

Where to Find Them

U.S. Senator Ron Wyden (Dem)

1220 SW 3rd Avenue, Suite 585
Portland OR 97232
Phone: 503-326-7525
223 Dirksen Senate Ofc. Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510-0001
Phone: 202-224-5244
E-Mail: <http://wyden.senate.gov/contact>
Website: <http://wyden.senate.gov>

U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (Dem.)

One World Trade Center
121 SW Salmon St., Suite 1250
Portland, OR 97204
Phone: 503-326-3386
107 Russell Senate Ofc. Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-3753
E-Mail: <http://merkley.senate.gov/contact>
WebSite: <http://merkley.senate.gov>

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

620 SW Main, Suite 606
Portland, OR 97205
Phone: 503-326-2901
2338 Rayburn House Ofc. Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: 202-225-0855
Website: <http://house.gov/wu>

Senator Betsy Johnson (Dem) Senate District 16

PO Box R,
Scappoose, OR 97056
Phone: 503-543-4046
900 Court St. NE, S-314
Salem, OR 97301
Phone: 503-986-1716
E-mail: sen.betsyjohnson@state.or.us
Website: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/johnson>

Representative Brad Witt (Dem) House District. 31

21740 Lindberg Road,
Clatskanie, OR 97016
Phone: 503-728-4664
900 Court St. NE, H-373
Salem, OR 97301
Phone: 503-986-1431
E-mail: rep.bradwitt@state.or.us
Website: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/witt>

Representative Deborah Boone

(Dem) House District 32
PO Box 926
Cannon Beach, OR 97110
Phone: 503-717-9182
900 Court St. NE, H-375
Salem, OR 97301
Phone: 503-986-1432
E-mail: rep.deborahboone@state.or.us
Website: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/boone>

Letters

OSEA Beanie Baby drive still underway

To the Editor:

Thank you for running the Beanie Baby Flyer in one of your recent editions of *The Independent*, for the OSEA Beanie Baby Drive. To date, the chapter has received 193 Beanie Babies!

The Oregon School Employees Association Vernonia Chapter 67, the Classified staff at the Vernonia School District, is still accepting donations of New Beanie Babies that will be donated to Doernbecher Children's Hospital.

Beanie Babies are easy to store, they can cheer up the children, and nurses can use them to prop up the breathing tubes of premature babies.

Your donations can be left in the Vernonia school offices with Ronda at WGS, Patty at VMS, or with Kathi at VHS, or with Julie and Doris.

Contributions will be accepted until June 4, 2010.

Please help us reach our goal of 300!

**OSEA Vernonia
Chapter 67**

Many ways to help kids in foster care

To the Editor:

May is National Foster Care

Month, a time to turn our attention to the children and youth in care and to honor the dedicated foster families, relatives, volunteers and child welfare professionals who get involved with children and young people to help change their lives for the better. Last year in Oregon, more than 13,000 children spent at least one day in some kind of foster care because they could not remain safely at home with their parents, usually because of drug and alcohol abuse and/or domestic violence in their homes.

Children in foster care need safety and stability. In Oregon, we're working to become the safest foster care system in the country.

The good news is we are getting closer to reaching that goal: Last year, our state's financial supports for children in foster care increased, and the number of children in foster care who were abused by their foster parents declined by 32 percent. Placements with relatives increased by more than 20 percent, and the number of children who had two or fewer placements increased by 10 percent. In addition, 10 percent fewer children in Oregon spent time in foster care in 2009 compared to 2008.

These milestones of improvement could not have been

reached without the great work of our staff, the commitment of foster and relative caregivers, quality services delivered by our partner providers, and the support of communities across Oregon.

Nevertheless, we still have a long way to go to be sure that all children in Oregon are safe, well, and connected to their families, their communities and their cultural identities. Ideally, all families would have the support they need to safely parent and prepare their children for adulthood. Ideally, no child would need the government to keep them safe. However, keeping children safe and families stable are goals that Child welfare cannot accomplish alone. We need the help and support of individuals and communities in every city and town in Oregon. That's where you come in.

No matter how much time you have to give, each one of us has the power to do something positive that will change the life of a child or young person in foster care. Be a mentor or coach to parents who are struggling, or to a young person in foster care. Become a foster parent. Volunteer at one of our child welfare offices to transport children or parents to services or visitations. Give a foster parent or relative caregiver a

break by providing respite child care. Tutor a young person in foster care and support their academic and lifelong success.

These are just a few of the many ways to have a positive effect on the life of a child in foster care. We need more everyday people to come forward because no child should be without a strong relationship with a caring adult to depend on. If you are already a foster parent, or involved in the lives of children and families in your community – thank you. Our kids and families need your support, and you can make a difference.

If you want to become involved in the lives of children and youth in foster care in your community, please call your local DHS office, e-mail us or visit our website.

**Gene Evans,
Communications Officer
DHS Children, Adults &
Families Division**

Policy on Letters

The INDEPENDENT will not publish letters with personal attacks on private citizens. Preference will be given to brief letters, 300 words or less.

All letters must be signed and include a verifiable address or phone number.

Out of My Mind . . .

From page 2

affected by foreign policy. During the Vietnam war, for instance, emphasis was placed on investigating minor Vietnamese smugglers who could be connected to the resistance, while investigations of large scale smugglers from Thailand, a U.S. ally, were left unfinished.

In 1970, hippies were smoking pot and dropping acid, and soldiers were coming home from Vietnam hooked on heroin. It was time to change the focus! President Nixon signed the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act and declared "Public enemy No. 1 in the United States is drug abuse. In order to defeat this enemy, it is necessary to wage a new, all-out offensive."

Nixon's first drug-fighting budget was \$100 million. President Obama's first drug-fighting budget is \$15.1 billion.

Although promising a new policy to treat drug use more as a public health issue, focusing on prevention and treatment, Obama has increased spending on interdiction and law enforcement to record levels; this

year, they account for \$10 billion of his \$15.5 billion drug-control budget.

In 2010, we are addicted to the War on Drugs, and our addiction is costly in many ways. The Justice Department estimates the cost of drug abuse for "an overburdened justice system, a strained health care system, lost productivity, and environmental destruction" at \$215 billion a year.

A 2008 study by Harvard economist Jeffrey A. Miron estimated that legalizing drugs would inject \$76.8 billion a year into the U.S. economy — \$44.1 billion from law enforcement savings, and at least \$32.7 billion in tax revenue (\$6.7 billion from marijuana, \$22.5 billion from cocaine and heroin, remainder from other drugs). Recent surveys help to confirm the consensus among economists to reform drug policy in the direction of decriminalization and legalization.

There is no question whether \$76.8 billion could be helpful in many other ways. The question for our nation — not just our government — is whether we are serious about the results of our approach to drug

use which, so far, has squandered our taxes and overburdened law enforcement, while increasing addiction and trafficking.

According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, about 330 tons of cocaine, 20 tons of heroin and 110 tons of methamphetamine are sold in the U.S. every year. Ultimately, the country of origin is irrelevant; it is sold here because we have the buyers.

From the beginning, lawmakers debated whether law enforcement — no matter how well funded and well trained — could defeat the drug problem. Now we know but, even after 40 years, do we have the strength of character to accept the fact that our "tough on drugs" approach is an abysmal failure?

Voters in many states have passed measures to reduce penalties for, or even decriminalize the use of marijuana. In the long run, the only way to reduce drug addiction is to reduce the number of addicts with treatment and education.

Are we willing to fight our own addiction to the War on Drugs?