

State mission: Plug \$238 million hole

The long-standing federal funding crisis in Oregon's rural counties is starting to affect urban schools and now our governor and statewide news media are beginning to pay attention.

Gov. Ted Kulongoski said, "This isn't just about rural Oregon. The ripple effects of this loss will extend to every K-12 student in the state" ("\$238 million crisis hits Oregon," June 24).

The real problem in rural Oregon is not about extending federal welfare payments another year or so to keep county governments and services afloat. It is, and has been for more than a decade, about jobs — real jobs that produce tax revenue, not government jobs that depend upon them.

Oregon has more than a million acres of dead and rotting trees going to waste on our federal lands. They are mute testimony to failed efforts to "save" our old growth.

The loss of legitimate and needed logging, trucking and sawmilling jobs in our rural communities has destroyed the culture and economies of these towns and families, perhaps irreparably. A return to scientific management of our federal lands will cure all of the self-inflicted hardships the governor is complaining about.

BOB ZYBACH

Springfield

The loss of federal timber payments to Oregon counties is a reminder that a crisis is also an opportunity.

Rather than relying on old models and piecemeal solutions, now is a good time to bring the county system into the 21st century. The availability of the Internet, even in a public library, means we can provide many services to residents without the need

for them to travel to a county building. This gives us the opportunity for counties to merge or consolidate their services to save costs and cut duplication. And it's far past time to start talking about consolidating school districts. Let's have these conversations now.

JANET PENFIELD

Beaverton

Regarding the recent articles and editorials about the funding crisis in Oregon's rural counties (and Rep. Greg Walden's influence on) Rep. Peter DeFazio's bill that would have extended payments to these rural counties, does Walden have a plan, short of mowing down old-growth forests?

Now it is Oregon taxpayers, the majority of whom live in the Willamette Valley, who are funding Gov. Ted Kulongoski's task force to study the problem. And it will be those same taxpayers who will be asked to help plug the hole and bail out Walden's constituents.

Walden should be held accountable for his actions on DeFazio's bill as well as for his 100 percent voting record in support of President Bush's war in Iraq, which has placed America in such a financial hole that we cannot even afford these small-by-comparison payments to Oregon's rural counties.

STEVE ALLEN

Northeast Portland

The feds won't fund \$238 million in timber payments for school kids and others in Oregon but think nothing of spending \$341 million a day in Iraq. Thanks for nothing, Bush & Co.

VERN HOLM

McMinnville