

# The INDEPENDENT

Published on the first and third Wednesdays of each month by The Independent, LLC, 725 Bridge St., Vernonia, OR 97064. Phone/Fax: 503-429-9410. Deadline is noon the Friday before each issue. Publisher Clark McGaugh, clark@the-independent.net Editor Rebecca McGaugh, rebecca@the-independent.net Printed on recycled paper with vegetable based dyes

## Opinion

### Merkley bill protects rights

Oregon Senator Jeff Merkley announced recently that he has introduced a bill to prevent warrantless surveillance of Americans. The bill, Protect America's Privacy Act, would close loopholes in the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) that could permit the intelligence community to knowingly or unknowingly collect and store communications of Americans and others living in the U.S. without a warrant. The right against unreasonable searches is covered in the Fourth Amendment in the Bill of Rights portion of the Constitution.

Other rights that have disappeared in the last 11 years include;

- In December 2011, under the National Defense Authorization Act, the president can (and has done so) order the assassination of any citizen whom he considers allied with terrorists. That's ignores the due process rights guaranteed in the Sixth and Seventh Amendments of the Bill of Rights.

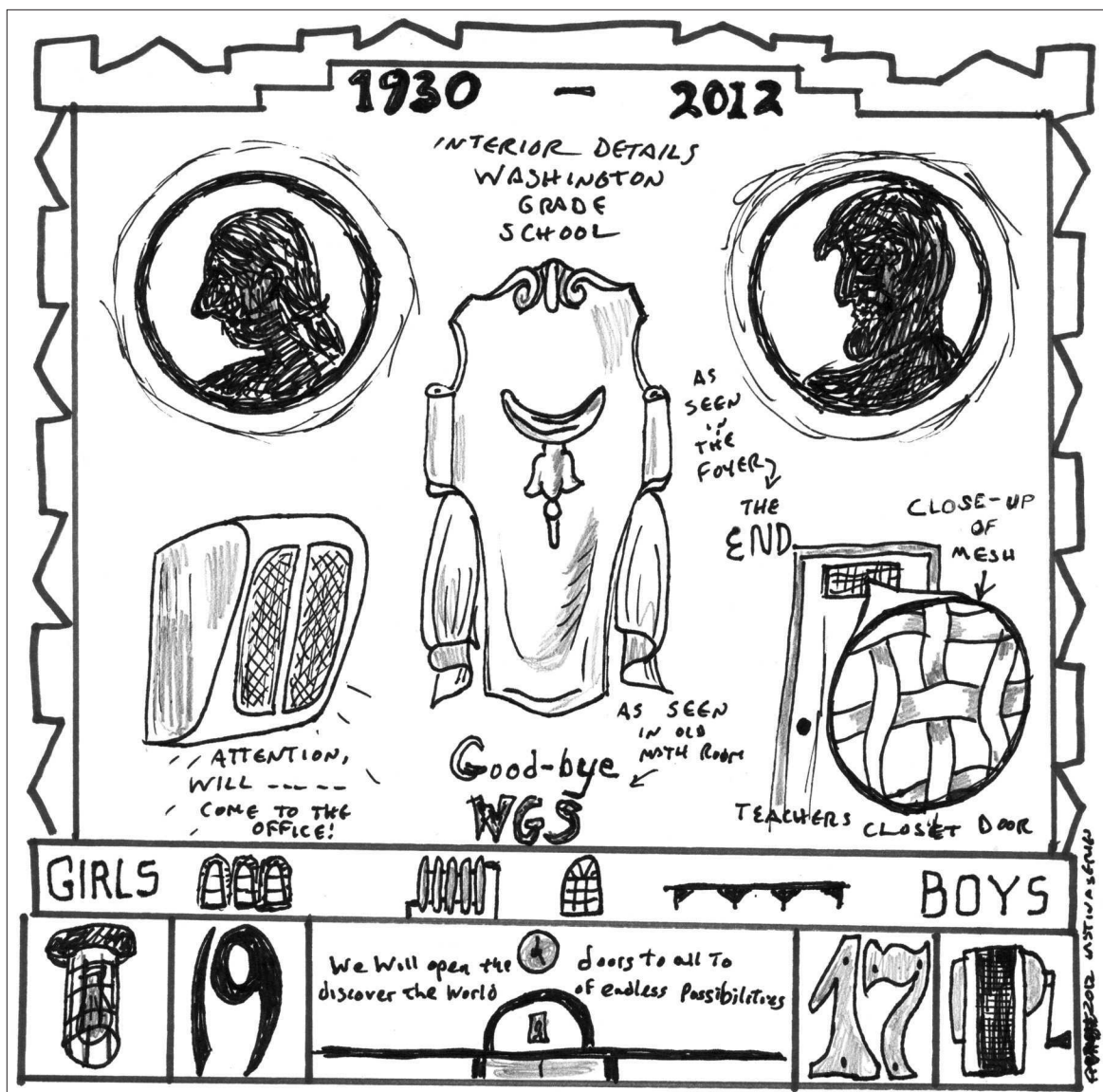
- Also under the National Defense Authorization Act, the president can indefinitely detain citizens accused of terrorism. The president also decides whether a person will get a trial in federal courts or in a military tribunal.

- Congress passed and Obama signed a renewed and amended FISA, which allows secret searches of individuals who are not part of an identifiable terrorist group. That means nobody has a guaranteed right to privacy.

- It's hard to believe, but the government also can transfer citizens to another country (under extraordinary rendition). Other countries have used this clause to torture suspects. This one started under Bush. Obama says he won't abuse this, as Bush did, but insists on the unfettered right to order these transfers, including those who may be U. S. citizens.

Merkley's bill is an opportunity to rein in an act that makes America less than the home of the free. "Keeping America safe versus protecting American privacy is a false choice. We have a moral and constitutional duty to do both," Merkley said. "We can ensure our government has the tools to spy on our enemies without giving it a license to intrude into the private lives of American citizens."

We support this bill and hope others will let their representatives know they should also support this bill.



### Out of My Mind . . .

by Noni Andersen



Mitt Romney has managed to bring Americans together: Both Republicans and Democrats wanted Paul Ryan to be his vice-presidential pick.

If Romney thought that picking Ryan would deflect questions about his income taxes and bring

the debate back to the general economy, he was wrong. The problem with that idea is Ryan's budget, which passed 228 to 191 in the House of Representatives with no Democratic votes and 10 Republican defections.

Under the Ryan plan, spending would be cut \$5.3 trillion below President Obama's budget through 2022. Medicare would be reduced by \$205 billion. Medicaid and other health programs would be cut \$770 billion. Other entitlement programs, including welfare, food stamps, agriculture subsidies and transportation, would be cut by nearly \$2 trillion.

Medicare would be reduced by becoming a subsidized set of private insurance plans, with the option of buying into the existing fee-for-service program. The annual growth of those subsidies would be capped well below the current health care inflation rate, putting the cost on the backs of senior and disabled citizens.

It mandates the repeal of the Affordable Care Act, which would eliminate coverage for pre-existing conditions, keeping young adults on their

parents' health insurance, and the premium rebates which are now beginning to appear. It would also eliminate the cost saving requirements of preventive health care. The additional costs would go to those needing health care.

Ryan's budget doesn't ignore education. It cuts funds for education from preschool to college – Head Start to Pell Grants – because, as far as this Republican leadership is concerned, education is another unfunded entitlement. Nobody deserves it except those who can afford it.

It also includes a sweeping overhaul of the tax code. The six existing personal income tax rates, topped at 35 percent, would be reduced to two, set at 10 percent and 25 percent. The loss of revenue is supposed to be offset by eliminating *unspecified* tax deductions and exemptions.

Under this budget, more than 33% of the Ryan tax cuts would go to the top two percent, while 62 percent of the spending cuts would come from low income programs. It also includes magnanimous tax cuts for big business.

Ryan has been lauded for his "courage" in addressing the deficit, but what is courageous about kicking those who are already down, and assuring that more of us will join them?

Real courage would be taking on Wall Street with regulations that would force them to pay for the losses when they rip off people's 401Ks, or public and private pension funds.

Real courage would be taking on the oil, gas and coal barons with regulations that would force them to pay for the losses when they ignore aging pipelines and blow up whole neigh-

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