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Letters

If we really care, we can work together

To the Editor:

To the people of Vernonia who have taken it upon themselves to comment on so many recent issues...

Everyone has differences of opinion – It doesn't make one person better than another – just different.

As far as I can tell this community is full of people who say they care about the future of Vernonia and it's citizens, if this is true then why so much hatred? Why, after we have suffered so much together and accomplished so much together should we allow petty differences to destroy us from the inside out? "A house divided against itself cannot stand."

Now is not the time to focus on the differences – Now is the time to focus on the similarities – the main one being our love for this community.

If we are to move forward, we must lock arms and move toward this common goal, lest all our hard work be in vain, we have already lost so much ground – Let's not call in the dump trucks...

Public perception is not fact, opinions are not fact, rumors are not fact, interpretation is subjective. If you want to know what someone's intent is, ask that person – not your neighbor, not the bartender, not the grocer, the baker, or the candlestick maker – the person.

Be prepared. No one is going to be able to agree with everyone, all the time, over everything. If everyone agrees, no one really cares and no one is thinking for themselves, everyone has to give a little bit. Expecting everyone else to give and only being willing to take shows a lack of character and maturity.

What do the banners say in the middle school? "Be Safe", "Be Respectful", "Be Kind". How can we expect the youth in our community to follow these admonitions if we aren't willing to do the same? What kind of example are we setting for future generations? If we show our youth that focusing on the negative is the way to process difficulties in life, we are ensuring that same pattern in theirs.

It's time to break the cycle of hate, time to bury all respective

hatchets, let the proverbial water run under the bridge. It's time to put the big girl/boy pants on and set a better example – It's time to learn to work together for the future of Vernonia.

**Esther Nicks
Vernonia**

Shoot First policy is rarely questioned

To the Editor:

Like some frothingly-mad Zeus or Thor, the CIA wants to spread out and greatly-widen its "death by drone aircraft" campaign from the tribal wilds of Pakistan to the even-wilder tribal regions of Yemen. Perhaps 1100 "terrorists" in Pakistan have been slain by this astonishingly-deadly method, together with a fairly substantial number of civilians. Langley's aerial sharpshooters would like to make sure that Yemen's swirling chaos in no way hampers our cowboy-in-the-white-hat urge to bump off as many perceived bad guys as we possibly can. We consequently learn that a "drone base" is being swiftly brought on line near to Yemen. Obviously, Panetta's "posse" is filled to bursting with the urge to shoot first, and never ask any difficult subsequent questions. Questions about the morality of

firing deadly munitions into crowded mud brick slums on the other side of the world.

This so-called "clandestine program" of targeted assassinations is really about as secret as the presence of a King Cobra in a five-star hotel's lobby. Any literate American can "read all about it" or "hear all about it" by one means or another. Yet we apprehend nary a protesting word or vague ethical doubt regarding it from either the dun-derheaded masses or from the well-connected smart set. After all, according to our spy service's moral calculus, "terrorists" are being justly slain. Isn't that an undeniably good thing? Don't these Koran-spouting buggers fully deserve their explosive fate?

Well, let's see.

Those Americans who've been around long enough can easily remember how enthusiastic this country's "respectable" folks were when headlines informed them that "U.S. Planes Kill Many Cong" and "North Viet Losses Huge". Only after a fairly considerable amount of time had passed did Americans see just how sadly their country had lapsed into moral/ethical folly in its quest to "stop communism in Southeast Asia". What had seemed like a good idea at the time was instead finally exposed as

wretched thuggery and futility.

It may be that time's passage will ultimately vindicate the CIA's "butchery by advanced buzz bomb" initiatives in Pakistan and Yemen, but I wouldn't really bet too ardently on this premise. Langley's historical record is simply too be-strewn with instances of moral odiousness for us to say, with any degree of assurance, that the "drone" program is a truly good thing. There was a time when the CIA's mid-1954 overthrow of Guatemala's reformist government garnered glad headlines in our press, and generated loud verbal expressions of support from our cravenly conformist politicians.

It is true that at present most Americans don't care about the drone program's spate of but-

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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*



Most of the bills that we deal with at the end of session are budget bills that have finally worked their way through the Ways and Means process to the floor for a vote. But some of the bills get to us late in the session because they are controversial and have experienced a fair amount of opposition. Here are a few bills that caused a good deal of discussion on the floor when they came up for a vote:

SB 412C grants tribal police officers the right to enforce state law off tribal lands, even though the crime might not have been committed on a reservation. Currently, state law allows tribal officers to arrest off tribal lands, but only under narrow circumstances, namely if the suspect is attempting to elude and resisting arrest. SB 412C expands a tribal officer's ability to provide law enforcement off tribal lands beyond those two categories, but it also carries with it certain

requirements, mainly with respect to training and certification.

With the passage of SB 412C, tribal officers will now have to complete all the training and certification requirements imposed on all other police officers by the Department of Public Safety Standards and Training. The tribes will also have to waive sovereign immunity from tort liability, insure public access to records, preserve biological evidence and adhere to the requirements surrounding the use of deadly force. The bill passed 33-25, and I supported it because it will improve the overall professionalism of tribal forces and provide additional law enforcement for those adjacent communities that wish to create agreements of mutual cooperation.

Another bill that squeaked by on a 31-29 vote was HB 2726B, which modifies the definition of "smoke shop" for purposes of the Oregon Indoor Clean Air Act. As you know, since 2007, smoking has been prohibited in almost all public places except cigar bars and smoke shops certified by the Oregon Tobacco Prevention and Education Program (TPEP). But since December 2008, TPEP has received close to 50 applications for a

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