

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Columbia County Sheriff's levy is very well planned

Columbia County has been trying, for several years, to increase funding for law enforcement through voter approved operating levies. They have not been successful, particularly in the Nehalem Valley.

This newspaper did not endorse the previous efforts because funds were never dedicated to this underserved area. Additionally, previous levies had no guarantee that the funds would be used for road deputies, instead of the jail. That has changed.

The county now has an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with the State of Oregon to house up to 40 inmates daily at the Columbia County Jail. The state will rent bed and care for the inmates at \$65.00 per day. This contract provides a stable, guaranteed cash flow for jail operations, something that has not previously existed.

Additionally, the Board of Commissioners passed a resolution that, if the levy is approved, dedicates the funds for law enforcement — additional road deputies and sergeants, uniforms and equipment, and a *resident deputy for the Vernonia and Mist areas*. The funds will also help provide medical and behavioral drug treatment for offenders while they are in jail, a much needed program.

The commissioners and Sheriff Phil Derby have worked hard to develop a program that makes sense for all parts of the county.

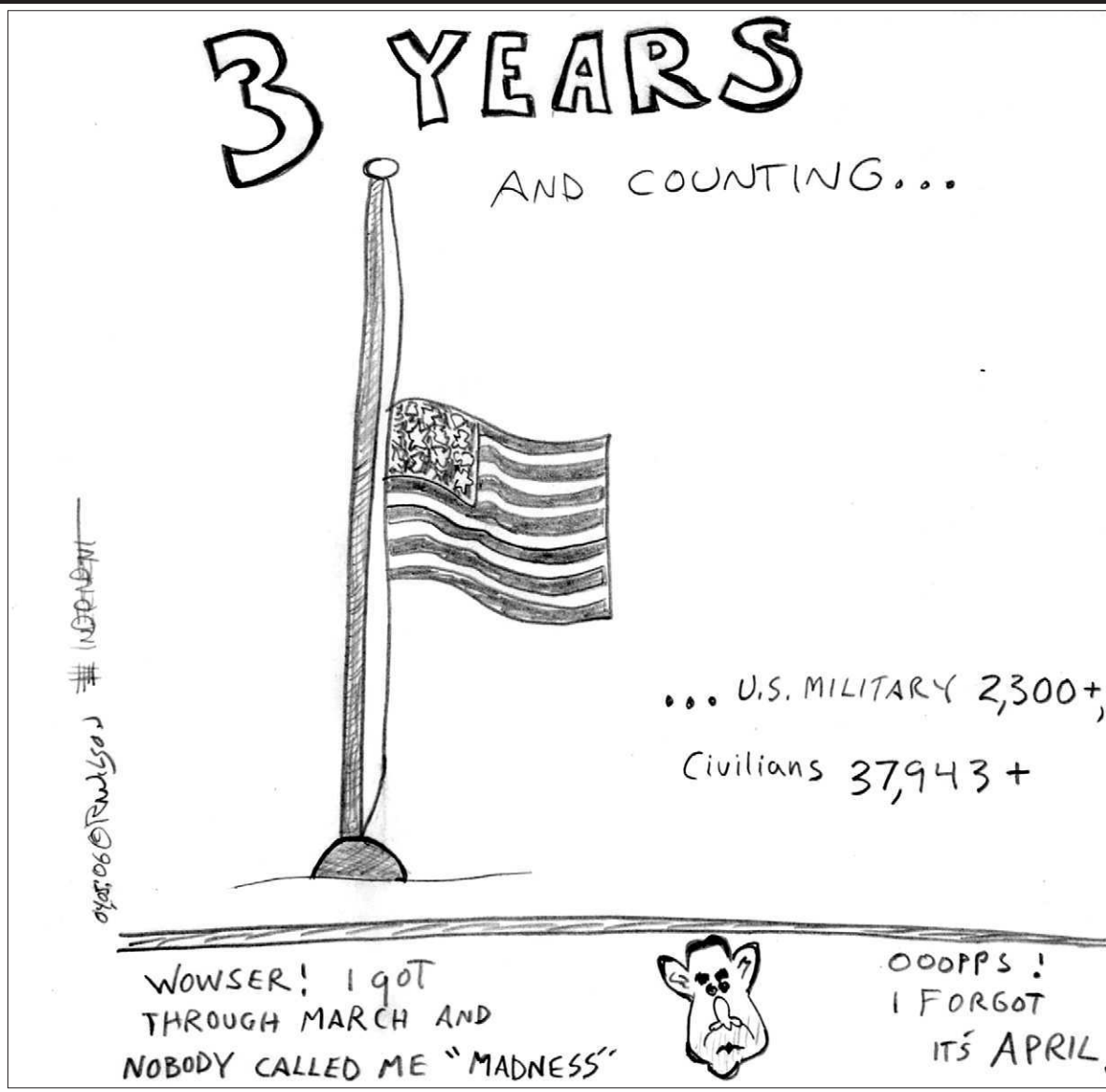
So what is the price tag? A sensible \$0.39 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

This levy request is both sensible and affordable. This time, valley citizens should support the sheriff's request for dedicated law enforcement funds.

Local lobbying effort goes to D.C.

Vernonia Mayor Sally Harrison and Vernonia City Administrator Robyn Bassett are leaving Monday morning for Washington, D.C. Their purpose is to lobby for continued community development block grants and other financial aids to small rural communities.

They deserve a great deal of thanks, too, because both officials are paying their own way, no tax dollars are being used for this trip. Bassett is also using some of her vacation time.



Ike Says . . .

By Dale Webb, member
Izaak Walton League, Nehalem Valley Chapter



Well, did you get out and do something fun on spring break? Some people got out and did some trout fishing in the lakes that are open and stocked with trout. Others headed east to look for some small game critters to hunt. The sage rats are just now starting to come out and, of course, Jackrabbits have been abundant the last couple of years. Did you get down to the beach and do some clam digging? I have heard that surf perch fishing has picked up, so next time you go down for clams, make a day of it and take your surf pole and get some delicious perch. Usually the best fishing is towards high tide, so dig your clams on a morning tide and then go eat and let the wife window shop, then head for the beach again and fish up to high slack.

The sea lions are snacking again on salmon and sturgeon in the Columbia River. Despite million-dollar gates to prevent the sea lions from entering the fish ladder, a few have managed to slip through and snack on fish. Sea lions don't have to get into the fish ladder to catch fish; they are quite successful all up and down the Columbia River. It is estimated that a sea lion needs to eat up to eight percent of its body weight every day to survive. This means at least 40 pounds of food is eaten a day, with salmon, sturgeon, shad,

lamprey and other fish being on the menu. The impact of this feasting will be high this year because of the low numbers of salmon returning. While the reason for the low return should be paramount, the sea lions also need to be addressed. Back when the Marine Mammal Protection Act was enacted, it was a good idea; sea lion numbers were low after many decades of wholesale slaughter. Today, though, the California sea lions are numerous, in fact they may have recovered in quantity to the level that Lewis & Clark saw when they made their historic visit. This would be okay, if the salmon were as numerous too, but they are not and, without intervention by man, the salmon runs and sturgeon in the Columbia may be in peril. It looks like the Fish & Game agencies of both Washington and Oregon are starting the process to petition the federal government for an exemption from the MMPA to use lethal force to curb the sea lion threat. The process will be long and most likely will face opposition, but the sea lions are not endangered, with the exception of the Stellar sea lions. Some people will try to humanize the sea lions and make the case they are cute, but if you look closely, there is not much cuddle factor when it comes to an 800-pound sea lion.

Salmon fishermen are really taking a beating this year. With the Klamath basin salmon runs in ruins, the impact on the ocean fishery along a good portion of Oregon and California's coast is pretty much up in the air. This is going to have a huge impact on local economies all up and down

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