issue that either has already touched your family or will at some time in the future. I look forward to taking another run at this in the next session.