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EDITORIAL

U.S. Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon, R-Calif., should write a book on higher education funding. That way, rational lawmakers around the country can read it and know what not to do.

If passed in Congress, McKeon's particularly dimwitted "Affordability in Higher Education Act" would allow the U.S. Department of Education to cut funding for certain university programs aimed at providing greater student access, such as work study and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, if the institutions raise tuition too high, too quickly. Ironically, most universities that raise tuition drastically in the fashion that McKeon attacks do so because of state funding shortfalls, making McKeon's plan even more asinine.

But wait — maybe we're on to something here. With McKeon's plan, state legislators can grossly mismanage money — criminally so, it seems — and drastically cut their support to higher education when they realize nothing is left. Then, the government can step in and throw students further down the hole.

Who loses in this equation? Is it the state for setting bad monetary policy? No, they get off the hook on this one; McKeon's bill fails to hold legislators accountable. Is it the universities who suffer gaping holes in their budgets after the government takes more? No, they would most likely do one of two things: raise tuition even more to offset the penalties for raising tuition or cut classes. Ultimately, the students suffer.

And so McKeon's idea throws the higher education funding system into a huge sticky mess of circular logic, especially considering that the people McKeon seems to be trying to help — the poor, unwanted college students — are the very people who will feel the brunt of such an absurd law in the long run.

McKeon should realize that tuition hikes — especially in Oregon, where they are drastic — can be attributed to one thing: decreased state funding, whether it is the result of an economic slump or inefficiently handled money at the state level.

Either way, cutting even more from strapped universities is not the answer. The fact that this even needs to be said is a prime example of how the price keeps rising on education but nothing is being done to actually fix it — something legislators — our elected representatives — should be willing to do.

As University Senior Vice President and Provost John Moseley said in a Nov. 4 Emerald article: "The reason tuition is going up has nothing to do with costs going up. The problem is not increasing cost in higher education; it's declining state support for higher education."

Another recently failed attempt to relieve the stress of skyrocketing tuition was last year's "The Deal," which unfortunately also lacked necessary insight into how the state Legislature provides money. Simply, the Deal was aimed at splitting the burden of funding straight down the middle, with students paying 50 percent and the state paying 50 percent. It seemed like a great idea until the state slashed \$62.7 million from the Oregon University System budget, rendering the Deal dead in the water and effectively shifting OUS from savings mode to survival mode. But OUS officials made their biggest mistake when they assumed that the state would clean up its act and live up to its end of the bargain; clearly it did not.

The problem of state funding obviously runs deeper than can be described in this small space, but one thing is apparent: Before lawmakers or OUS officials attempt to fix the problem of tuition hikes, they should start at the source of the problem. The Oregon Legislature must overcome its partisan bickering and take a good, hard look at reforming the way it handles taxpayer money. Only then will students start to see some relief.

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BIOPIC BULLIES

Everyone knows that free markets are the cat's meow. Everyone knows that competition is the best form of regulation in every case, and that it will always do the most effective job of protecting the public interest. Some have gone so far as to say that "History is dead," because capitalism is the answer we've all been looking for.

On Oct. 4 we saw a prime example of the invisible, yet ever-so-godlike hand of free market mythology in action, when it descended from the sky and single-handedly won one for the Gipper. Thank the dollar, too, because the great Satan of liberalism was a mere 12 days from invading our homes through our television screens.

Under relentless pressure from conservatives across the country, CBS decided to pull its November sweeps spectacular, "The Reagans," and send the biopic off to its sister company, Showtime.

A memo issued by CBS denied accusations that the company was a frail lap-dog of a business that cowered and wet itself under the raised fist of angry business and political interests.

After admitting that the miniseries' "producers have sources to verify each scene in the script," CBS claimed that the movie "does not present a balanced portrayal of the Reagans..." The memo also adds: "This decision is based solely on our reaction to seeing the final film, not the controversy that erupted around a draft of the script."

Conservative critics protested the film because of its ties to "liberal" Hollywood and its alleged factual misrepresentations. Both of the film's producers are homosexual activists, and actor James Brolin — husband of the unfortunately liberal Barbara Streisand — plays the role of Ronald Reagan. They called the movie a cheap-shot on a defenseless dotard and American hero.

According to friends and family of Ronald Reagan, the film portrayed him falsely. They took special offense to the line in which Reagan speaks of AIDS pa-



Joseph Bechard
Cultural obstetrician

tients, saying: "They that live in sin shall die in sin."

But critics of CBS's move say the company kowtowed to Republican cries of liberal bias and demands that CBS yank the \$9 million, four-hour story of Ronald and Nancy Reagan's lives. They argue that the public should be allowed to view the movie and make decisions for itself, also emphasizing that no one has even seen the movie yet.

In an undated script posted on the Internet magazine Salon.com, this watered-down drama looks too dumb to be an effective shot at Reagan. Some even believe this glitzy docu-drama didn't sink its teeth deep enough into the 40th president's character. If you want to take a stab at the ailing ex-president while his defenses are down, there is no shortage of fodder. He is one of the most scandalous presidents in the history of the United States.

In "Sleepwalking Through History: America in the Reagan Years" Haynes Bonner Johnson claims that Reagan's administration was the "worst ever" in terms of corruption. "By the end of his term, 138 Reagan administration officials had been convicted, had been indicted, or had been the subject of official investigations for official misconduct and/or criminal violations," Johnson wrote.

But this case brings up the more important subject of the role that big business plays in the media. Viacom, one of the world's largest media conglomerates, owns CBS and could certainly use a little help from its conservative, right-wing friends in its time of need.

Viacom — like Fox's parent company, News Corporation — is in violation of the ownership cap limiting a television broadcasting company's reach to only 35 percent of the national audience. It is awaiting the Senate's ruling on the Federal Communications Commission's decision to increase the limit to 45 percent. The decision — its fate now looking very bleak — has faced heavy bipartisan criticism in Congress since the FCC issued the ruling on June 2.

With such a huge decision looming in the background, Viacom couldn't afford to anger any of its conservative, pro-business cronies in the Republican-dominated Congress or in the conservative courts. The corporation's only option was to send the movie to a narrower audience, hoping to avoid retributive action by powerful conservatives while avoiding a total financial loss.

Recently, some conservatives have put increasing pressure on the media to portray reality in these very narrow and specific terms. With George W. Bush and his National Security Council asking journalists to clean up their war coverage, Attorney General John Ashcroft pleading with the media to portray his USA PATRIOT Act in a more flattering light and right-wing liars coercing media companies to censor themselves, it's becoming more difficult to avoid the self-centered arrogance of conservative loudmouths.

This silly situation establishes a regrettable precedent, wherein rightists attack and eliminate anything critical of their vile and gluttonous dogma.

Thanks to Reagan and the free-market gospel he brought to this backward land, the media have the freedom to air and print only that which doesn't upset the established order, and we get to watch promilitary misrepresentations of Jessica Lynch.

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