

Supporting Sen. Johnson

It was with some healthy skepticism that I read last week's *Oregonian* article criticizing our Sen. Betsy Johnson. Betsy readily admitted that she failed to list a property sale on some ethics report. But *The Oregonian* seemed bent on creating a scandal because she and her husband made a profit, a dirty word in the view of *The Oregonian*, by selling a parcel of land. The article went on to criticize her support on a bill that gives small airports another tool with which to encourage commercial development. A big deal was made of allowing commercial "through-the-face" access to small airports.

The fact is that such access is a critical tool in locating jobs in industrial parks that are around airports. Such access already exists at most locations. There are at least three at Tillamook airport, and more than that in Hillsboro and Portland International.

Apply a little more careful analysis to the article. In a very short sentence buried at the end of the article, it admits that the senator did disclose a potential conflict, publicly, on the floor of the Senate. That does not sound like someone trying to hide anything, does it?

If Senator Johnson is guilty of a violation in filing a report, let her face the consequences. But give credit where credit is due. First, the greatest beneficiary of her involvement in the "questionable" property sale is the economy of Scappoose.

Second, give her credit for aggressive support of her district. Tillamook County has never received such attention and concern from a legislator, particularly toward the deterioration of our estuaries. She has attended multiple meetings of the Tillamook Bay Habitat & Estuary Improvement District, often to face a drive home late at night, or a fast trip back to Salem.

Senator Johnson has orchestrated numerous meetings where her influence brought all of the responsible state agencies to the table, face-to-face with the district. And she is the primary organizer of the Oregon Solutions project that forces a new look at methods of restoring our rivers and sloughs. This support requires an investment of valuable political capital on her part. She has shown no hesitation to invest that capital on our behalf.

From a personal point-of-view, I have known of the Johnson family and its donations to the public for most of my life. As a youngster I was privileged to spend many summers in Central Oregon, where Senator Johnson's father, Sam Johnson, based his business. Many tourists and residents owe thanks to the family for donations to the public of areas such as the headwaters of the Metolius River, or areas surrounding homes and roads where pristine timber was left standing to protect views and wildlife.

In later years I was honored to serve on a board of directors with Mr. Johnson. I had the opportunity to hear his commitment to give back to the state in which he had achieved his success.

Besides contributing much of her life to improving our state as a legislator, Betsy Johnson now serves as the president of the Sam Johnson Foundation. The goal is to continue her family's legacy of donating to the public. The foundation supports projects such as improving public safety, promoting sound education and supporting a strong economy.

Somehow, this long history of

giving to the public by Senator Johnson, and her family, does not jibe with the tone of *The Oregonian* article. Nor does it jibe with my experience in working with the senator and her father. Senator Johnson has earned, and deserves, our support. A phone message, or a note of support, would be in order.

Doug Rosenberg
Tillamook

Courage, accountability

No one has fought harder or more passionately for our community than Sen. Betsy Johnson. Her passion for creating living wage jobs, accessible healthcare, securing adequate funding for schools and for law enforcement, and addressing the flooding problems cannot be questioned. Nor can her effectiveness in accomplishing her goals.

This is not intended as an excuse for the recent revelations of errors she has made because Betsy Johnson makes no such excuses for herself. Instead of running for cover and blaming everyone in sight, she came to previously scheduled town hall meetings to face the outrage of her constituents and to answer all their questions.

"I acknowledge that things went wrong" she said. And when disappointment at her poor judgment was expressed, she acknowledged it as "a proper and justified criticism." Just how amazing is that in a time when the favorite mantra of the country's highest judiciary officials currently under investigation — not for errors in judgment but for serious crimes against the nation is — "I don't recall"?

Americans today are demoralized by the failure of so many leaders to accept and acknowledge personal responsibility for their actions or to demonstrate the least bit of contrition for enormous blunders. What a different country this would be if all our leaders shared the courage and personal philosophy of accountability that Sen. Betsy Johnson has demonstrated.

Lenora Lawrence
Oceanside

Sen. Johnson is our senator

Now that things have settled down a little bit in the Portland media market regarding our Senator Betsy Johnson, I thought I'd take a few minutes of your time and tell you what kind of senator we have working us in Tillamook County.

Senator Betsy Johnson is one of the most — if not the most — dedicated legislators I have ever seen or known. She works for us, not for personal gain. If it was not for Senator Betsy Johnson we would not have two major projects in this county just in the last few months — those being the Oregon Solutions Project to address unacceptable flooding in the Tillamook Basin and the Transit Center Project.

Both took our senator's action in front of and behind the scenes to make these things happen for our citizens to make this county a better place. I've also seen her personally work with a very contentious issue in South County involving ODOT and a private developer and watched her use her facilitation and problem-solving skills so in the end both parties were satisfied with the outcome.

I've seen Senator Johnson fly and drive over here at her own cost in order to be here for a county meeting and then immediately fly or drive back to another meeting in Salem or Astoria or Scappoose. She recently took out time from her many Salem legislative evening meetings to fly in for the Tillamook FFA banquet because, as

she put it, this is a shining example of some of our "greatest young citizens," and she wanted to show her support for their efforts.

Of course, she flew right back to Salem in order to be back for early morning meetings in Salem. She works every weekend from either her home office or her Salem office or traveling to a meeting in a community.

She takes money out of her own pocket every year to buy 4-H beef at the County Fair and then turns around and donates the beef to the Chamber of Commerce as a raffle item to help out two groups. She financially supports the art auction for Habitat for Humanity every year. She sponsored a band at our upcoming June Dairy Parade and she did not tell the public she did this because she does need or want the recognition. She just wanted to help out our local dairy parade.

By the way, she was in all six county parades last year and, remember, she represents all of Tillamook, Clatsop and Columbia counties, as well as part of Washington County.

Yep, she has a strong personality and tells it likes she sees it and that's what I particularly like about our Senator Betsy Johnson. You know our senator is going to tell you the truth. Our senator is also going to tell you the way she sees the issue not what you want to hear, which I also like. Senator Betsy Johnson is working for you and me not for her personal gain.

Senator Johnson is our senator, and I'm darn glad she is.

Mark Labhart, chair,
Tillamook County
Board of Commissioners.

