

## Letters

### Return the birdhouse

To the Editor:

I don't know who you are but you must have turned around in our driveway. Saw our birdhouse. Thought it was "Cool" and took it!

Please return it, just put it back on the stump. Thank you,

**Kathleen Gwin  
Vernonia**

### Prepare your entry for the July 4 Parade

To the Editor:

Vernonia Pride will again be sponsoring the 4th of July Parade.

Advance registration isn't necessary, but participants

need to arrive early enough to form up on Weed Avenue, alongside City Hall and the Library, before the parade starts at 7:30 p.m. From City Hall, the parade will go along Bridge Street to State Avenue, where it will disband.

Please, don't park on Bridge Street during the parade so that everyone can enjoy the parade.

No ATVs will be allowed, but all other entries will be gladly accepted.

**De Loris Webb  
Vernonia Pride**

### Questions are okay, but know the facts

To the Editor:

This letter is in response to the June 04, 2009, Letter to the Editor entitled, "Does Vernonia Need Five Police Officers?"

I know most people in this community understand the need for police and appreciate the services we provide. But recently our department has been the subject of criticism from a few sources, and I feel the need to write a response.

Does little Vernonia need five cops? Well yes, in my opinion they do! In fact, eight or nine would be best. I'm not sure the author of that letter really understands the facts of what your police and the department does and the types of things they are responsible for. I would like to take this opportunity to explain some of the facts, and offer my opinion on a few other issues.

In the late 90's there were as many as six paid Police Officers employed by the City of Vernonia. Those positions over the years have been slowly whittled away to where they are now. All the added duties and responsibilities now rest in the hands of only four.

The Police Officers often work alone with no hope for a rapid response from outer agencies should one of them need emergency assistance. With future cuts to the Columbia County Sheriffs Office the likelihood of that rapid assistance will be even less.

As stated in the published

letter, these are different times. There are indeed bad people out there, and dangerous drugs on the streets. There are also many petty crimes committed, petty things that take a lot of time for Police to deal with. Although someone may think the issue is petty, someone else thought it serious enough to call for Police, requiring a response and often times a written report. The author of the letter would lead you to believe that he does not require police services, stating, "I've never had a problem I couldn't personally resolve." Actually, public records would show that Vernonia Police have responded to his residence several times in the past few years, including once last month for a disturbance.

In response to the people caught with illegal narcotics. The Vernonia Police Department is proud of all our drug arrests, big and small. In each one of those, illegal narcotics taken off the street could have caused serious physical injury

or death if [they] landed in the wrong hands. I don't believe anyone is portraying that any type of drug cartels are moving into town, but we do have a problem that needs attention in this community.

In order to get those narcotics off the streets you have to have Police Officers working the street. Not just police officers, but COPS. Officers that will stop a car at 2:00 a.m. alone and possibly out-numbered. The Vernonia Drug Coalition recently received a large government grant to help work with youth and combat the drug issues within this community. The most recent Healthy Teen Survey portrayed Vernonia as above the state average on everything; teen drug use, teen pregnancy and violence in the schools were all above the state average. Maybe that is why the department is trying for a school resource officer, someone with resources and trained to work with our youth, not a security guard.

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### 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 (Dem)

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### Senator Betsy Johnson (Dem) Senate District 16

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### U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (Dem.)

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### Representative Brad Witt (Dem) House District. 31

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### U.S. Representative David Wu (Dem) OR District 1

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### Representative Deborah Boone (Dem) House District 32

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## Salem Scene

By Representative Brad Witt  
Oregon District 31



This past week was exceptionally busy at the Capitol. The House passed two critical pieces of legislation, one revamping the way we provide health care in this state and the other raising revenue from both individuals and corporations in order

to help close the \$4.2 billion gap in our state's budget. I'll begin with HB 2116 and HB 2009, the bills that will increase access to health care for thousands of Oregonians.

There are many compelling reasons to revise the health care system in Oregon, not the least of which is the growing dependence by the uninsured on emergency room treatment. This is the most expensive form of care and the costs are passed through to those who do have insurance.

HB 2116 and its companion measure HB 2009, supported by both the hospital and insurance industries, will leverage additional federal dollars, a total of \$1.7 billion over the next four years.

The major components of these bills:

- Increase health coverage for approximately 200,000 Oregonians 2009-2011
- Create or retain 3600 jobs in hospitals and health care facilities
- Streamline a patchwork of health policy boards with a citizen-led Health Policy Board
- Transfer almost all health-care-related re-

sponsibilities now in DHS to the Board

- Create a statewide database for all health care claims by all providers
- Demand accountability and enhanced public input prior to insurance rate increases
- Develop a central insurance marketplace for individuals and small businesses

All in all, these two bills will do more to improve health care delivery than any program since the introduction of the Oregon Health Plan two decades ago. They focus on prevention, primary care and disease management, and give consumers the tools to make better health care decisions. HB 2116 and 2009 were passed by the Senate and will proceed to the Governor's desk for his signature.

The House also passed the revenue package, HB 2649 and HB 3405, funding for the 2009-11 biennium. This was a difficult vote for all members, Democrats and Republicans alike. Out of an overall \$17 billion budget, our state faces a \$4.2 billion shortfall. After \$2 billion in cuts to state budgets affecting the entire spectrum of programs, laying off over 1700 public employees, and adding funds from the rainy day fund and the federal stimulus, it became apparent that there would be no way to escape turning to the taxpayers to help us bridge a \$733 million gap.

Some talk show hosts have characterized this as "soaking the rich." This kind of inflammatory rhetoric ignores the facts. For too long, middle class families and small businesses have shouldered the burden of funding education, human services and public safety in our state.

While these folks are sacrificing, over 60% of

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