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Shows true colors

If Washington County ever needed a reason to oppose the scheme being pushed by Portland for a metropolitan governmental overlay, there's no need to look farther than the vote to locate the proposed garbage transfer station in the midst of the Sunset Corridor's high-tech development.

One of the strong selling points to electronics firms searching for plant sites has been the campus-like environment of the corridor. Gov. Vic Atiyeh knows well the value of this asset. He formed a task force to seek alternatives after the Metropolitan Service District Council singled out for garbage collection a 7.26-acre parcel on Cornelius Pass Road just north of the Sunset Highway.

Only Washington County members of the MSD Council, Bob Oleson and Richard Waker, were against locating the garbage station on the prime high-tech land. The council voted 8-2 to start the legal proceedings of condemnation on the site.

Governor Atiyeh was upset — as he had a right to be — when he learned of the vote. The MSD Council paid no heed to his warning that selection of the corridor for the garbage unit would most probably lead to prospective industry opting to locate elsewhere. Further, his words were backed by letters from representatives of high-tech firms.

There are those who put the governor's warning in a category of so much political talk. All of Oregon, not just the MSD, should give heed. No state's chief executive has been more consistent in the role of No. 1 salesman. And, few can lay claim to a recruiting success ratio the equal or better of Atiyeh's.

Many have tossed barbs in the governor's direction for what some might judge as perhaps too much enthusiasm toward sales excursions. None, however, can deny his effectiveness. He has played an important role. There is a potential for thousands of future jobs in new manufacturing facilities built or to be built by industries he has helped attract to the state.

Manufacturing employment provides the seed money for the economy. Oregon has added thousands of service-oriented jobs, but the dollars pumped into the state from the sale across the nation and throughout the world of products manufactured in Oregon is "new" money. Service payrolls merely churn those dollars.

The fact the Metro Council closed its eyes to the best interests of the state's economy is one thing. Another, is the fact the Portland-dominated council disregarded the resounding "no" voiced by the hundreds who overflowed a hearing on the location of the garbage station. The vote is a clear warning on the dangers metro-area government holds for Washington County residents and businesses.

Washington County might be one of Oregon's most heavily populated units, but it is no match for the combined vote of Portland backed by Multnomah and Clackamas Counties in a scheme of metro government.

If there's any question on what can be expected of a metro governmental body, ask the frustrated residents of Rock Creek and the leaders who have helped guide the Sunset Corridor to its status as an industrial showplace known and envied throughout the high-tech world.