

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### Hooray for death of 5-190

This past Tuesday, April 14, Columbia County Judge Ted Grove struck down Measure 5-190 that would have required a \$10,000 fine to any employer who knowingly or unknowingly hired an illegal immigrant. Had this law, passed in last November's election, gone into effect, it would have been a nightmare for businesses in Columbia County. The law was poorly written and basically unenforceable. Judge Grove ruled that 5-190 violated state law, among other problems. It's not Columbia County's responsibility to 'fix' the problems in this country with illegal immigrants, and 5-190 would have penalized businesses, not kept out illegal workers.

### Good start to WWTP plan

Vernonia's City Council recently approved a contract with an engineering firm, Brown & Caldwell, to review our existing waste water treatment facilities, formulate alternatives, and then act as project manager for a new wastewater treatment plant, to be out of the way of future floods. Unlike last time around, in 2005, the city's engineers will not decide on the system, decide on the contractor to build it, and then oversee it. That process got us into lawsuit trouble. Brown & Caldwell is not the city engineer, though the city engineer was on the committee that chose this firm. Brown & Caldwell won't be the builder, that will be decided by a bid process. In other words, the city got it right this time and the fox isn't watching the henhouse.

### District elections coming

Sometime after May 1, voters in Washington and Columbia counties will be getting a ballot in the mail. Don't think that since there are no presidents, senators or legislators on the ballot that it is not important. This election determines who is on the board of directors for school districts, fire districts, and other special districts. These people are volunteers, and they make important decisions, like the one facing Vernonia's school board about where to put new schools and how to pay for them, or the one facing Banks School District of who will replace Superintendent Marv Ott and lead the Banks School District.

Do your part to make sure these districts have good direction by voting and voting wisely.



### Out of My Mind . . .

by Noni Andersen



The latest outrage du jour, resulting in "tea bagging" Washington, D.C., wasn't simply ridiculous; it was at best ignorant, at worst stupid.

In trying to drum up opposition to President Obama's plan to roll back President Bush's tax cuts from 35% to 39.6%, for the wealthiest Americans, protesters planned another "Boston Tea Party". Part of the ignorance undoubtedly stems from either inadequate or forgotten understanding of U.S. history: Part of that 1773 protest was for taxation without representation because the American colonies had no representatives to speak for them in the English Parliament.

Today's protesters do not lack representation in Congress; they can vote just like other Americans, if they choose to do so. The *really* ignorant part is their belief that the increase they are protesting will affect most Americans. Actually, it will affect only the wealthiest, by not renewing the Bush tax cuts when they run out...in 2011. The problem with "belief", is that facts are irrelevant. Under Obama's plan, 95% of working Americans will see slightly lower taxes.

A bit of more recent history: During Dwight Eisenhower's administration, the wealthiest paid up to 91% on the top portion of their earnings. Under Richard Nixon, it was 70%. At the end of Ronald Reagan's first term it was 50%. Then it

was lowered more and the result caused George H.W. Bush to increase it slightly, probably costing him a second term.

Obama's plan would return the tax rate on America's wealthiest people to the level it was under the Clinton administration. If you recall, they had no difficulty prospering at that tax rate.

Another part of the reason for the original Boston Tea Party wasn't simply that a tax was imposed on tea, but a loophole in that tax which gave a tax break to the British East India Company to help them establish a tea monopoly in the American colonies. The colonists thought that the companies should be treated equally. What an American idea!

An important additional element in Obama's plan is closing huge tax loopholes for oil companies, as well as corporations that ship jobs overseas. Oil company profits have remained very high. Indeed, Exxon has had three years of world record-setting profits.

(Do you remember 20 years ago, when the Exxon Valdez tanker spilled 10.8 million gallons of crude oil in Alaska's Prince William Sound? The oil fouled 790 miles of shoreline within the Sound and more than 2,400 miles of shoreline along its 470 mile trajectory from the Sound to the southern Kodiak Archipelago and Alaska Peninsula. Many areas are still damaged, but Exxon, that model of corporate integrity, still hasn't paid the final \$92 million for cleanup.)

The Congressional GOP did finally present an alternative budget proposal that includes more tax cuts for the rich, keeping oil company tax breaks, and eliminating the stimulus plan. Were yesterday's protests somewhat off target?