

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### Vote yes on Measure 5-192

In 1998, Columbia County voters passed a five-year levy to fund our county's Columbia 9-1-1 Communication District service. When 9-1-1 came back five years later, in 2004, they hadn't needed all the money approved in the 1998 levy so they lowered the rate they asked for to fund 9-1-1 through 2008. How often do you see that kind of fiscal responsibility anymore? Five years ago, Columbia County voters (probably you included) voted to renew the levy at the reduced rate of .29 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

We all know how much gasoline prices, grocery prices, water and sewer rates, etc. have gone up in this past five years. Yet, 9-1-1 is still asking only for the same .29 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value (about \$58.00 a year on a house assessed at \$200,000). 9-1-1 says it can operate on that and even improve service. They have won awards for their budgets and fiscal responsibility so, if they say they can make do with that amount of money, it's believable.

It's good to know you can call 9-1-1 at any time of the day or night when you, a friend, a loved one or a neighbor needs help, and it will cost you less than it did in 1998. If you, your loved ones, friends and neighbors all vote yes, 9-1-1 can keep working for us. Each day Columbia 9-1-1 gets about 10 calls per hour, or 230 calls per day, from people who need help here in Columbia County.

This 9-1-1 levy is too good a deal to pass up – please vote yes on Measure 5-192 and keep the good Columbia County service we get now.

And speaking of what happens during emergencies, last week Vernonian Tim Jensen was driving on Hwy 47 when someone coming towards him lost control of their car and hit our local fellow. Jensen was driving a Jeep with a hard top. The top flew off, the seat belt broke at the buckle and Jensen went flying out of the vehicle as it rolled. In his words, he landed and then lay there with his head in the mud and water (it was raining that day) and the blood. That's when his roadside angel for the day showed up and held his head in her lap, and out of the water, for about 20 minutes until the ambulances and emergency vehicles got there. Jensen was Lifeflighted out but is now home recovering. We want to thank the Good Samaritan who stopped and helped. So, thank you, Kelly Davis.



**Must be Some Candidates out on the Campaign Trail!**

### Out of My Mind . . .

by Noni Andersen

Several of this November's state ballot measures spring from the fertile mind of Bill Sizemore, who earns his living by (surprise!) getting measures on the ballot. He so often tells educators how to do their jobs, how to pay teachers and even how their unions should operate, that it would appear he must be qualified to do so. Appearances are deceiving.

Sizemore isn't a teacher and doesn't have a degree in education. He does seem to have a superiority complex so deep and abiding that he knows how a classroom should be run. I'm not a teacher, either, but as a daughter, sister, spouse, daughter-in-law and friend of past and present teachers, I have been a closely connected observer of that very complex profession since before Sizemore was born.

Those decades of observation have led me to seriously question the efficacy of standardized tests as a measure of successful teaching and ask how teachers can be evaluated for "merit pay." Good teachers want students to develop the kind of intellectual curiosity that becomes a springboard for lifelong learning. While academic performance at grade level is a necessary standard, it is only part of a much broader measure of success.

Let's compare two imaginary situations:

Teacher A has a class of 25 fifth graders in a school district where the average annual income is \$74,000 per family with one parent working. They aren't rich, but they have some discretionary income and time to volunteer in the

school.

Teacher B has 25 fifth grade students in a school district where the average annual income is \$44,000 per family with both parents working. They aren't poor, but they have little discretionary income and little time to volunteer.

Now, assume that these imaginary teachers and students have comparable abilities: Which teacher will be more successful on the basis of standardized tests? Studies have repeatedly shown that parental involvement in the school is a major element of academic success. So, with all other elements being equal, parental involvement will determine that Teacher A is more "successful" than Teacher B.

The example above doesn't account for circumstances that adversely affect students, such as inadequate school supplies, uncomfortable classrooms, learning disabilities, illness, poverty, etc. Each teacher's classroom is unique.

There are a few exceptional teachers, and there are a few inadequate teachers. Regardless of the chosen profession, most people are not exceptional, but they work hard and should be paid well. We expect teachers to educate our children regardless of conditions, including overcrowded classrooms, lack of support staff or preparation time, and much, much more.

Teachers aren't left unobserved; they are regularly evaluated by their supervisors. Considering the responsibility we ask our teachers to shoulder, they nearly all deserve merit pay, but not on the basis of standardized tests.

Please vote No on Measures 58 and 60.