

State 'saves' money at its own peril - and that of its citizens

Guest commentary

Save money? Good idea!

Let's see, if I skip my regular car maintenance for the rest of this year, I can save, maybe, \$60. Or how about the roof that is starting to leak in that one spot? Well, it's going to stop raining soon, and I can save \$100 on a patch job - next year is good enough. Oh yes, the faucet in the shower is leaking badly, but what the heck, no need to call a plumber, I'll just close the door so I can't hear it and save another \$80.

Sound familiar? Most of us have done that kind of thinking at one time or another. But we usually find out, as the old motor oil commercial said, that it's, "Pay me now or pay me (more) later."

Many taxpayers in Oregon may think it's a good idea to save money by skipping essential health services to mentally ill individuals. But saving money now may end up costing more later - in dollars and human suffering.

For example: In February, the state removed 290 people with mental illness from services that made it

possible for them to work, take care of themselves and pay taxes. The various programs that provided them with employment opportunities, supervision, job training, on-the-job visits, skills training and transportation have ended.

Which part of our society is paying the price while the state is saving money? Hospitalization, homelessness, crime, and death exact different kinds of costs.

In February, the state also cut medication and treatment for 3,700 children with mental illness or severe emotional disturbance. Without the medication and treatment, these children are unable to function in the community or succeed in school. In addition, 132 non-Medicaid and 32 Medicaid Psychiatric Day Treatment slots for children were eliminated.

All of these cuts deprived the children who were affected of access to critical treatment in times of psychiatric crisis. Costs will shift to schools, the juvenile justice system and in-patient care. The costs will compound as these untreated children grow into adulthood.

Funding of community mental health services for non-Medicaid adults has been cut, denying treatment for 10,500 people with mental illness. Most will no longer be able to function in the community; those with jobs are likely to be unable to keep working and may end up being civilly committed or may commit crimes.

That may already have happened in some cases.

In all these instances, the state "saved" money in the desperate attempt to re-balance the General Fund budget because of decreased tax revenues. It will continue to "save" if the Legislature can't find the money pay for those services in the coming biennium.

But at how much greater cost - to the state and to the thousands of mentally ill individuals who lost their critically needed help - will those savings come?

It's as the commercial said: "Pay me now or pay me later."

State Senator Bill Morrisette, D-Springfield, represents central Linn and Lane counties, including the East Campus neighborhood.

Unrealistic reality TV limits viewers

Guest commentary

Every weeknight, it's the same thing. I come home from classes, search for something slightly entertaining on television and find nothing, much to my frustration. Instead, I find garbage that is both despicable and insulting to me. How can a television viewer not be revolted when reality TV shows abound on network television? It was once a clever concept, I admit. "Survivor" was interesting enough, but it has spawned cancerous knock-offs like "Fear Factor" on NBC, "I'm a Celebrity: Get Me Out of Here!" on ABC and "Scare Tactics" on Sci-Fi.

In shows like these, we watch ordinary people and washed-up celebrities be tortured mentally and physically in a circus of sadism. Sorry, but I really don't find Robin Leech being deprived of food or shelter in the middle of the jungle entertaining. In the constant search for bigger shocks, the reality TV genre is on the fast track to the deadly game show of the future featured in the movie "Running Man." Imagine turning on the television sometime soon and finding "Gas

Chamber Challenge" or "Firing Squad Trivia." This trend insults the intelligence of the American viewer and shows that humanity has not yet progressed beyond the bloodthirsty rabble of the Roman coliseum.

Another branch of reality TV, which is somewhat more sophisticated but still insulting, is the "talent" show genre, featuring shows like "American Idol" and "Are You Hot: The Search for America's Sexiest People." To me, and perhaps others, these "talent" shows seem more like meat markets. The sadism of the "Survivor"-type shows remains, but it is mixed with dimwitted hosts, cold judges exuding emotional cruelty and mentally fragile but sexy contestants. These shows are like Ed McMahon's (not Arsenio Hall's) "Star Search" turned on its head. I don't recall the old "Star Search" tarnishing people's dignity in front of millions. I would be more sympathetic to the rejected contestants, but these people are usually jaded and narcissistic, so I think they get their just desserts.

Reality TV and unimpressive sitcoms have limited my nighttime viewing to reruns of "The Simpsons," some shows

of note on Comedy Central and recurring broadcasts of CNN. Even the usually rowdy BBC coverage of the British Parliament is more entertaining and less predictable than reality TV!

Thanks to repugnant television, I've been forced to expand my mind with books, go out with friends more often, and even to my surprise, study harder. This result is perhaps the opposite of the networks' designs. Television was once and could still be the technological altar of Americana, but because of either the depravity of American viewers or the desperation of networks, the aura of the 20th century's greatest invention has lost its former appeal.

Let's hope that reality TV is a fad in popular culture, like Westerns in the '50s, and that we can all look back one day and think, "Why did I watch this crap?" Until that day comes, I will be forced to study instead of relaxing, and be tormented by irrepressible catch phrases, such as "America, you decide who makes it to the next round" or "You have been voted off the island!" Ironically, in real life, one never has that option.

Steven Lockfield is a junior majoring in history.

Letters to the editor

PPPM majors wrongly 'undeclared' in ASUO primary elections

The Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management, for those of you who don't know, is a division of the School of Architecture and Allied Arts and is located in Hendricks Hall. It is a small school, with about 50 undergraduates. I represent these students, and all AAA majors, on the ASUO Student Senate. And I feel compelled to point out a great injustice that recently happened to PPPM majors during the recent ASUO primary elections.

During the primary elections that took place April 9-11, PPPM majors, including myself, were forced to vote for the "undeclared" seat, instead of the AAA seat as they should have. Furthermore, it appears as though this has been a problem for a couple of years now. A lazy elections board member a couple of years ago decided not to bother to look into what seat PPPM would fit under (which would have taken minimal effort) and decided instead just to lump it in under "undeclared."

It is only a fluke that a PPPM major even had a chance to represent AAA this year, as I was appointed to this seat. And I know of at least one PPPM major who was denied that same right for next year, as he was unable to run an effective write-in campaign due to the elections board mess-up. I hope that future election boards will look more closely when placing majors under senate seats so that no students will be aggrieved like PPPM was in this year's ASUO primaries.

Eric Bailey
senior

PPPM and political science

Speaking out against injustice is a duty

Early in the 19th century, abolitionists protested contemporary thought on race by challenging the "accepted" practice of slavery. Some even defied federal law and assisted fugitive slaves in their flight to freedom along the Underground Railroad.

Later, men and women stood up to the bosses, unionized, struck, faced imprisonment and even died, with the end result being the 40-hour work week, minimum wage, laws prohibit-

ing child labor, health care for workers and general advancement of the concept that all people, not just the wealthy, have a share in America.

In the '50s and '60s, women and men such as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King defied Jim Crow and the Klan - and now, people of color, or with Hispanic surnames, can attend college right alongside their Anglo counterparts.

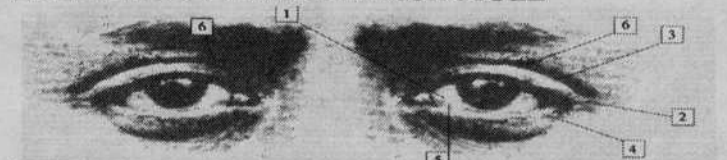
Speaking out against perceived injustice is not just a right, nor a mere privilege abused by spoiled brats in the age-old rebellion against mommy and daddy, as some would have it; it is in fact a duty. It can be said to be an integral part of a broader humanistic campaign as well, and as such may thus be far more responsible for real social progress than any military action.

Perhaps, if either Salena De La Cruz ("Majority Support," ODE, March 31) or the people in Bush's war machine had ever actually been in a war, they might realize this, and thus not be so quick to send others to die for a vague cause - or to condemn those who challenge the act.

Bill Smee
kiosk attendant

HAS A CONVERSATION REALLY HAPPENED?

Race isn't biological.
But that doesn't mean it isn't real.



RACE

the power of an illusion

A nationwide release of a three-part documentary series by California Newsreel

View each provocative episode and then engage in facilitated dialogue within a safe and supportive space.

ALL levels of interest are welcome.

Tues. May 6th 6:30-8:30pm Ben Linder Rm (EMU)
EPISODE I - The Difference Between Us

Everyone can tell a Norwegian from a Nubian, so why doesn't it make sense to sort people into biological races? Examine the contemporary science including genetics that challenges our assumptions about human groups.

Thurs. May 8th 6:30-8:30pm Gumwood Rm (EMU)
EPISODE II - The Story We Tell

Hasn't race always been with us? Explore the roots of the race concept, the 19th century science that legitimized it, and how it gained such a hold over our minds.

Tues. May 13th 6:30-8:30pm Ben Linder Rm (EMU)
EPISODE III - The House We Live In

Race may be a biological myth, but racism still gives different groups vastly different life chances. Forty years after the Civil Rights movement, the playing field is still not level, and "colorblind" policies only perpetuate inequality.

LET'S ENGAGE IT.

VISIT THE COMPANION WEB SITE @ www.pbs.org/race

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For more information contact the BRT at 346-1139 or email kmoic@uoregon.edu

Leadership

from the inside out

tomorrow • may 6th

expressive arts for leadership and social change

This hands-on workshop will incorporate the arts to help you develop communication skills for creating change. We will use drawing, movement, journal writing and improvisational theatre to develop skills in creative, interactive and playful expression. No prior experience necessary.

3-5PM • BEN LINDER ROOM • EMU

monday • may 12th

considering leadership: how personal styles influence leadership

During the first part of this workshop you will have the opportunity to take a self-score version of the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory. Then you'll learn how the way you operate in the world influences your definition of leadership, your expectations from a leader and how you think you should act when in a leadership position. We will discuss how differing views of leadership can lead to differing conclusions in each of these areas.

3-6:30PM • ROGUE ROOM • EMU

thursday • may 15th

approaches to conflict resolution

This interactive workshop will explore concepts and skills related to effective communication and conflict resolution. We will cover topics such as distinguishing positions from interests, looking at the impact of assumptions and inferences, shifting your "conflict lens" and the art of asking questions.

3-5PM • UMPQUA ROOM • EMU

WORKSHOPS ARE FREE. LIMITED SEATING. PRE-REGISTRATION SUGGESTED. REFRESHMENTS WILL BE AVAILABLE.

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