

Letters

Cost of electric heat is now less than oil

To The Editor:

My daughter lives in an older wood frame house. After hearing what she paid last year to heat her home with oil, I thought I'd run the numbers to see if she should shut off her oil furnace and use electric space heaters instead. Here are the surprising results:

At our 10¢/kwh for electricity

it would pay for her to buy the space heaters if she is paying over \$2.76/gallon for fuel oil. Our local Portland rates for fuel oil today are around \$3.40/gallon. If she had a high efficiency "condensing" burner (the kind with a warm plastic exhaust pipe rather than a hot metal flue) the switch-over point would come at \$3.70/gallon. She's buying the electric space heaters!

However, by far the lowest

cost heat in any case, even when compared with natural gas, remains an electric heat-pump. She'll be making that conversion soon.

**Nick Galaday
Vernonia**

Ballot Measure 59 is bad for seniors, others

To The Editor:

[State] Measure 59 would likely reduce services to sen-

iors and families in need of emergency housing assistance.

Community Action Team provides In-Home Assistance to seniors so they don't have to be placed in Nursing Homes. We also provide Emergency Housing Assistance to homeless families and families "at risk" of losing their housing. Both of these programs are state funded and would be jeopardized by the passage of Ballot Measure 59.

Ballot Measure 59, which creates an unlimited state tax deduction for Federal Income Taxes, would reduce the state budget by an estimated 3.4 billion dollars over the next four years. Needless to say, this large reduction in state revenue will force cuts in many, if not all, state programs.

We are currently experiencing increased demand for Senior In-Home Services and Emergency Housing Assis-

tance. Passage of Measure 59 will likely force more seniors into nursing homes and increase the number of homeless families in our community.

Sincerely,

**Rocky Johnson
Executive Director
Community Action Team
St. Helens**

"Together we can" sure sold cupcakes!

To The Editor:

Thank you for all who helped at the Sauerkraut festival.

A huge thank you to everyone who helped Saturday with the United Way of Columbia County booth to setup, take down and sell those yummy cupcakes. We had volunteers from our Board of Directors, the Senior Centers and Community Action.

We made history this year. For the first time, all five senior

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Salem Scene

By Representative Brad Witt
Oregon District 31



It seems impossible that our summer is almost over and we are settling into another school year.

Now I'd like to bring you up to date on some things that have been happening in the district that are examples of people working hard to make a difference

for all of us. These efforts are in response to the many challenges that we have experienced over the last nine months, beginning in December of '07, with the devastating storms that whipped Northwestern Oregon. So here is some of what is going on.

- **Vernonia Schools Group:** This is a diverse group composed of people from both the public and private sectors, who are committed to helping the Vernonia Community find a way to replace its flood-damaged schools. The Group has met several times, with various sub-committees working on site selection, budget and fund-raising. Needless to say, Superintendent Ken Cox and his school board members are at the heart of the effort and doing yeoman's work. The intent of the Group is to tie all objectives together and have a clear plan of action to present to the community this fall.

- **Lower Columbia River Rail Corridor Study:** This is a project funded through the Dept. of Economic Development for study of the rail corridor from the Columbia County/Multnomah County line to Tongue Point in Astoria. The study will identify which intersections and crossings in the corridor are busiest and which need to be upgraded. This study was precipitated by the addition of unit trains to an increasingly busy rail line. The study's final recommendation is due in December, with five Core Team meetings between now and then.

- **Districts 31/32 Water Districts:** This group was convened by Sen. Betsy Johnson to facilitate the exchange of information between water districts in her Senate District, which encompasses my House District and that of Rep. Deborah Boone. Representatives from several state agencies were also present to provide resource information. This was a valuable meeting with more than a dozen rural water districts in attendance, as well as nearby cities that often offer technical assistance. It was soon evident that all

of these water districts share some of the same problems, including aging infrastructure, capacity issues due to population growth, power failures and lack of manpower. An immediate benefit was information sharing about loans, grants and technical assistance offered through the Drinking Water Program.

- **Columbia County Soil and Water Conservation District:** This group obtained just over \$1 million of federal funding through the Emergency Watershed Protection Program to repair damage caused by the December '07 storms in Columbia and Clatsop Counties. There are approximately 24 projects that affect 45-50 separate properties. At a meeting on July 9, it was evident that these dedicated volunteers and staff had done their homework. Plans were well underway to complete the projects within the time constraints dictated by the program.

I also received a number of requests from constituents to advocate for two programs that require federal grant funding in order to move forward. Consequently, I contacted our Congressional delegation to express my support, and I have already heard back from Congressman Wu that he is on board. These two programs are:

- **Replacement of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in Columbia County.** The current EOC is housed in the basement of the Columbia County Courthouse in a space that has become almost unusable for proper emergency operations. Columbia County Emergency Management applied for a Dept. of Homeland Security grant in order to fund a new EOC. Columbia River Fire and Rescue has made a long-term commitment to the project by contributing operational assets and in-kind donations of land, but the project will not move forward without considerable monetary support

- **Full Funding of the federal Mitchell Act.** The Oregon Dept. of Fish and Wildlife depends significantly on funds received through this program. If the final appropriation is not adequate, ODFW will be forced to make a series of budget adjustments that will involve the possible elimination of up to 16 ODFW positions, closure of the Sandy Hatchery and decreasing production at other hatcheries. That will impact ocean fisheries from British Columbia to the Columbia River.

Please know that during this interim period, you can still contact me should you have any questions or need my assistance. My email address is rep.bradwitt@state.or.us, and my office number is 503-986-1431.

Policy on Letters

The INDEPENDENT will not publish letters that include personal attacks on private citizens. Because of space limitations, preference will be given to brief letters, 300 words or less.

All letters must be signed and include a verifiable address or phone number.

Where to Find Them

**U.S. Senator Ron Wyden
(Democrat-OR)**
1220 SW 3rd Avenue, Suite 585
Portland OR 97232
Phone: 503-326-7525
230 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.,
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: 202-224-5244
Website: <http://wyden.senate.gov>

**U.S. Senator Gordon Smith
(Republican-OR)**
One World Trade Center
121 SW Salmon St., Suite 1250
Portland, OR 97204
Phone: 503-326-3386
Fax: 503-326-2900
404 Russell Senate Ofc. Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510
Phone: 202-224-3753
Website: <http://gsmith.senate.gov>

**U.S. Representative David Wu
(Democrat-01)**
620 SW Main, Suite 606
Portland, OR 97205
Phone: 503-326-2901
Fax: 503-326-5066
2338 Rayburn Building
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: 202-225-0855
Fax: 202-225-9497
Website: <http://house.gov/wu>

**Senator Betsy Johnson
(Democrat-16)**
PO Box R,
Scappoose, OR 97056
Phone: 503-543-4046
900 Court St. NE, S-314
Salem, OR 97301
Phone: 503-986-1716
E-mail: sen.betsyjohnson@state.or.us
Website: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/johnson>

**Representative Brad Witt
(Democrat-31)**
21740 Lindberg Road,
Clatskanie, OR 97016
Phone: 503-728-4664
900 Court St. NE, H-277
Salem, OR 97301
Phone: 503-986-1431
E-mail: rep.bradwitt@state.or.us
Website: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/witt>

**Representative Deborah Boone
(Democrat-32)**
PO Box 926
Cannon Beach, OR 97110
Phone: 503-717-9182
900 Court St. NE, H-375
Salem, OR 97301
Phone: 503-986-1432
E-mail: rep.deborahboone@state.or.us
Website: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/boone>