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Letters

Commissioners are acting wrongfully

To the Editor:

Now it seems that the attorney for the commissioners is attempting to interfere with the sale of the property on Millard Road. Peter Mercereau is his name. Remember him – he's one of the attorneys who works for SDAO – the same outfit which gave really bad information to the current CHD board when SDAO was pretending to work for them.

The current CHD board appointed Joe Cason and Brady Preheim as trustees to sell the property. The trustees, with a Warranty Deed in hand, listed the property with an agent so that it could be sold and the money credited to the taxpayers.

Mr. Mercereau and his clients, your county commissioners, decided that was not such a good idea and have filed or are filing for a motion to stop the sale. Remember, the commissioners want to turn the

property over to the City of St. Helens at no charge and apparently do not want it to be credited to the taxpayers.

There is currently a lawsuit filed in this matter. That should not affect the sale of the Millard Road property. If the sale occurs, the money can be held in escrow until the suit settles and then it can be decided who will return the money to the taxpayers. Under no circumstances should it be turned over, free of charge, to the City of St. Helens. The Oregon Constitution prohibits taxing one district for the benefit of another.

The commissioners are advocating against their own people and that is just wrong.

**Nancy Whitney
St. Helens**

Sentry employees, citizens helped drive

To the Editor:

The Vernonia Lions Club would like to thank the entire staff at Sentry Market for their help with our food drive on

Sunday (Feb. 11, 2012). We were able to raise \$168 and 50 pounds of high quality protein and shelf stable milk items to benefit Vernonia Cares Food Bank. We would also like to thank the wonderful citizens of Vernonia, whose generosity always is amazing!!

Thank You All!

**Randal Harvey, Secretary
Vernonia Lions Club**

Enjoy dinner to help Roberts' transplant

To the Editor:

On Saturday, March 24th, between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m., at the Scout Cabin, we are sponsoring a Spaghetti Feast to benefit Ryan Roberts' desperate need for a kidney transplant.

Ryan is a hardworking family man in our community who needs our help, and Vernonia is known for its compassionate and giving heart.

A fine group of your neighbors have started a campaign to raise funds so that Ryan can

have his surgeries.

Chef Mario will be doing the cooking. There will be "to-go" meals available and also a silent auction will be presented for bids.

The price per meal is \$7.00 and all proceeds will benefit Ryan due to donations already made.

So, please, mark your calendars for March 24th to turn off your kitchen stove and plan on an evening of good food, good company and good deeds.

Thank you,

**Sally Harrison,
Shirlee Daughtry
Vernonia**

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*



Last Thursday, the Co-chairs of the Ways and Means Committee announced a budget agreement that will prioritize services, and hold the line on any further cuts to the most important programs that Oregonians rely upon. I expect the House and Senate to approve the final budget next week. Here are some highlights:

- K-12 and early childhood education are protected from cuts, keeping intact a crucial program that helps Oregon prosper in the long term.

per in the long term.

- College students will have access to \$10 million more in state financial aid, helping middle class Oregonians attain the education and training that helps them prepare for the 21st century economy.

- \$8.5 million is restored to programs for people with developmental disabilities, further safeguarding our most vulnerable Oregonian.

- We've been able to restore funding to Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF), mitigating the worst of the cuts.

- We are pursuing elimination of some middle-management positions within state agencies to free up resources for the most critical programs.

- We have been able to maintain dental, prosthetics and other benefits in the Oregon Health Plan, and to re-open enrollment in OHP.

- In public safety, we will be able to keep the Santiam facility open and restore drug and alcohol treatment within the prison system. Unfortunately, I'm concerned that we will not be able to preserve 12 State Police positions, which may impact law enforcement on a statewide level.

Make no mistake, this budget still includes cuts, and after the last three years of economic recession, it is impossible to balance our budget without feeling pain. We could not have cut \$3.8 bil-

lion over the biennium without incurring some major wounds. As an example, our Community Colleges are still woefully underfunded considering the load that they carry in retraining our unemployed workers. K-12 is also still laboring under class sizes that are some of the highest in the nation. And state subsidies for day care benefitting low income workers will be capped at 8,500 families, down from 10,000. If it were up to me, I'd encourage a serious conversation that included alternative methods of funding.

Because of the lean budget proposed by the Co-chairs, we have made sure that there will still be an ending balance of \$117.8 million as a buffer should revenues continue to drop. In addition, there will be a \$46 million rainy day fund that will be held until the beginning of the next biennium. It was my hope that we could have accessed some of that rainy day fund to improve education funding, but it was not to be.

Last week I shared a remonstrance with you addressing our failure to move ahead on foreclosure legislation. One week later, we have not been able to reach a compromise. At the heart of this is a philosophical difference of opinion about whether or not banks should be required to meet at least once, face-to-face, to discuss the possibility of a loan modification, and to stop the dual track practice of pursuing foreclosure at the same time they are discussing loan modification with the homeowner.

There has been a lot of discussion surrounding who were offered home loans and whether or not they were truly qualified. First of all, the number one job of lending institutions is to vet both the buyer and the property. If they failed to do that because they were pursuing the enormous profits that were being generated at the time, they must accept part of the responsibility for their lapse in judgment.

Second, we cannot do anything about the past, but we can do something about what is happening now, namely shoddy and deceptive practices that continue to displace homeowners and impact the entire real estate market.

Let's hope we can come together on this issue before we adjourn sine die.