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PERSPECTIVES

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A mixed blessing UNDERSTANDS



Governor Kitzhaber's proposed budget is great for higher education, but it may create trouble for the Oregon Health Plan

It is always nice to see someone keep a promise, so seeing a politician keep a promise fills us with unparalleled glee.

So kudos to Gov. John Kitzhaber for making good on his campaign pledge to budget more money for higher education.

The 1999-2001 spending plan, unveiled on Tuesday, calls for an additional \$73 million to go to state colleges and universities. Some of the tastier perks that will accompany this windfall include continuation of the in-state tuition freeze, better re-

cruitment and retention programs and better curriculum and facilities.

That's not all the budget contains. There's also additional funding for juvenile crime prevention, transportation and education in general. Perhaps best of all there are no new taxes being proposed to pay for any of the budget's provisions.

But in government, no one can get ahead without the screws being put to someone else. So it is with this budget proposal. The whipping boy of choice? The Oregon Health Plan.

Because the budget

does not call for any new taxes, Kitzhaber had to do some interesting juggling with state funds.

Largely due to decreasing revenue and increasing costs, the health plan will face cuts in services, and it will be more difficult to qualify if the proposed budget passes.

Furthermore, if the budget passes as written, and the state Legislature allows the current 10-cents-a-pack cigarette tax to expire, then there would have to be more cutbacks to the Oregon Health Plan to make up for the lost rev-

enue.

You might want to prepare yourself for this next part. Where would the cuts come from? Coverage for college students, low-income pregnant women and their babies and low-income children under 19.

This being the case, it is likely that the Legislature will opt to keep the cigarette tax in place. It's doubtful that they would want to take responsibility for yanking health care away from poor women, children and students.

And Kitzhaber, no doubt, realizes this. Okay, so it might be a bit

of a dirty trick for him to back the Legislature into such a tight corner, but it will probably work.

Obviously, the Legislature should go ahead and continue the cigarette tax, even though recent rises in cigarette prices might increase resistance to even the slightest fluctuation in price. There's nothing that can justify taking health care away from the people who need it the most.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

Thumbs



TO FINANCIAL AID ON LINE:

A new system being tested at universities around the country would allow students to apply on line and view their account information without ever stepping foot into a campus financial aid office.

TO BILL GATES:

The multi-billionaire and his wife are donating \$100 million to pay for childhood vaccinations in underdeveloped countries.



TO THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE:

For attempting to add campaign finance charges to President Clinton's impeachment inquiry, a move that would undoubtedly drag the proceedings out longer.

TO CIGARETTE PRICE HIKES:

By raising the per-pack cost of cigarettes, the tobacco companies have managed to wrangle out of the tobacco settlement. With the increased prices, the money lost in the settlement should be recouped in no time.

