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Perspectives

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an uneducated plan



Everyone wants to see crime punished, but most of us realize there are appropriate levels of such punishment for a given crime. And the recent proposal to suspend federal financial aid from some students with an illegal drug conviction is too severe in the manner it is written.

The first of many problems with the plan to disqualify students from receiving federal aid for the upcoming school year is that it would include those with prior drug convictions. New consequences should always start after the rule goes into effect, in this case July 1, and not before. It would be incredibly unfair to retroactively seek out students to whom to deny aid.

Besides the fairness of including prior convictions, one of the most pressing concerns in this issue is the slippery slope of government peering into personal lives. Whether the gov-

ernment should be examining the behaviors of its citizens before doling out money is an important question that will always raise the ire of informed citizens, regardless of their stance on the issue. In this instance, government would be taking money away from those in need of it for vastly varying degrees of offenses against society.

As irony would have it, those who would be hurt most by this rule are those who need to be attending school to brighten their future prospects. For many, receiving federal aid is the only way they can attend school, which is now universally recognized as a necessity for material success in the coming century. Those who would lose the ability to attend school — over what could theoretically amount to a very petty crime — would face a life sentence of menial work. This creates a double jeopardy through natural consequences, even

though someone would have paid their codified debt to society. That, indeed, would be a disproportionate penalty.

Without positively knowing the intent behind this policy, we can only assume it is another "get-tough-on-crime" measure designed to show the stalwart support for fighting drugs. That would be fine if it were better planned out and had a middle ground to it.

The general notion of this policy seems palatable to most: punishment for crime. But this policy totally ignores any middle ground between no financial consequence at all and what has been illustrated to be a possibly life-altering punishment. There should be a probationary period, mandatory drug counseling or some well-reasoned hybrid of the two. While the concern over a prying government would still loom, a middle step that would stave off taking

school away from a student would make this plan more worthy of support.

Because this is a decision that has already been made, students can argue over the merits of the policy but still must live by its rules nonetheless. There doesn't seem to be anything that can be done save being informed on the repercussions, if any, that may apply.

Even instances where little can presently be done to alter a policy, it is still important to keep a healthy argument brewing in the hopes our representatives will listen. And if they do, they should hear that this education policy is poorly planned, targeted against those who need federal aid the most and lacks any reasonable middle ground. That's one uneducated plan.

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

THE WEEK IN THUMBS



To a sign of the times

The ASU will present a proposal that would allow American Sign Language to be used to fulfill the foreign language requirement. It will be reviewed by the University Senate.

To expanded child care

Gov. John Kitzhaber will include a student-parent child-care proposal in his next budget after an impressive effort to increase voter turnout by Student Vote 2000. Kitzhaber agreed to include the federally funded Student Block Grant program in the state budget, thereby matching it with state dollars.



To bumping smart heads on invisible ceilings

According to a Harvard Business Review article published last week, women find themselves hitting a glass ceiling in corporate America, as they make up just 10 percent of senior managers in Fortune 500 companies.

To an "unsatisfactory" poll

The Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" topped a list of VH1's 100 greatest rock songs. "Satisfaction" wasn't even the best Stones song. The music industry people polled for this attempt missed the mark terribly.

It's time for students to stand up to Sizemore

Students should take notice of Bill Sizemore's initiative on the upcoming ballot; if it passes it will have a devastating impact on their pocketbooks.

Loser in the last gubernatorial campaign, Sizemore is promoting an initiative for the November ballot that could be the worst thing for Oregon schools since Ballot Measure 5. For 1990's graduates of Oregon high schools, that memory is still quite fresh.

First the impact to the state, student and individual. Sizemore's initiative will cut more than \$1.66 billion dollars out of the general fund during the 2001-2003 biennium, approximately a 14 percent cut. This will mean dramatic cuts in services to the

citizens of this state, especially community colleges and higher education.

Since Measure 5 was passed, tuition at Oregon's community colleges and universities rose well over 90 percent. The increases occurred because of backwards measures like this one. This new initiative will have an even greater impact on our tuition costs. The measure would go into effect after November 2000, and with only eight months left in the 1999-2001 biennium the state would see 1 billion dollars of its almost 4 billion dollar budget cut. That represents a 25 percent cut to the state's services during that time.

With a 25 percent cut in state services, what will happen to students enrolled in schools across the state? Undoubtedly tuition will rise —

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some say it could rise as high as \$500 mid year. This will force many students out of school. Also program offerings will be cut as faculty are laid off to make room for budget cuts.

The initiative would allow Oregon income taxpayers to deduct all of the federal taxes they pay from their state returns. Currently, taxpayers filing single and joint returns can deduct a maximum of \$3,000 of federal taxes, and corporate taxpayers can't deduct any.

Sizemore has submitted more than 100,000 signatures to get his initiative on the November 2000 ballot, and it's

expected to qualify easily.

The measure would make the tax cut retroactive to January 2000, concentrating the entire financial meltdown into the last seven months of Oregon's two-year budget.

The taxpayers would get about \$1 billion in tax cuts in the budget period, according to the Legislative Revenue Office. Those tax savings would translate into cuts of more than 20 percent in state programs, including schools and colleges, which are paid for mostly with state income tax revenues.

Sizemore wants to pass another initiative that would require voter approval of any tax or fee increases. That could automatically put any legislative response to the tax-cut initiative back on the ballot.

I am sick and tired of letting Sizemore run our state. I was a peer advisor in college when Measure 5 passed, and I saw dozens of people forced out of school because they could not afford the mid year \$501.00 increase in tuition. I witnessed the students who had to leave Oregon State University and the University due to program cuts and faculty layoffs.

Students must stand up and be counted on this one. We have to teach ourselves about this ballot measure, stand up to Sizemore and tell him we have had enough. Help students register to vote, help students learn about this measure and help students defeat Sizemore.

Ed Dennis is the executive director of the Oregon Student Association. His views do not necessarily represent those of the paper.