

# The INDEPENDENT

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## Opinion

### Happy with government?

Do you like the way your elected officials are running our government?

Are there things that you would like see done differently? Do you feel there is nothing you can do to enact change? Only 52 percent of registered voters in Columbia County voted in the January 31 election to select our representative in Congress. Many others didn't even register. Typical excuses for not voting sound something like this: "My vote doesn't count, the politicians will do what they want, they don't care what I think!" It doesn't matter if you're conservative, liberal or neither, here are some ways to fight voter apathy.

1. Call or write your elected officials. They were elected to represent you; they need to hear from you. *The Independent* publishes a list of elected officials and their contact information on page 3. Constituent calls, letters, faxes and emails have changed votes. It is important to speak up!

2. Volunteer. National, state and community organizations can accomplish great things – but they can't do it alone. Volunteer for a local community group – church, PTA, Boosters, Senior Center, Food Bank, etc. Your time and talents can make a valuable difference and you'll know that you're doing your part.

3. Stay informed. You can't make a difference if you don't know the problem. Many federal, state and local agencies have informative, helpful websites.

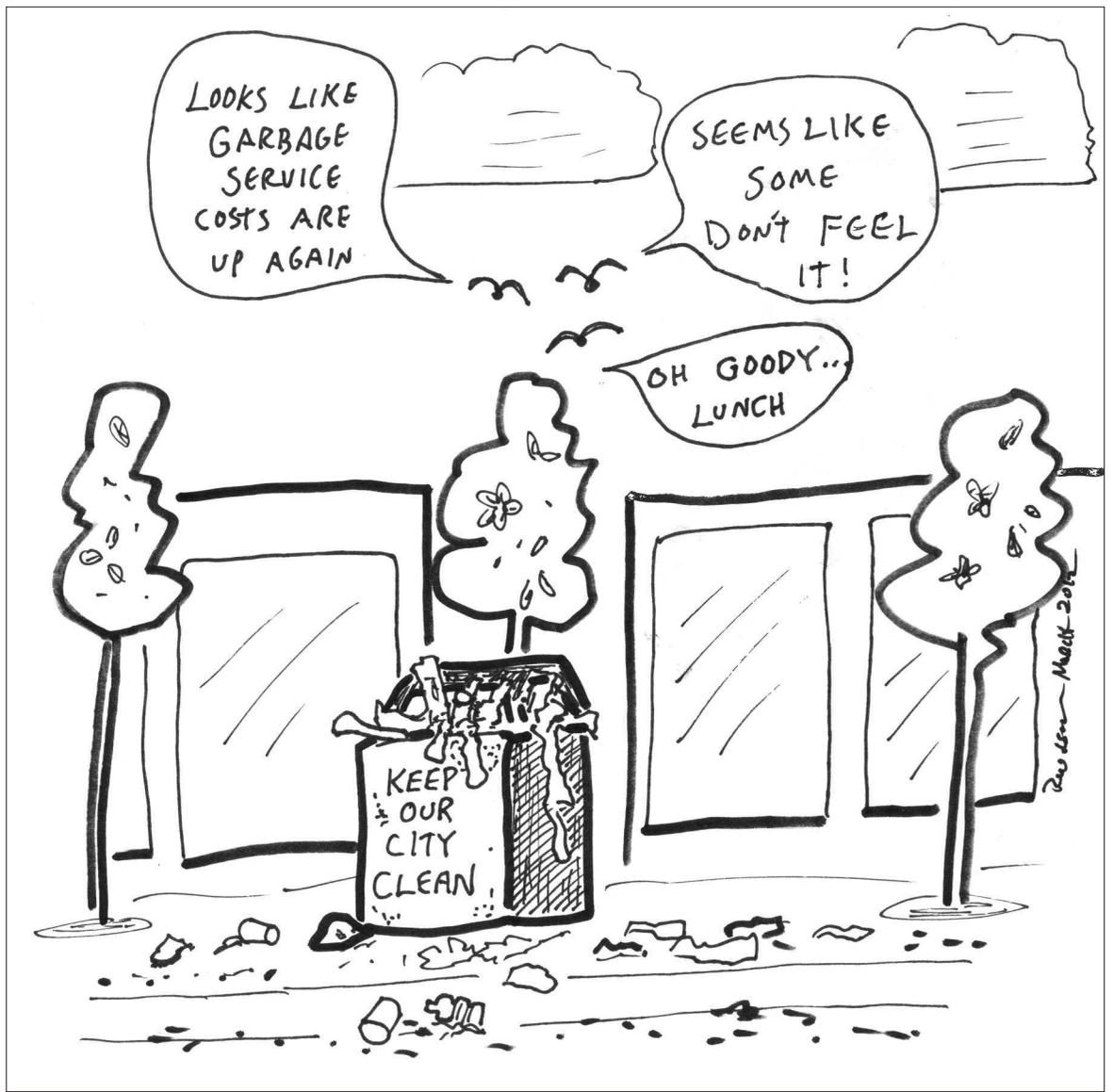
4. Writing a thoughtful Letter to the Editor about an issue that concerns you is a good way to reach elected officials, as well as other voters.

5. Attend a public forum or meeting of your local government. Speak up about issues you care about...ask questions...demand accountability. It's your right.

6. Take part in a grassroots action. A rally, a protest, a signature-gathering drive, a door-to-door canvass...all build interest in important issues, and educate and encourage others to be active. Attend events and meet others with the same interests.

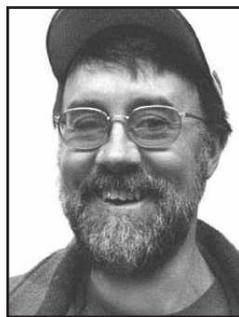
7. Talk to friends and neighbors about issues you feel are important. There IS power in numbers, you can build a community force for change.

8. Vote. None of the above will accomplish anything if you don't vote. It's the easiest, most effective way to make a difference. Encourage others to vote, teach your children why voting is important, help others to register to vote.



### Ike Says . . .

By Dale Webb, member  
Nehalem Valley Chapter, Izaak Walton League



So far, this winter is shaping up to be fairly easy on the big game populations in our state, which is a good thing, they really need it. Temperatures locally are running just slightly cooler than last year, but the rainfall is less. Temperature and rainfall are factors in how many calories deer and elk need to burn to keep warm. Obviously, the more calories they burn to stay warm, the more need to be replaced by caloric input in the form of forage eaten. In our region, it is simply not possible for big game animals to eat enough forage in the winter to keep up with the energy needed to stay warm, which is why they store up fat reserves in the summer and fall. That is why animal conditioning going into winter is so important, and why the severity of winters can have dramatic effects on big game populations. Another effect of winter severity is reproductive success; in years of hard winters, calf and fawn births can be expected to be lower. Added to the loss of fewer offspring is poorer body condition of the adult females, resulting in lower pregnancy rates the following year also. There is no doubt that winter conditions can have a very dramatic impact on our big game populations.

So how are we doing in regard to monitoring and analyzing winter impact upon big game pop-

ulations? With the advancement of telemetry monitored sites all across the state, one would think that a model for the effects of winter severity on game populations would be possible, but to my knowledge, there is no such model being used by our game managers. Managers do conduct fall and spring population composition counts and get a feel for fawn mortalities, but obviously this method has some flaws since more than a few of these counts end up with more fawns in the spring than in the fall. This is not realistically possible. So the answer is no, we probably don't do a good job of tracking the effects of a hard winter on the big game populations, and probably have an even poorer handle on actual numbers of losses.

We did have a good shot of snow this winter, but it was relatively short-lived and probably had minimal effect on game populations. It is when snow is on the ground for a considerable time that deer and elk become stressed due to increased foraging efforts.

I missed out on this year's main snow event because Donna and I were out on the Pacific Ocean, with about 2,000 other people, headed for the Panama Canal. The coolest temperatures we encountered were while we were staying in California, but once on the ship, 76 degrees was probably as low as it got. I have never been really out on the open water of the ocean before; it is a different feeling not being able to see land. We had five days of sailing before we made port in Costa Rica, but that did not mean we didn't see wildlife. We saw porpoises,

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