

Proposed program would help small business

By Nick Reed
Of the Emerald

Students interested in starting their own businesses after graduation may find the task a little easier if a newly proposed small business advocacy program goes into effect.



Sponsored by Lane County legislators Sen. Grattan Kerans, D-Eugene, and Rep. Ron Eachus, D-Eugene, the Small Business Advocacy—One Stop Business Information Program bill will create a governor-appointed advocate who will represent small business entrepreneurs statewide.

"The main purpose (of the program) is jobs," Kerans said.

According to Jim Bernau, state director of the Oregon chapter of the National Federation of Business, 96 percent of Oregon businesses are considered small businesses. That constitutes about 64,000 firms, he said.

Considering that there are such a large number of small businesses, it is clear why these businesses are vitally important to Oregon's economy, Bernau said.

"It is a major goal of the Oregon Comeback," he said, referring to Gov. Neil Goldschmidt's plan to revitalize Oregon.

The proposal incorporates a three-part plan to encourage the growth of small businesses.

First, it will create a cabinet-level advocate, appointed by the governor. The advocate would be directly responsible for dealing with state efforts to consolidate, coordinate and simplify rules and the voluminous paperwork involved

in starting and maintaining a small business.

Other duties would include hands-on assistance to small businesses in complying with regulations, the mediation of regulatory conflicts between state agencies and small businesses and the evaluation of agency-proposed rules.

Secondly, the proposal would establish a one-stop business information center, also to be directed by the small-business advocate and operated within the Economic Development Department.

The center will provide a toll-free number for information and provide a referral service to assist small businesses with any problems concerning permits, licenses, regulatory information and other needs.

Included in the plan would be the creation of a Business Assistance Officer, who would work at each agency to field and direct the needs and problems of

particular businesses.

"This person can help resolve complaints," Eachus said, adding that many bureaucratic delays then could be avoided.

The third aspect of the bill would establish a Fiscal Impact Analysis of Proposed Agency Rules. The main function of this effort would be to direct the many regulatory agencies in evaluating the effects of their proposed rules and reduce the "red tape" that can be frustrating to small businesses.

One of the most common complaints from small businesses is the problem of paperwork, Eachus said.

"So much expertise is needed to keep a business functioning that owners are forced to hire accountants, advisers and other experts just to keep up with it all," he said.

The new program would hopefully eliminate this need, Eachus said.

Children losing out to elderly in U.S., Nichols says

By Cliff Pfenning
Of the Emerald

Children are becoming poorer and more vulnerable, as compared to the elderly, according to Margaret Nichols, superintendent of Eugene 4-J schools and the keynote speaker for University Honors Week.

The leaders of tomorrow need to redefine the terms of community service, Nichols told a small audience Tuesday night in Room 167 EMU, also known as the Fir Room.

"The children of the U.S. are rapidly losing ground, while older people are rapidly gaining ground in our American society," said Nichols, who also discussed the trend in the United States toward increased aid to the elderly and decreased aid to children.

Nichols outlined three areas where she saw the status of children declining: economically, educationally and in health.

"Children are the poorest people in our country," Nichols said. Twenty-five percent of the

nation's children live below the poverty level, as opposed to only 4 percent of the elderly. The figures were 14 percent and 15 percent respectively in 1970, she said.

"We are very pleased to provide monthly income, health care, recreation, food, even reduced-price movie tickets for the elderly," Nichols said. "But, there are 13 million children in the U.S. who are destitute."

Twelve percent of the population over 65 receives 50 percent of the money spent for social services, while only 16 percent of what is spent on the elderly goes toward the young.

"The infant mortality rate in the United States is greater than that of 15 other developed countries in the world," Nichols said, "while the elderly population of the U.S. is growing faster than the population of India."

Nichols cited federal funding cutbacks in nutrition programs for women and pregnant mothers as well as cutbacks in



Margaret Nichols

funding for school breakfast programs as examples of government neglect. The need for these programs, however, has increased, she said.

"Family patterns are changing such that most children will not be living with the same two parents they started with by age 16," Nichols said. The current rate is estimated to be at 43 per-

cent and will be more than 66 percent within a few years, she said.

As a result of divorce and a subsequent lack of support payments to single mothers, 72 percent of children from broken homes in the United States will suffer a serious decline in their standard of living, she said.

Nichols pointed out the lack of financial support for education programs as a negative trend. Programs such as Project Headstart, a program designed to get low-income children into preschool, have been reduced to serving only 18 percent of eligible children, she said.

While money is decreasing, more is being expected of public education, Nichols said. To prevent what has been called "the rising tide of mediocrity," schools have increased graduation requirements, the length of classes and school days, and generally made more demands of students, she said.

"We have a spirit across the nation that says we should

make the public schools more demanding, more rigorous, and more effective, but an unwillingness to foot the bill.

"We've become so obsessed with our own interests... that we're neglecting to attend to the needs of the children of our country," Nichols said.

"Our society is becoming more and more diverse. There are enormous changes coming about. Children need to be able to deal with and celebrate the cultural diversity of our society and not be intimidated," she added.

Nichols suggested that the solutions to the problems lie with the nation's future leaders. "We really need to reconsider the importance of community and the common good," she said. "We need leaders who have a vision of what this country could be."

"We need people who have nerve enough to stand up and state their point of view, even when it differs from the prevailing point of view."

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