

## Committee aborts funds for contraceptive care

**OUR OPINION:** Program cessation will increase poverty and pregnancy

Those Contract-with-America scissors just keep cutting ... the wrong programs.

The House Appropriations Committee passed a Labor, Health, Human Services and Education appropriations bill on Tuesday that will eliminate Title X federal funding for the nation's family planning centers — locally affecting Lane County Public Health and Planned Parenthood services in Grants Pass and Medford. The bill now moves to the floor of the House of Representatives for debate.

The Title X program provides health and family planning services to an estimated 5 million women in more than 5,200 service sites around the country.

The majority of these women live below the poverty line and rely on these services for contraception information, lower prices for contraceptive devices, breast exams, pap smears and other essential health services.

Slashing this funding will inevitably cause an increase in unwanted pregnancies, abortions and death rates for the nation's impoverished women.

An attack on women's services is not surprising considering the conservative bent of the Congress and the Republican drive to "reform" welfare and prevent all those promiscuous women from raking in big public-assistance bucks. Women, they say, need to take "personal responsibility for their lives."

Of course, without access to accurate reproductive information or contraception; responsibility means abstinence — a highly unrealistic and unfair goal.

Wealthier women continue to be able to exercise reproductive control and minimize the number of

their pregnancies. Their smaller families allow them to have careers and maintain a higher standard of living. As such, they also raise children who receive the same information and can live educated and productive lives.

Meanwhile, poorer women continue to have more babies, lowering their standard of living and locking them into a downward spiral that is difficult, if not impossible, to escape. The children, often unwanted, grow up in an environment that encourages hopelessness. These are the same children that later fill our welfare system, our hospitals and our prisons.

This widening gap not only seems acceptable to conservatives, but preferable, in part because eliminating Title X funding will make abortion less accessible.

If all of these propositions pass, including welfare reform, young women who have no access to accurate sex education or contraception, will become pregnant, be unable to terminate that pregnancy and be unable to receive free or low-priced prenatal and postnatal care.

The best part is that if the baby is lucky enough to be born healthy, the mother will be unable to receive state assistance to feed and clothe that child, much less pay the medical bills.

But Title X money cannot be used to perform or advocate for abortions. The focus of the program is to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

According to Planned Parenthood statistics, the monies provided by Title X prevent 1.2 unwanted pregnancies each year, more than 250,000 of which involve sexually active teenagers. Every dollar of Title X funding saves the state an estimated four dollars in welfare and other services.

Apparently, some conservatives think orphanages are a better investment.



### OPINION

## Special Olympians: no pity, just pride

By Sargent Shriver  
Guest Writer

In a Gallup poll conducted recently to gauge the perceptions of Americans about Special Olympics, more than 95 percent of the respondents indicated they believe individuals with mental retardation "could benefit from involvement in sports."

That was great news for us. It reinforced similar findings published in December by the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*. The *Chronicle* reported that its own independent poll had revealed that Special Olympics is considered the "most credible" charity in the United States.

In July, more than 7,200 athletes gathered in New Haven, Conn., for this year's largest and most rousing sports event, the 1995 Special Olympics World Games. Athletes from 145 countries competed for 10 days in 19 summer sports, including aquatics, basketball, gymnastics, and for the first time, golf, sailing, and the full-length Olympic Marathon!

They also saw a huge Parade of Tall Ships and displays, witnessed opening and closing ceremonies featuring world-class television, radio and movie stars and other celebrities. They had the time of their lives.

Plus, for the first time ever, a silver dollar coin honoring the achievements of individuals with mental retardation has been struck by the U.S. mint! The coin features a portrait of Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who founded Special Olympics in 1968. This coin is a tribute to the one million athletes around the world who are participating in Special Olympics activities daily.

Yet, there are those who still pity individuals with mental retardation. But should anyone really feel sorry for this group

"We shouldn't pity Special Olympics athletes, because they don't pity themselves. They only ask us to treat them as worthy human beings."

of people?

Let's face the facts:

Each and every one of us has got his or her own shortcomings, deficiencies, flaws, handicaps or blemishes.

We all must accept them, deal with them and move on. But Special Olympics athletes, like all individuals with mental retardation, often have a stigma attached to their handicap, as if their handicap makes them hopeless ... forever. But they are not.

You can bet your last dollar that Special Olympics athletes do not consider themselves hopeless!

Certainly not Andy Leonard, a power lifter from Pennsylvania, who can lift four times more than his body weight, an achievement matched by only a handful of athletes in the entire world.

Not Anthony Doak, a long-distance runner from New Zealand who runs the traditional Olympic Marathon in just over three hours.

Not David Ricker, a Special Olympics athlete who, like dozens of others enrolled in Special Olympics' Officials Program, has become a certified official.

Not Loretta Claiborne, a gifted athlete and an even more impressive individual, who recently received an honorary Doctorate of Humanities degree from a Connecticut university, the absolute first for any human being with mental

retardation in academic history!

We shouldn't pity Special Olympics athletes, because they don't pity themselves. They only ask us to treat them as worthy human beings.

Ask anyone who has attended a Special Olympic competition. He or she will use these kind of words when describing the competitors: determination, pride, exuberance, joy, perseverance. But not self-pity.

Some might still question whether events such as the World Games can truly serve as a celebration of the achievements of individuals with mental retardation. Those skeptics should come to the World Games.

The state of Connecticut welcomed tens of thousands of spectators to into New Haven, Hartford, New London and dozens of other communities. Millions more tuned in to a multitude of national and international broadcasts from NBC, ABC, ESPN and others who covered the event.

Watch the World Games, then decide for yourself. Seeing is believing.

Sargent Shriver is the chairman and CEO of Special Olympics International.

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The *Oregon Daily Emerald* will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.

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