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## Out of My Mind

**From page 2**  
 the sacrifice.” Many also claim that attempts to change current tax levels so the wealthy pay more is “class warfare”!

Here are more economic facts:

- According to the most recent information, the Forbes 400 (*Forbes* magazine annual list of the 400 wealthiest people) now have a greater net worth (\$1.37 trillion) than the bottom 60% of U.S. households combined (\$1.22 trillion).

- Bank of America, with 114 offshore tax havens, paid no taxes in 2009, and its CEO expects a profit of \$35 billion this year.

- 25% of American homeowners are “under water”, i.e., what they owe on their mortgages is now more than the value of their homes. This doesn’t

include those who have already been foreclosed.

- Economists at Goldman Sachs estimate the GOP’s proposed budget cuts for the remainder of 2011 would reduce economic growth by 1.5% to 2%, which would mean a loss of 1.2 million jobs.

Yes, there is class warfare, it has been going on for a long time, and the middle class is the target.

### 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.

## Salem Scene

By Representative Brad Witt  
 Oregon District 31



Representative Brad Witt

As Co-Chair of the Veterans’ Committee, I am often called upon to join with various organizations to advocate for veterans’ needs. On Wednesday, the United Veterans Groups of Oregon (UVGO) held their 2011 Veterans’ Muster on the steps of the Capitol. These service men and women come from every branch of the military and from every community in Oregon. I was honored to be able to address them

and I’d like to share my remarks with you this week:

First and foremost, I want to personally thank each and every one of you for your service and the contributions that you have all made in protecting our country, preserving our democracy and guaranteeing this and future generations our liberty. I live in a free and open country because of your service and I thank each of you for this cherished opportunity.

As one of the House Veterans’ Committee Co-Chairs, I am pleased to report that our committee is making every effort to promote:

- Awareness of your benefits and how to get them
- Access to the medical, dental and mental health benefits that have been promised to you
- Turning the tide on suicide rates, especially among our Viet Nam, female and recently returning service men and women
- Safe and warm housing, adequate nutrition and clean clothing
- College credit for the things that you’ve learned, the skills you’ve acquired and the life experiences that you’ve been through; and lastly
- The successful reintegration of our veterans back into jobs and our larger civilian society

On this last point, ODVA Director Jim Willis told our Committee just yesterday that there are literally thousands of veterans most of whom are Viet Nam vets, who won’t “come in from the cold” because they are adamantly distrustful of our government.

It is my intention along with Co-Chair Esquivel, that by example and with proof of our Committee’s deeds, that all Oregon veterans be recognized for their service, at ease with the past and comfortable with the government that they have preserved. You have all earned our respect and it is my heartfelt goal to earn yours. Thank you, ever so much for your service, my invitation to join you for this muster, and may God

## Letters

### Scammers claim to be helping students

To the Editor:

I first want to thank our community for all they do to support our school district fundraisers. Without you, our students would not be able to do many important and enriching things like purchasing uniforms and equipment needed for a sport, raising money for prom, and traveling to California, Europe and Costa Rica.

Pop Can and Bottle collecting is an important fundraiser for many of our groups. Recently, a few high school groups have been misrepresented by individuals soliciting donations for cans door to door. My apologies go out to anyone who has been misinformed by these individuals.

Please know that any Vernonia High School pop can/bot-

tle drive fundraiser will never happen during school hours. Most of the drives are held on Saturdays and are advertised beforehand on the school district reader board and/or in the local newspapers. School groups participating in the drives will have a school ID/Lanyard with “VHS Fundraiser” printed on it. If they don’t have the fundraising ID card, they will be wearing team sweatshirts identifying themselves properly.

Our students are grateful for all the time and effort Vernonia community members put in to help them reach their fundraising goals. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at VHS. Thanks for supporting our students!

Sincerely,  
**Teri Willard**  
**Vernonia High School**  
**Student Activities Director**

bless the United States of America.

I’d like to add, these remarks apply to all veterans reading this newsletter. Your service to our country and its citizens is deeply appreciated.

### Items of Interest...

A new state website makes it easier for Oregonians to find information about health care and health insurance. Oregon Health Connect lists programs to help pay for coverage, file insurance complaints, find coverage for pre-existing conditions and locate help with Medicare questions. This is funded with a federal consumer assistance grant and is produced by the Oregon Health Authority and Dept. of Consumer and Business Services (DCBS) Insurance Division. For more information call 1-855-999-3210, or go to <http://www.oregonhealthconnect.org>

I’ve just been informed about a new program for dog owners. It’s called Fences for Fido, and is fully funded by the Banfield Charitable Trust. In an effort to improve the quality of life for dogs that are kept on chains, Fences for Fido will build a fence, as well as an insulated dog shelter, for dogs that are chained for 8-10 hours a day. The work is done by volunteers and they have unchained 156 dogs so far. You can find out more by going to <http://www.fencesforfido.org/index.php>.

I want to tip my hat to Jeff Kemp, owner and CEO of Pacific Stainless in St. Helens. Jeff was in the middle of site construction for a new building when the economy went south. Instead of pulling back, he chose to invest both in his operation and his community, hiring locally at every turn. When no local concrete company was big enough to handle the job alone, he split the contract and hired two. He also provides health care benefits for his employees. Jeff reminds us that priorities like these move beyond the individual company and improve the economic health of the entire region. Good job, Jeff and Pacific Stainless!

Finally, thank you to all who responded to my questions regarding the kicker. There was overwhelming support for the creation of a rainy day fund with kicker refunds, up to a certain percentage, and with anything above that to be returned to the taxpayer. I really appreciate the detailed and thoughtful comments that you sent me and I will bear them in mind as we go about reconciling our budget and stabilizing our economy.