

Letters

Some misunderstand peaceable assembly

To The Editor:

In the Letters section of the *Chronicle* (Feb. 25, 2009), Rick Demings makes a number of statements about the February 18th Procession for Respect and Dignity in St. Helens.

I feel that many of the statements made in Mr. Demings' letter misrepresent the motives and goals of the organizers and attendees. I won't answer each point individually in this letter because I believe that readers can distinguish between assumptions and opinions as opposed to facts, but there are some points I would like to address.

Both in his letter to the editor and in previous press coverage Mr. Demings states that most of the marchers were not Columbia County residents. What is present in the previous press coverage, but not his letter, is his stated reason for that belief — that he was unable to recognize more than a couple dozen of the marchers. I am not able to arrive logically at the same conclusion based on such subjective evidence.

Mr. Demings seems disappointed in the quality of the news reporting because the reporter used quotes from some of the marchers. Since Mr. Demings and others who opposed the procession had their quotes printed also, I think the

reporter did a good job of providing balance to the article.

To specifically address point number 6, I'd like the community to know a couple of facts. All of us, whatever our first or second language, were chanting at times in both Spanish and English, and sometimes we walked quietly, too. It's pretty standard to chant or sing during a march or rally. However, you may not know that on several occasions the chanting started up in direct response to rude and hateful comments being spoken, and even shouted, at us by the handful of counter-protesters. It's perfectly okay with me if people voice opposing opinions, but if it is done rudely and hurtfully, I feel no obligation to just stand there and listen. I much prefer hearing a group of voices chanting a message of unity, respect and dignity.

Lastly, Mr. Demings had some questions about how to determine if the event was successful. Most undertakings are deemed a success when a predetermined goal, or set of goals, are met such as:

The constitution provides for peaceable assembly and the organizers and attendees desired a peaceable assembly. The event was peaceful throughout. Goal accomplished. The stated objectives for the procession were to allow the community to see their Latino neighbors, to ask community members to afford all per-

sons the same level of respect and dignity, and to bring awareness to the fact that ballot measure 5-190 has already caused a negative impact on people in this community. Goals accomplished.

**Pratiti Fullerton
Deer Island**

Group helps county in varying projects

To The Editor:

Re: A Guest Opinion piece published in the *South County Spotlight* (Feb. 25, 2009) written by Jim Lewis of Warren

Mr. Lewis posed several questions as to how Rural Organizing Project (ROP) and its local member group Columbia County Citizens for Human Dignity (CCCHD) had contributed to Columbia County.

Well let me count the ways:

In 2006 we handed out \$2,605.00 in grant money to the following organizations; Community Action Team \$1,000, CC Safe Kids coalition \$405, St Helens Senior Center \$300, St Helens Alano Club \$200, Turning Point Service Center \$400, Marcus Brown (New Orleans artist and flood survivor) \$300.

In 2007 we handed out \$2,375 in grant money to the following organizations; Scappoose Public Library \$225, CC Commission on Children and Families \$300, Scappoose Senior Center \$750, Community

Action Team \$375, H.O.P.E Emergency Food Cupboard \$375, Friends of the St. Helens Library \$350.

That is a total of \$4,980 in the 2-year period. I will leave it up to Mr. Lewis and the readers of the *Spotlight* to determine whether or not the above groups have used the money to benefit families who have lost their jobs, supported local rural economics, supported returning Vets and their families or invested in the needs for all Oregonians in the realms of education, healthcare, living-wage jobs and affordable housing.

This money was raised through our Winter Gala dinners. All the work is performed by volunteers; most of the food is raised by our members or donated by local farmers, markets and businesses.

In addition to the above monetary funds, several of our volunteers have lent a hand to the community, such as the cleanup during the Vernonia floods, volunteering at the Columbia County animal shelter, the food bank and the senior

centers, just to name a few. As a group we are productive members of Columbia County. We are nurses, health care providers, family service providers, accountants, small business owners, restaurateurs, teachers, and small business owners. Numerous members belong to local civic clubs and churches where our donations and volunteer time are comparable to those of other members.

Lastly I would ask Mr. Lewis to please add my name to the illustrious list of donors to the NO on Measure 5-190 and 5-191 in the amount of \$55.

**Eloise Bates
St. Helens**

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.

Salem Scene

By Representative Brad Witt
Oregon District 31



On February 20th, we received Oregon's March Revenue Forecast and it is a very sobering report. Also, the State's economist spoke to a joint session of the House and Senate and indicated that our budget is in the red by approximately \$855 million through the end of June.

Oregon's Constitution requires that this budget gap, as large as it is, be balanced by the end of our budget cycle. This gives us only four months to plug nearly a \$1 billion hole. That is why my legislative colleagues and I have been so focused on rebalancing the budget during the past several weeks. Oregon's budget shortfall is largely the result of our state's heavy reliance on the income tax. With 86 percent of our general fund revenue coming from personal income taxes, when times are tough and lots of people are

out of work, state revenues plummet.

Worse yet, during a recession, our state budget suffers what I refer to as a "double whammy" in that revenues decline precisely when the demand for state social services skyrocket due to collapsing family incomes. But, because of some very hard work by the Ways and Means Committee co-chairs, we have a blueprint to get through the current budget cycle. While this involves some additional work, we are very close to balancing this biennium's budget.

We are not alone in this struggle. Every state is facing severe budget shortfalls due to the global recession. But because we have the federal stimulus, over \$362 million in state budget cuts and, due to our fiscal responsibility in 2007, we'll have some additional resources to help us through these tough times. Nevertheless, we are facing some very severe program and service reductions through the end of June. And the situation will only worsen as our state faces a projected \$3 billion decline in revenue for the 2009-2011 budget cycle.

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