

Utility pleased with appliance repair law

The future Clark Public Utilities' popular appliance repair service, in doubt since an attorney general's ruling in 1998 that questioned whether a public utility district can offer such a service, was assured last Friday, when the former attorney general, now Gov. **Christine Gregoire**, signed 49th District Democratic State Sen. **Craig Pridemore's** bill allowing Clark to continue the service.

"We're very pleased that the governor has signed this measure into law," said utility CEO/general manager **Wayne Nelson**. "Many of our customers love this service, and we've wanted clarity on the issue."

"We want to thank Sen. Pridemore and Rep. **Bill Fromhold** (D-49th), who took the lead on getting this legislation passed," Nelson said. "Reps. **Deb Wallace** (D-17th) and **Jim Moeller** (D-49th) also played key roles in getting the issue through the legislature," Nelson said.

"It's not an easy task to get a bill with strictly local significance through the legislature," Nelson said. "We sincerely appreciate the hard work of these local legislators who supported this bill."

Clark Public Utilities has offered appliance repair services to its customer owners since the early 1940s. A portion of the business was acquired, along with other assets of Portland General Electric, in 1946. PGE served part of Clark County prior to formation of the PUD. The service has proven to be very popular, particularly with long-time residents.

Clark offers repair of heating and cooling equipment, water heaters and ranges. Customers are charged \$66 for the first half-hour and \$17 for each additional 15 minutes. These rates are comparable to what is charged by many private companies that operate in Clark County. The service is not subsidized by electricity rates.

The utility also offers Guaranteed Hot Water, a maintenance program that provides repair or replacement of water heaters within 24 hours of failure. This service costs \$2.40 per month.

The utility's authority to offer appliance repair services was questioned by the state auditor in 1999, based on the 1998 opinion issued by the state attorney general's office. The attorney general's opinion was written by an assistant attorney general but signed by Gregoire, who was attorney general at the time. It reviewed a number of services offered or being considered by Washington public utility districts. Among other things, the opinion said a PUD did not have the authority to repair appliances that it has not sold. Passage of this legislation clarifies that Clark can continue to operate its repair service, the only one of its kind in the state.

As part of the legislative process, some opponents of the bill raised several issues with the state's Department of Labor and Industries, which regulates the licensing of repair technicians, and sets standards and permitting requirements for many electrical and plumbing repairs and installations. Officials of L&I have been reviewing utility records and are expected to announce findings within a couple of weeks.

"We will take all necessary steps to ensure full compliance with all legal requirements," Nelson said. "As a public agency, we will be a visible example for the repair industry to follow."

Baird to follow up social security survey with town hall meetings

Over 80 percent of those responding to a survey by U.S. Rep. **Brian Baird** (D-3rd) say Congress should act now to ensure long-term security of Social Security, according to Baird, who is scheduling town hall meetings in the district beginning with a 7 p.m. Friday, April 29, meeting in Vancouver in the Washington State University Vancouver Student Services Building.

According to Baird, he has received over 7,200 responses to the survey he conducted by email.

Baird said, "Nearly 90 percent of the respondents said the Social Security Trust Fund should not be used for other government functions."

Respondents were also strongly or moderately opposed to allowing private accounts to be used as part of the system. Baird also said 89 percent of the recipients strongly or moderately agreed that the cap of high income earners should be raised.

News briefs

The Vancouver City Council meeting in a workshop session at 4 p.m. today will hear a legislative update from the city's political consultant, **Mark Brown** and, following a one-hour closed meeting to discuss property acquisition, will reconvene for a consent agenda and will conclude at 6:30 p.m. with recognition of and a recep-

tion for a delegation from Vancouver's sister city, Joyo City, Japan. ☞ Clark Public Utilities' commissioners meet in regular session at 9 a.m. Tuesday, April 26. ☞ Clark County commissioners meet in regular session at 10 a.m. Tuesday, April 26. ☞ The annual Children's Home Society Sweethearts for Kids benefit luncheon is at 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, April 26, in the Red Lion Hotel at the Quay.

Monday Headlines at home and around the world

[Democrats had the votes Sunday to pass a \\$26 billion, two-year spending plan. All Republicans had](#)
[were speeches--Columbian, Don Jenkins](#)
[Republicans break ranks to pass gasoline tax on second try--Columbian, Don Jenkins](#)
[Washington vet may influence U.S. Cuban travel policy--Seattle Times, Alex Fryer](#)
[By two-to-one Americans oppose changing Senate rules change to make it easier for Republicans to](#)
[win confirmation of Bush's court nominees--Washington Post, Richard Morin and Dan Balz](#)

Monday on the air

Vancouver City Council Workshop (live)—4 p.m. CVTV
Portland Beavers at Salt Lake City (live)—5:30 KKAD
Vancouver City Council (4/18)—7 p.m. CVTV

Town Tabloids and the weather

Linda Stanton celebrating 21 years. ☞ **Jim Demmon** looking for spelling checker. ☞ **Sharon Crouch** on the winning team. ☞ **Jeff Williams** once again interlocutoring. ☞ **Janelle Ward** lining up top 40. ☞ **Monday**, gray and damp, 58. **Tuesday**, partly sunny, 68. **Wednesday**, kind of gray day again, 65.