

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

How many deaths will it take til they know...?

If 100 people disappeared from Vernonia each day, Vernonia would be empty in 23 days.

Iraq is a bit larger than twice the size of Idaho and has a population of 26,783,383 (Just for reference, Idaho's population is 1,429,096). Most of the people in Iraq are civilians.

The New York Times printed a story yesterday entitled "Iraqi Death Toll Rises Above 100 Per Day, U.N. Says." The United Nations reported Tuesday that an average of more than 100 civilians per day were killed in Iraq last month. It goes on to report that 1,778 civilians were killed in January, in February the number was 2,165, March = 2,378, April = 2,284, May = 2,669 and 3,149 in June. Why? The article said "this sharp upward trend reflected the dire security situation in Iraq as sectarian violence has worsened and Iraqi and American government forces have been unable to stop it."

The report does not say who killed all those civilians, but it does mention sectarian violence between the Sunni Arab and Shiite communities. *Newsday* wrote that before the invasion of Iraq in March, 2003, the most common cause of death was heart attacks, strokes and other chronic diseases. After the invasion, violence was the primary cause of death.

Are the Iraqi people better off than when we started helping them? The solution is not so simple as to say "we should pull our troops out" and let them do what they will. This writer doesn't know what the answer is, but can't help but be appalled at the numbers of the dead on all sides and was struck by the similarity of numbers between the civilians losses in Iraq monthly and the population of Vernonia, a number that has more meaning than the number of dollars spent so far on the war; \$297,195,750,000 (that's 297 billion, 195 million, 750 thousand) as of 5:00 p.m. on July 19, 2006, and still increasing by \$1 million every nine minutes.

A thought on democracy

"The point of complaining is not that it's going to change things. It's more kind of an existential act that is essential to democracy." Quote by Matthew Bakkom, a conceptual artist, on the history of complaints to New York mayors. From *The New York Times*, July 8, 2006.

HOO RAY! I FINALLY
GOT TO
VETO
SOMETHING!



DUH... WHAT WAS
IT I GOT TO
VETO?

BRAIN CELL RESEARCH

THE INDEPENDENT

July 06 © Rebecca Lisa

Opinion

Vernonia School Board needs lessons

The Vernonia School Board held a work session before convening their July 13 business meeting. The work session was held to interview applicants for vacancies on the school board.

According to Oregon Public Meetings law, work sessions are open to the public. This one was not. A reporter from *The Independent* was allowed to attend the work session, but the board ran it as though it were a closed door executive session.

There were two glaring violations of state statutes on public meetings:

1. There was no notification of an executive session, as is required by law. The meeting notice and the agenda specifically identified the interview period as a Work Session.

2. Even if the interviews had been called an executive session with proper notification, the purpose violated the law. That law clearly states that board questions, discussions and decisions for the purpose of appointing someone to a va-

cant elective position may not be held behind closed doors.

The Vernonia School District has a new superintendent, who was among those not allowed in the work session. At his first board meeting, he handed out copies of the public meetings law and recommended that board members familiarize themselves, particularly, with what may, and may not, be included in closed door executive sessions.

That was a good call on the superintendent's part.

There are board members, however, who have spent multiple terms on the board and have no excuse for not having learned the basics by this time.

School board members are all volunteers and are not paid for their service. Nevertheless, when they seek to place themselves in that position, they must also accept the responsibility that goes along with it, after all, we tell kids they must be responsible for their actions.