

Centerpiece of the State of the Union

With a plea to Congress and a plea to the people of the United States, President Clinton delivered his State of the Union address Tuesday.

With his 64-minute speech inviting 67 rounds of (democratic) applause, there was plenty of time for sipping water and wiping his brow. That's right in line with the feel of the speech, a desperate coach delivering a team speech like it was his last. Clinton did a fine job delivering a strong and passionate speech putting responsibility on individual people, but it was all done grazing the surface. The specifics carrying out the new policies were specifics left out.

One of the Clinton administration's biggest issues, and one it is grappling with, is health care, and he made it the centerpiece of his speech. Clinton called for major reform, calling health care a crisis. And fair enough, seeing as Americans are hit with the most expensive health care system in the world. Although U.S. health care is the most expensive, the security that should go along with the expense is not there.

A system run by the insurance companies, according to Clinton, is a system that is in the control of the wrong people. The insurance companies are currently the ones who decide who gets treated and what treatment they get. The administration's policy is to provide a fair and fulfilled system for everyone. Clinton called on Congress to approve a health care plan that covers all Americans or else suffer the threat of a presidential veto. Veto or not, Clinton's current plan is nowhere close to being ready for adoption. Like his speech, a few questions remain unanswered regarding health care.

Is the role of government in line with demands that are being created? How is access, as well as competition, handled? Cost containment is another issue left untouched.

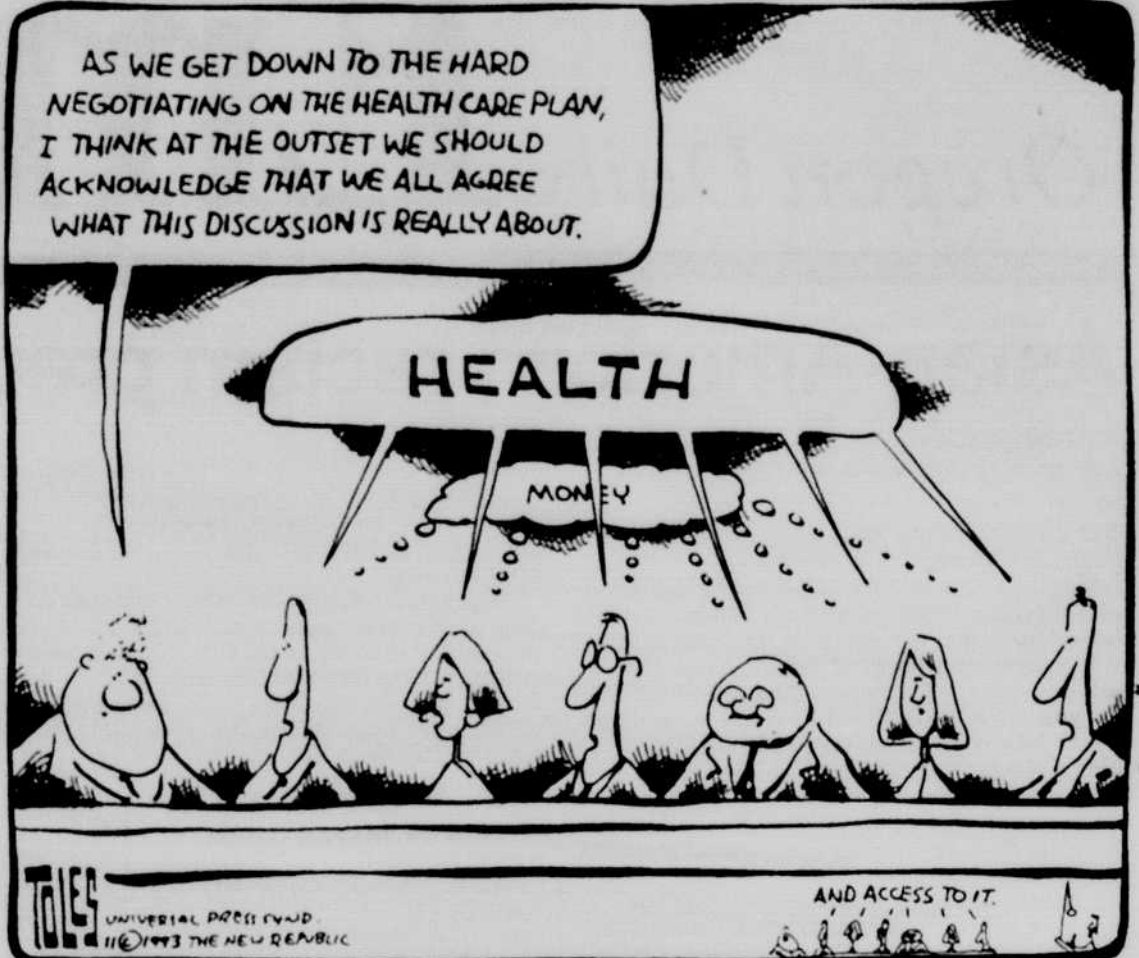
These are questions that require a solid answer before the conservative nature of this country hands over its support to government intervention in health care. The goal for 1998, set by Clinton, is for every American to be covered under a health care policy. And the key word of his goal is "every" American or else it is vetoed. Not much room for compromise; however, Clinton said there is room for negotiation elsewhere.

One thing that goes without argument is the need to overhaul the system. The problem has been looked at in the past, but action does need to be taken. Setting a goal for 1998 may, perhaps, be a goal that is never met.

But what is the state of the Union anyway? As far as the Democrats were concerned, seeing as they were out of their seats and applauding like clockwork, they thought it was quite good.

At the other end of the political spectrum, however, the Republicans came to the speech with weights in their pants, seeing as their seats were occupied for a great deal of the speech.

Clinton said, "What is the state of the Union? It is growing strong, but it must grow stronger still." Stronger is right, and the ideas that were presented are good ones, just subtract the details.



OPINION

Education is no longer valued



ROBBIE REEVES

It wouldn't be Oregon if some agency wasn't having to worry about budget cuts.

This time, it's state-funded colleges and universities.

Gov. Roberts announced that the state higher education budget for the would be cut by \$12 million, but that neither enrollment nor the quality of education would be affected.

How so? Simple, Roberts said. Simply consolidate smaller classes and offer professors early retirement options. And while the colleges are doing that, they can cut the administration a little as well.

One can see the quality of education plunging already.

Of course, enrollment won't be cut. It can't be cut. Any cuts in enrollment would eliminate money from students, especially from out-of-state students who pay higher tuition - money the University desperately needs.

The proposals sound benign enough. However, consolidating classes and finding ways to get rid of instructors do affect the quality of education.

It's a fact that many people like smaller classes. Smaller classes usually mean there will be more student-instructor contact than in larger classes, and students will come away from the course learning more than they would when there is less personal interaction.

And getting rid of instructors, whether they are fired or retired, inevitably will in some way lower the academic quality of the University.

These proposals, in turn, could affect the satisfaction students feel with an education

from a state school in Oregon.

Satisfied students usually means returning students, and returning students pay dollars, which help run this institution.

There are obvious detriments to the governor's proposed policy. That brings up a logical question. Why is it being proposed?

Education is not valued as it once was.

Oregonians used to value education highly. This can be seen by the number of community colleges (16) and state 4-year colleges (eight) in Oregon. These all took lots of money to build, staff and bring to the position they were in a few years ago.

Then, in 1990, Oregonians became quite tight-fisted toward state government and enacted Measure 5, an initiative that constitutionally limits property taxes, which is one of the primary forms of taxation in Oregon.

Revenues have dropped, and, therefore, so has funding to state agencies and state-funded ventures such as public universities. This, in turn, necessitates the cutbacks of staff and resources that the universities have to offer.

It's a sad reality that the budgets for agencies and institutions are being cut. It's been happening for three years now, and people are being hurt by the cutbacks.

But what is there to do now? The money is not there these days to fund everything that needs to be funded.

One could start blaming people. That would be an easy way to deal with a complex problem. Almost anyone could be blamed, from Gov. Roberts for proposing the cuts, down to the citizens that voted in 1990 to limit property taxes and who have put the governor in the position she is now in.

However, as easy and cathartic as blaming would be, it would do absolutely nothing to solve the economic problems that are facing Oregon today.

Higher education is crucial to Oregon's future in many ways, from the education of students straight out of high school to the retraining of displaced workers for new jobs.

As ironic as it sounds, it is necessary to educate people about the importance of higher education in order to protect it.

It's not that Oregonians have any spite toward higher education or, for that matter, education in general. Everything is unfortunately coming down to the question of money, and Oregonians seem a lot less willing these days to part with their cash.

And I can't say that I blame them. I hate to part with my money, too. But there are some things that just need to be funded because their value to society is infinitely greater than the value of the money alone.

It must be made clear to everyone that higher education is worth every cent of their money, and invariably a lot more.

It will be an uphill battle to convince Oregonians that the universities are worth their money. This reflects a general ambivalence of Oregonians in funding education these days. Voters have often blocked operating levies and tax bases for K-12 education statewide, and rejected a sales tax dedicated to education last November by a 3-to-1 margin.

Perhaps students and professors at higher education institutions statewide could be more aggressive in telling their communities about the value that colleges and universities have to the state, and that they are worth the money that citizens invest in them every year.

It would be a step in the right direction — putting education back as a priority, both economically and societally, in Oregon.

Robbie Reeves is a columnist for the Emerald.

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3159, EUGENE, OREGON 97403

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

The Emerald is private property. The unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.

Managing Editor	Calley Anderson	Sports Editor	Steve Mims
Editorial Editor	David Thorn	Editorial Editor	Jeff Pickhardt
Graphics Editor	Jeff Paslay	Photo Editor	Anthony Forney
Freelance Editor	Jeff Winters	Supplements Editor	Kaly Soto
	Night Editor: Julie Swensen		

Associate Editors: Edward Klopfenstein, Student Government/Activities; Rebecca Merritt, Community; Julie Swensen, Higher Education/Administration

News Staff: Mandy Baucum, Wilson Chan, Dave Charbonneau, Jim Davis, Meg Dedolph, Amy Devenport, Cara Echevarria, Malia Fields, Martin Fisher, Sarah Henderson, Heatherie Himes, Yin Leng Leong, Marius Meland, Trista Noel, Elisabeth Reensterna, Robbie Reeves, Lia Salocchia, Michael Shindler, Scott Simonson, Stephanie Sisson, Susanne Steffens, Julie Swensen, Michele Thompson-Aguar, Kevin Tripp, Amy Van Tuyl, Daniel West

General Manager: Judy Riedl

Advertising Director: Mark Walter **Production Manager:** Michele Ross

Advertising: Subir Dutta, Nicole Herzmark, Teresa Isabelle, Jeff Marion, Jeremy Mason, Michael Millette, Van V. O'Bryan II, Rachael Trull, Kelsey Wekell, Angie Windheim

Classified: Becky Merchant, Manager, Victor Mejia, Sim Tze Teck

Distribution: Andy Harvey, John Long, Graham Simpson

Business: Kathy Carbone, Supervisor, Judy Connolly

Production: Dee McCobb, Production Coordinator, Shawna Abele, Greg Desmond, Tara Gaultney, Brad Joss, Stacy Mitchell, Jennifer Roland, Natt Thangvijit, Clayton Yee

Newsroom: 346-5511 **Display Advertising:** 346-3712

Business Office: 346-5512 **Classified Advertising:** 346-4343