

Where to Find Them

U.S. Senator Ron Wyden (Dem)
1220 SW 3rd Avenue, Suite 585
Portland OR 97232
Phone: 503-326-7525
223 Dirksen Senate Ofc. Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510-0001
Phone: 202-224-5244
E-Mail: <http://wyden.senate.gov/contact>
Website: <http://wyden.senate.gov>

U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (Dem.)
One World Trade Center
121 SW Salmon St., Suite 1250
Portland, OR 97204
Phone: 503-326-3386
313 Hart Senate Ofc. Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-3753
E-Mail: <http://merkley.senate.gov/contact>
WebSite: <http://merkley.senate.gov>

U.S. Representative Suzanne Bonamici, (Dem) OR District 1
620 SW Main, Suite 606
Portland, OR 97205
Phone: 503-326-2901
2338 Rayburn House Ofc. Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515
Phone: 202-225-0855
Website: <http://bonamici.house.gov>

Senator Betsy Johnson (Dem) Senate District 16
PO Box R,
Scappoose, OR 97056
Phone: 503-543-4046
900 Court St. NE, S-314
Salem, OR 97301
Phone: 503-986-1716
E-mail: sen.betsyjohnson@state.or.us
Website: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/johnson>

Representative Brad Witt (Dem) House District. 31
21740 Lindberg Road,
Clatskanie, OR 97016
Phone: 503-728-4664
900 Court St. NE, H-373
Salem, OR 97301
Phone: 503-986-1431
E-mail: rep.bradwitt@state.or.us
Website: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/witt>

Representative Deborah Boone (Dem) House District 32
PO Box 926
Cannon Beach, OR 97110
Phone: 503-717-9182
900 Court St. NE, H-375
Salem, OR 97301
Phone: 503-986-1432
E-mail: rep.deborahboone@state.or.us
Website: <http://www.leg.state.or.us/boone>

Guest Opinion

by *Tony Hyde, Columbia County Commissioner and Columbia County Economic Team, and Jeff Kemp, CEO, Pacific Stainless and Columbia County Economic Team*

Columbia County's Industrial Grade Workforce

Columbia County's greatest economic asset is its highly skilled workforce. These highly skilled workers excel in manufacturing. Fortunately, workers with experience in goods producing industries – a full 25% of the local workforce – can find quality opportunities throughout the region. However, the bottom-line value of working locally, for residents and the community, is incomparable.

In Columbia County, there are currently unfilled openings for skilled workers at manufacturers – and the Columbia County Economic Team foresees a growing manufacturing sector that generates many more such opportunities for local residents in the future.

Manufacturing is a key industry here. It generates more wages than any other private-sector category – \$63 million in total payroll last year. And local manufacturers need skilled employees today.

Manufacturing jobs range in scope from production operator to industrial engineering man-

ager. In Columbia County these positions pay, on average, \$50,000 in annual wages – more than any other category. At face value, these wages slightly trail neighboring counties, for example, by only \$3,000 per year relative to Multnomah County.

However, switching to a local manufacturing job from a similar position elsewhere, is like getting, on-average, a \$12,500 pay raise when you factor the high cost of a long commute.

A 20-mile commute each way, at minimum, costs \$5500 per year in gas and car wear-and-tear. In terms of lost wages, the cost of time spent commuting is, on average, almost \$10,000 per year.

Yet, you almost can't put a price tag on the considerable loss of free time. For example, commuting 45 minutes to Portland, each way, eats up 7-1/2 hours per week, 375 hours per year. This grueling commute is the equivalent of nearly 10 extra weeks of vacation per year – time anyone would rather spend with their family, or whatever else adds to their notion of "the good life."

We both are fortunate to work locally, and spend some of our free time in service to the community. Community groups – Kiwanis, Rotary, Elks Club, Chambers of Commerce, for example – are a big part of what makes Columbia County great. We can only imagine what it would mean to the com-

munity if each group had 50 more people volunteering one hour per week, instead of commuting.

An "on-shoring" trend finally seems to be bringing manufacturing jobs back to the U.S. after decades of decline. Rising productivity here, and increasing costs overseas, is leveling the playing field. This points to new opportunities for Columbia County's skilled workforce, entrepreneurs, and the community.

The Columbia County Economic Team (CCET) is hearing from local manufacturers that they are getting new contracts. Contracts that were formerly awarded to Chinese competitors. Perhaps this explains, in part, why the Oregon Employment Department finds Columbia County manufacturers to have added 100+ jobs in the last twelve months.

Regional and statewide eco-

nomics development groups are working diligently to capitalize on on-shoring and new export opportunities to stimulate economic growth – and Columbia County is well positioned to participate in and take advantage of these strategies.

Our robust base of industrial sites, favorable business cost structure, and access to markets means Columbia County is ripe with opportunity – for entrepreneurs, the community, and, most of all, Columbia County's industrial grade workforce.

Learn about the manufacturing companies operating in Columbia County by visiting the Columbia County Economic Team's website at www.columbiacountyoregon.com, and discover job openings at www.worksourceoregon.org. There are great opportunities in our own backyard.

Out of My Mind . . .

From page 2

borhoods, when they contaminate our planet on land and sea, and when they bury streams and whole valleys with coal ash.

Real courage would be taking on super rich corporations and individuals with a tax code that ties taxes to income, so those who enjoy raking in 70 percent of the year's wealth also pay 70 percent of the year's income taxes.

Romney, who said the Ryan budget was "marvelous", now says he has his own tax plan to reduce rates and close loopholes. Like Ryan, he doesn't say which loopholes.

Many people still want to see Romney's taxes because that is how we will know what kind of tax policy he supports. That may be why he doesn't want to reveal more than two years of returns.

Letters

Use corn for food, not to make ethanol

To the Editor:

Friday, the USDA lowered its projections of the 2012 corn crop by 13% (WSJ, Saturday, August 11 Ethanol vs. the World). The intense drought in the Midwest is largely to blame.

40% of the precious remaining crop will be used in the production of ethanol, a fuel additive for gas. Even environmental groups have turned against the ethanol subsidy because of the deforestation it causes.

The EPA can suspend this ridiculous bit of corporate welfare. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, if the mandate isn't stopped im-

mediately, widespread starvation could result.

Don't be deceived by lower beef prices in the short term. Cattle have been rushed to slaughter because of spiking feed prices. This reprieve won't last long.

Contact the EPA or your congressman.

**Wayne Mayo
Scappoose**

Ridge Riders thank sponsors for support

To the Editor:

The Vernonia Ridge Riders would like to take this opportunity to thank our sponsors for their donations towards our Montana Silver Buckles that for

hi-point winners in each age group at the Jamboree Playday: Sentry Market, Vernonia Hardware, Napa Auto Parts, Wauna Federal Credit Union, Stump Branch Logging, Vernonia Equestrian Team, and Vernonia Dental.

Vernonia Ridge Riders would like to thank the Vernonia community for their continued support over the past 55 years.

**DeLoris Bellingham
President of Vernonia
Ridge Riders**

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.

NOTICE

The INDEPENDENT publishes on the first and third Wednesday of each month. Because August has five Wednesdays, there will be three weeks before the next issue, on September 5.

The deadline for the Sept. 5 issue is Friday, Aug. 31.