

Spare AmeriCorps from budget cuts

On the road to cutting the budget, Congress might veer off the side and cut necessary programs that must be funded.

A prime example of this would be AmeriCorps. A public service program instituted by President Clinton, AmeriCorps offers money for education in exchange for a year or more of national service.

A House subcommittee has cut \$210 million from the \$580 million budget already approved for the program this year. Now it appears some Republicans might like to cut the whole thing.

AmeriCorps is a program that deserves every dollar allocated to it. If this program cost billions of dollars, it might be argued that cuts in the program would be justifiable. In an effort to reduce spending, Congress is currently trying to cut a little out of most programs while eliminating others.

AmeriCorps is one of those visionary programs that only comes along every few decades.

However, AmeriCorps is not an expensive program and doesn't deserve to be cut. In fact, for the good that the program does both for the workers and for their communities, AmeriCorps is the type of program that should be promoted rather than gutted.

AmeriCorps encourages many things society actively tries to promote. The program aims to help people pay for their education by working for projects to better society. Recent projects throughout the country include building houses and immunizing children — noble projects few could find fault with.

Opponents argue people shouldn't be paid to work on community service projects. As humans, we should be willing to help another person in need. However, the reality is that even while working to help the community, people are still looking to get an education. Everyone has bills to pay and college isn't getting any cheaper. If people are willing to work to better society to get the funds necessary to attend college, then AmeriCorps is a successful program.

AmeriCorps is one of those programs everyone can benefit from. With AmeriCorps, no one loses. Those in the program gain money for college or vocational school, while gaining valuable experience that might help when applying for employment elsewhere. The community benefits as well. AmeriCorps workers can often accomplish tasks the local community cannot do itself.

AmeriCorps is one of those visionary programs that only comes along every few decades. Similar to the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps allows people to help others and better themselves at the same time.

Congress should spare AmeriCorps from cuts. Americans are getting excellent return for their dollar and workers are getting an education. What more could Congress look for in a federal program?



OPINION

All crimes are created equal



BRIAN WOMACK

Every crime that happens today in the city of Eugene will be a hate crime. The same goes for the rest of the state and the nation, for that matter.

I can say this because, as far as I can tell, nobody does crimes out of love.

There are no "love crimes." Hate is the motive in just about any crime I can think of. At least if they're not done out of pure hate. Perhaps the criminals are just ticked-off or really upset for some reason.

I guess these crimes could be called "ticked-off crimes" or "I was really upset crimes."

Crimes are committed with the intention of infringing upon another person's property or self that I would characterize as, if not at least hate, certainly evil.

Let's suppose on the way back to my car tonight, some people decide they need some money, and I'm the person they decide to take it from. Just for argument's sake, let's suppose in the process of the mugging, I lose my kneecaps to a .38.

Am I now going to care if the person who committed that crime is black, white or a radical vegetarian? No. I'm upset that I'm missing my kneecaps. Whether the person did it out of hate for me for any reason is really beside the point.

That crime or any crime is wrong because it is a crime. It's not because of what some person was thinking at the time of the crime.

Yet many believe it does.

In a *New York Times* editorial on June 16, 1993, the board of the paper called a Supreme Court decision that found the idea of classifying crimes because the person was biased

toward the person's minority a "welcome message."

But this board and others who hold its views should consider the consequences of such laws.

In the May 1993 issue of the *ABA* (American Bar Association) *Journal*, an article explained a case where a group of black men beat up a white boy. This was the case the Supreme Court decided in 1993. The theft and felony aggravated battery conviction by the jury was expanded from two to four years because of the hate crimes law in the state of Wisconsin where the crime took place. It was said that the incident took place after the group of blacks watched Mississippi Burning and one of the men said, "Do you all feel hyped to move on some white people?"

This may make sense to some. If the person who did this was a racist, doesn't he deserve worse punishment?

A symposium in the 1992 winter/spring issue of *Criminal Justice Ethics*, discusses the very topic of penalty enhancement for hate crimes.

Martin H. Redish of Northwestern University School of Law argued that, "while the violence that results from racial strife is surely not constitutionally protected, no additional punishment may be imposed solely for the racial motivation."

Redish questions the basis of hate crimes because they attempt to sentence people based upon what their thoughts are, not just on the act itself.

"Anyone who has devoted substantial thought to issues of freedom of expression knows that a system that protects only expression, which we find morally or politically acceptable will soon disintegrate ... As dangerous and offensive as I find any expression of bigotry, I fear much more any attempt by government to control the minds of its citizens."

It's amazing to me that once again the left, with all of its calls for freedom of thought, are too happy to trample on that free-

dom when it doesn't line up with their politics.

James B. Jacobs of the New York University School of Law wrote one of the most striking points in the symposium. He said, "A decade ago many thoughtful individuals and the responsible press were opposed to even reporting the race of arrested individuals and their victims. ... Now, the reverse policy seems to be gaining the ascendancy, especially among liberals who propounded the color-blind approach in the first place."

Because hate crimes are not color-blind, discrimination abounds.

Though we often think of hate crimes as white on black or some other minority, it isn't always that way.

The *New York Times* reported on Dec. 13, 1993 that the "racially motivated crimes by blacks have soared in the last few years." The report found this was done by a group that was formed to monitor hate crimes by the Klu Klux Klan. It said from 1991 to 1993, the number of actual killings done by blacks on whites, Hispanics and Asians leaped 46 percent.

This is another problem with hate crimes. They end up punishing some of the groups of people they were supposed to protect.

If a group of people is being hostile toward another in a violently threatening manner, they should be prosecuted fully. I do believe that.

However, as Jacobs said, "I continue to believe that our goal should be a color-blind society and a color-blind criminal justice system."

This is just something else in society that tears at the relations between the races.

We don't need anymore of that — no matter how politically correct one may think the ideas are.

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