

A CALL TO ACTION by Jim Bice

In these times of reduced revenues to government and budget cuts in nearly every area, there's one program that is important to many of our state's residents. That is veteran's services.

Unlike many groups that rely on government support, our veterans have already paid their dues and have earned the benefits they receive.

Due to the current economic situation government officials at all levels are looking for ways to economize and stretch funding to provide as many services as possible and still remain within their means. This necessity presents a danger to veterans who rely on the services of county veterans' Affairs officers.

The current law regarding these officers, ORS 408.410, states that counties "...MAY appoint a service officer who shall give aid and assistance to any veteran, the spouse or dependents of the veteran, in applying for all benefits and aid to which they are entitled by federal, state or local laws, rules and regulations. The county governing body shall fix the compensation of the service officer, provide the service officer with an office and the necessary equipment therefor in the same manner as

provided for any other county officer. [If a county governing body appoints a service officer.] The county governing body shall also provide in the annual budget for expenditure of moneys sufficient to enable the county to employ the service officer, to properly maintain the office provided for the service officer and to pay the costs incurred by the service officer in providing assistance to veterans, spouses and dependents of veterans or survivors of veterans. The annual expenditures required by this section shall be made from the county funds referred to in ORS 408.720."

In a bill, HB 2926, sponsored by Representative Wayne Krieger (R, Gold Beach) and co-sponsored by Representative Arnie Roblan (D, Coos Bay), the word "MAY" is replaced with "SHALL" and requires Veterans' Affairs Service Officers in each county, with a couple of exceptions. These exceptions relate to sparsely populated counties, which would share an officer between them.

The bill is currently bottled-up in the House Veterans Committee and is in danger of being permanently tabled by committee chair Jean Cowan (D, Newport). Her contention is that with the budget shortfalls across the state, some counties may not be able to con-

tinue to provide veterans' services to their residents.

The cost to counties for these Veterans' Affairs Officers is relatively small compared to other expenditures. Nearly all counties currently have these officers in place and this bill would prevent the positions from being eliminated.

Since veterans comprise a large segment of our population and rely heavily on the assistance provided by their county's Veterans' Affairs Officers, this bill should be passed through committee and sent to the floor of the house for a vote.

Veterans and other citizens are urged to contact Representative Cowan at her office, phone 503-986-1410 or e-mail her at rep.jeancowan@state.or.us and urge her to pass HR 2926 through her committee.

Or veterans have already completed their service to all of us and have paid the price required to earn the benefits they receive. Without the county Veterans' Affairs offices to help them, many would not be able to navigate the myriad of requirements for them to receive the benefits they so richly deserve.

LOCAL REALTOR ELECTED PRESIDENT OF OAR



tion may be.

Hansen is no stranger to service on behalf of the real estate industry in the area and the state as a whole. She has chaired every committee for the Coos County Board of Realtors and has served for 20 years as the local board's state director. She chaired the OAR Issues Mobilization Committee and is past President of the OAR Home Foundation. She is also a certified National Association of Realtors mediator for Coos, Curry and Douglas counties as well as the Cottage Grove Regional Professional Standards and Coos County Courts. She has chaired many ethics and arbitration hearings. She has testified before the National Association of Realtors membership committee and attended NAR meetings representing our local board. Joann has been appointed to at least one Presidential Task Force per year over the past 20 years, including but not limited to Strategic Planning, New Governance Task Force, Senate Bill 246 Task Force and others. She chaired the Coos County Planning Commission in 2007 and is in her second term as a Coos County planning Commissioner.

Congratulations are in order! On April 9, local Realtor Joann Hansen was elected in a landslide vote to become President of the Oregon Association of Realtors.

Joann is well known in this area as a hard working Realtor. Besides being a mother of two and grandmother of nine children, she has operated her business, Joann Hansen Realty in Coos Bay, since September 1983. She has survived the Carter Administration, the Ford Administration, the Clinton Administration, two Bush Administrations and so far, the Obama Administration. She has seen the good times and the bad and has adapted herself and her business to prosper no matter what the political or economic situa-

With all her experience and knowledge, Joann's vision for the future as President of OAR includes many ideas to help the organization operate more efficiently and better serve public interests. She will work to protect private property rights and enhance the organization's membership by providing additional educational opportunities to members. She wants to implement the new governance structure for OAR as well as make use of modern technology to enhance communication to reduce time and travel costs for meetings. She believes that under her leadership Realtors and the people of Oregon can overcome the challenges presented by the current economic conditions and markets.

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