

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### May 16 primary election

Little interest has been shown in Columbia County positions for the May 16 election. The only commissioner position on the ballot is held by Democrat Rita Bernhard, who is unopposed. No Republican filed for the primary election.

The only "race" is between long-time County Clerk Elizabeth "Betty" Huser of Scappoose, and Holly B. Freeman of Clatskanie.

A county ballot measure has attracted attention, however. If it is approved, a five-year operating levy for the Sheriff's Department will provide a resident deputy in the Vernonia-Mist-Birkenfeld area, among other improvements. Area residents have been seeking this for a long time, now they can show whether they were serious about local law enforcement.

Vernonia residents will also see a ballot measure for a general obligation bond to finance wastewater system improvements. If approved, the bond issue would add about \$400.00 per year (\$33.33 per month) to taxes on property assessed at \$100,000. According to the City's fact sheet, the \$7,000,000 bond would still be short of local project costs by about \$1,600,00, which would require increased sewer rates unless other funding sources can be found.

If the bond fails, the fact sheet says, the "typical customer's monthly sewer bill will increase to approximately \$99." But even if the bond is approved, monthly sewer rates will increase from \$37 to \$47 for the typical customer, without any consideration of the, as yet, \$1,600,00 remaining unfinanced.

In Washington Co. Commissioner Andy Duyck, District 4, will face Susan Mclain and Eddie McMullen. The Commissioner-At-Large position has Chairman Tom Brian and four challengers – Samuel M. Cone, Daniel J. Denorch, Dennis G. Holtz and Robert D. Vanderzanden.

Clatsop County has a four-way race for Commissioner, District 5, including Ann Samuelson of Jewell, who will face John R. Benson of Hamlet, and Russell Earl and John B. Dunzer, both of Seaside.

Clatsop Co. residents will also decide a levy request of \$0.09 per \$1,000 of assessed value each year for five years starting in 2006-07. The taxes would be used to finance operations and maintenance of the fairgrounds and operation of the annual County Fair. The Fair Board is considering closing the fairgrounds, except for the annual two-week fair, which would be significantly reduced to only 4-H and FFA activities. The facilities would not be available for community or private events without funding for maintenance.

**The last day to register to vote in the May 16, 2006, Primary Election is April 25th.**

**Ballots will be mailed starting April 28th.**

**If you're not registered, you can't vote. If you don't vote, don't complain about the outcome.**



## Letters

### Sheriff seeks votes for resident deputy

To the Editor:

I hope the people of the Vernonia, Mist, Birkenfeld areas will join me in voting for Measure 5-143. I have been proud to serve as your Sheriff but have not had enough money to provide the deputies to properly serve you. Measure 5-143 provides enough money to do just that. Measure 5-143 will allow us to assign a full time Resident Deputy in your area. You deserve law enforcement coverage and this measure, if passed, will provide it. Please vote YES on Ballot Measure 5-143.

**Phil Derby**  
Columbia County Sheriff

### Resident deputy is needed in this area

To the Editor:

I have lived in Vernonia for 36 years and started my law enforcement career with the City of Vernonia as a Police Reserve. I was hired by the Columbia County Sheriff's Office

in 1974 where I served the area as a "RESIDENT DEPUTY" in the Vernonia-Mist-Birkenfeld area. I did that for a short time and then was pulled out to the St. Helens area. I am now retired from the Columbia County Sheriff's Office and I have always believed that we need a "RESIDENT DEPUTY" in the area, and now we can have one. Please join me in voting YES on Ballot Measure 5-143. This will guarantee a "RESIDENT DEPUTY" in our area. It will provide more deputies and result in safer communities for us all.

**Fredric W. Oviatt**  
Vernonia

### Vote yes on levy to maintain safe living

To the Editor:

Throughout the twelve years I have resided in Columbia County, I've always appreciated the balance of our natural beauty and "small-town" atmosphere. Some of the gifts I've come to take for granted include a low crime rate, gang-free schools, negligible traffic

problems, as well as our environmental gifts of hunting, fishing, hiking and boating, etc. These are things I could only dream about while growing up in Chicago.

Each day it seems, more and more people discover Columbia County to be an attractive and viable option for raising a family. There is a discernable tension building from this constant stream of new families relocating here. It is beginning to put a strain on the very things that have always made our community attractive and livable to us.

Reasonable citizens of any society will agree that maintaining a low crime rate requires a professional police organization. Stronger enforcement is critical to sustain the livability we enjoy. Because our law enforcement has been steadily eclipsed by our County's growth, this livability is being severely threatened. In the past year we have seen startling crime incidents like high-speed car chases, bank robberies, property theft and even

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