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## Letters

### Boise employees are great community help

To the Editor:

Thank you for your continued support.

During these tough times, we frequently hear only the negative. Jobs are lost, no raises, cost of food and shelter going up.

I would like to focus on something very positive going on in our community. That is Boise Paper and the support the company and their employees are giving to this community as they themselves are going through some very difficult

### Ike Says . . .

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regard of fire closures and gated roads by individuals on ATVs. It has become almost a contest to see who can defeat the other as the timber companies barricade illegal ATV trails and the outlaws find new ways around the blockages. Let's just say, if you get caught on an ATV in a closed area, there will be no leniency, the timberland owners and troopers are not amused.

Will there be any salmon for Salmon Festival this year? Probably not, although the predicted rainfall will surely help. My wife said she saw one from the bridge downtown. Chinook runs in the Nehalem River have taken a huge turn for the worse in the last few years and ODF&W is scrambling to figure out why. They took the extreme measure this year of closing the fishery for Chinook salmon in the Nehalem drainage. ODF&W is also conducting extensive spawning surveys this year and gathering genetic samples. One could assume the genetic samples are to help identify when Nehalem Chinook are caught in other fisheries, and to observe the impact of these outside fisheries. Let's hope they get this fish run turned around, it's pretty hard to have a Salmon Festival without any salmon!

**Izaak Walton League, Nehalem Valley Chapter** meets monthly on the 3rd Thursday at 7:00 p.m. Call 503-428-7193 for location.

times.

Over this last year, Boise has experienced a significant reduction in the number of people employed there. Funds that were readily available from the company to support community events are no longer available. What could possibly be good about that?

The answer: Boise employees, past and present, are still actively involved in volunteering in our community. Those still employed are helping support many not-for-profit programs via payroll deduction and the company is reaching out to community not-for-profits with donations of computers, office machines, furniture and office supplies.

United Way of Columbia County has received and helped distribute over \$6200 in furniture, computers, office machines and assorted school and office supplies. These items have helped numerous community organizations, including United Way, by providing them with needed items without having to dip into their already stretched budgets. The volunteers who serve on boards, help deliver meals, etc. are crucial to the continued availability of service to those in need in our community.

Thank you to Boise and the employees, both current and past, who continue to support the community where they live and do business.

We are very fortunate to have such dedicated people in our community.

Sincerely,

**Kathy Beck**  
**Executive Director**  
**United Way of Columbia County**

### 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.

## An Oregon Perspective

By Senator Jeff Merkley



### Bringing Down the Cost of Health Care

Recently, I held a number of town hall meetings in Eastern and Central Oregon. Whether I was in Crook County, Wallowa or Harney, the number one issue on people's minds

was health care reform. Oregonians want to know what will change, what will remain, and how much this will cost individuals, businesses, and the country.

In the reform plans currently in front of Congress, there are several strategies that will lower health care costs while encouraging market-based competition and choice:

First, we need to make it illegal for insurance companies to discriminate based on pre-existing conditions. And for Americans who have insurance, we need to stop providers from delaying, capping or eliminating coverage just when people need care the most. It is unacceptable that insurance companies can drop someone from coverage when they get sick or injured even if they've been reliably paying premiums for years.

We'll also make insurance more portable so

that you can keep your plan if you lose your job or want to switch to a different job. And we'll end the low lifetime limits that throw even insured families into bankruptcy because they've exhausted their available benefits.

A crucial component for lowering costs is increased competition. We will give individuals and small businesses more choices by creating an insurance marketplace. This marketplace will enable them to band together in one large group to get a better deal from insurance companies instead of having to try to buy a policy on their own in a confusing and fragmented insurance market. Each person in the pool will then be able to choose whichever plan they prefer. This is how the health plan for federal employees and Members of Congress works.

The other major mechanism for increasing competition is the creation of a strong community health plan – or public option. Consumers would still be able to pick from among private insurers if they want, but the community plan would give them another choice to improve service and drive down costs.

The health care plans being developed in Washington will lower costs while strengthening our health care system for those who have insurance and extending care to those who don't. Now is the time to move forward and improve our health care system for all Americans.

*"A human being is a part of the whole, called by us, "Universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest – a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security."*

— Albert Einstein - (1879-1955) Physicist and Professor, Nobel Prize 1921