

The INDEPENDENT

Published on the first and third Thursdays of each month by The Independent, LLC, 725 Bridge St., Vernonia, OR 97064. Phone/Fax: 503-429-9410. Publisher Clark McGaugh, clark@the-independent.net Editor Rebecca McGaugh, rebecca@the-independent.net Mentor Noni Andersen
Printed on recycled paper with vegetable based dyes

Opinion

On cats and bureaucrats

Recently a sign went up at Vernonia Lake saying a cougar had been sighted and to "use at your own risk." As of January 2009, according to Michelle Dennehy of Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, "We've never had a cougar attack a person in Oregon." There are estimated to be 5,800 cougars in Oregon, though this part of the state does not have a high density of the cats. Native to Oregon, their primary food is deer, though they also eat elk, raccoons, bighorn sheep (well, not in these parts) and other mammals and birds. They have a 100 mile range and are most active at dawn and dusk. If you encounter a cougar, it will probably retreat. Make sure it has a way to escape, stay calm and stand your ground, maintain direct eye contact, back away slowly, don't run, raise your voice and speak firmly. If the cougar seems aggressive, raise your arms and clap your hands. If it does attack, fight.

Now, on to bureaucrats. A bureaucracy is a system of administration marked by officialism, red tape, and proliferation. Many people in Vernonia may immediately think of FETA or SBN, two great examples. FETA changes their rules every time they turn around and they almost have a corner on the red tape market.

A recent Vernonia City Hall example of bureaucracy at its finest had to do with a request for a public record. The request was sent to the city attorney to see if they had to provide the information. The attorney said no and quoted language from Oregon Revised Statutes (OURS). When it was pointed out to the attorney that further on in the same OURS it says the information asked for is public, we got the information. But, when this incident was mentioned to someone else in City Hall, it was decided to ask the attorney for a 'written decision', apparently email (the medium originally used) isn't considered written by bureaucrats. That was months ago now and we don't know if city hall got an answer on that request. We recently mentioned the issue to another person at City Hall and that person is already in the process of getting the attorney's opinion on same. That makes four requests for the same legal opinion the attorney ruled on the first time. That's bureaucracy.

To be fair, we do know of some county agencies that are able to immediately, and over the phone, respond to similar requests.

Perhaps the real reason that Nero played the fiddle while Rome burned, during the great fire in AD 64, was that he hadn't received the memo about the fire on the correct form with all the little spaces filled in correctly.



Out of My Mind . . .

by Noni Andersen



bottom.

The number and share of people without health insurance is doubtless higher now, since the unemployment rate has grown substantially over the past year and many more people have lost their health insurance along with their jobs.

Critics of health care reform have done Americans two great disservices. They have obscured and denied the very real suffering of millions of uninsured Americans and the very real danger that millions more will soon join them. And they have twisted the goal of health care reform when they rail against a fictitious government takeover.

It seems that many who oppose affordable health care are angry with government. They are not angry with health insurance companies that are ripping them off, not angry with drug companies that are ripping them off, not angry with Wall Street firms that are ripping them off.

Why? Have they swallowed so many lies from supporters of big business that they have truly lost their ability to understand they are being used to shill for companies that profit from the ill-

ness and misfortune of others?

Most healthcare CEOs make millions, including some who head not-for-profit healthcare organizations. Yet Darrold Mushatt, a young father who is too sick to work, needs to have \$8,000 before he can be put on a *waiting list* for a kidney transplant! This is the status quo that opponents of reform want to maintain.

Have they lost the ability to care about the more than 700,000 Americans who are forced into bankruptcy each year because of medical costs? Do they care that the majority of those 700,000 Americans thought their health insurance would cover major illness?

Incidentally, the number of Canadians and English who were forced into bankruptcy last year because of medical costs was 0.

It seems that the opponents of health care reform have bought the subliminal propaganda that maintaining the status quo is good, but helping those in need is "socialism". They have obviously forgotten Christ's admonition that "how you treat the least among us is how you treat me."

Others have "thoughtful" reasons for opposing health care reform, citing, for instance, that doctors will leave the medical profession because they won't work for a socialist system.

In spite of opponents' claims that doctors don't want changes in health care, a new national poll by the "New England Journal of Medicine" shows that 76% of doctors support health care reform, including a public option, and many also support a single payer system – a la England or Canada.

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