

# Hope still afloat in Salem for TANF families

BY ISRAEL BAYER  
STAFF WRITER

For months, state lawmakers have been mulling over drastic budget cuts to the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, or TANF, program that would not only cut the program by about 50 percent in revenue, it would also create the shortest time limit for assistance in the nation.

TANF specifically serves families with children with incomes below the federal poverty level. The maximum a family can receive is \$506 a month for a family with four or more children, with a lifetime eligibility limit set at 60 months, in line with federal policy.

The reduction under Gov. John Kitzhaber's original budget plan would reduce support to 18 months, the shortest in any state in the country.

The most recent news out of Salem is bittersweet. The latest revenue forecast earlier this month added about \$100 million for the human service budget.

"In recognition of the program's impact on Oregon's families, the proposed 18-month time limit cut was put at the top of the list for "add backs" by the Human Services Subcommittee of Ways and Means," says State Representative Tina Kotek. "Nothing is final until the budget is passed, but Ways and Means members have understood that this cut will have catastrophic impacts to families.

Kotek said she was confident the state will not resort to the 18-month limit.

"We have worked to restore the 18-month time limit, but there are other cuts still being made to the TANF program," Kotek said. "Job Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS) services for TANF clients are being

cut by \$60 million, eliminating opportunities for people who face significant barriers to entering the workforce."

JOBS helps clients gain skills through education, training, work experience and networking with other parents who are facing the same challenges.

"The elimination of these services will remove concrete services like skill development, work experience opportunities, and GED classes, as well as increasing isolation among parents who lack community supports," says Kotek.

Nearly 20 percent of Oregon's children live in poverty. Oregon's TANF program currently provides cash assistance to 30,108 families (including 54,000 children) 8,353 of whom live in Multnomah County. Without the state benefits, these families are expected to more heavily rely on already stressed county programs.

## Down at the food bank

by Anonymous

Down at the food bank  
I spotted her.  
The line shuffled along  
For macaroni and cheese  
Or bread the bakery  
Couldn't sell on time.

She was sitting on the  
Fill-out-these-forms bench  
As I stood there with  
A can of pears in my hand.

When I hesitated at the  
Boxes of dried milk,  
She smiled at me like a little girl  
With long gray hair.

# New Seattle law highlights crimes against homeless

BY CYDNEY GILLIS  
REAL CHANGE NEWS

David Ballenger lived under a freeway overpass. For that reason alone, three young men kicked, beat and stabbed him to death near Green Lake in August 1999.

The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* quoted one of the men saying there's "one less bum on the face of the earth."

The murder of Ballenger was one of more than 60 attacks on homeless people nationwide. By 2009, the annual number of attacks had nearly doubled, to 106, and there were more than twice as many murders, 27, according to a 2009 report from the National Coalition for the Homeless.

In Oregon, 10 people experiencing homelessness were killed because they were homeless, and 27 were injured between 1999 and 2009.

Scott White, who was a state

representative for North Seattle at the time, used to see Ballenger, a Vietnam veteran, walking the streets of North Seattle. He wrote an op-ed in this newspaper decrying the violence and pledging to do something about it.

Finally, White can say he has.

On April 15, Gov. Chris Gregoire signed legislation White authored that allows for increased penalties on those convicted of committing a crime against a homeless person.

In cases of second-degree assault, for example, judges can increase the sentence from seven years to 10. The law takes effect Aug. 15.

A homeless hate crimes bill in Oregon died in the committee process this session.

Ballenger's three killers — Michael Caffee, Shelton Musgrave and Jay Stewart — went to prison in 2000. Caffee spent six years in prison and one year on parole on a manslaughter charge, according to the

Department of Corrections. Musgrave served nine years for murder and is expected to finish his parole in June. Stewart is still serving a 17-year sentence.

Joe Ingram, a homeless advocate who testified for the bill and once lived on the street, said White's law will make a difference.

"You sit down with people that are homeless and they talk about getting beat up and sexual violence, and the response from police is always less than enthusiastic," Ingram said. "What this (law) does is makes them feel more empowered."

What the law doesn't do, however, is compel police to investigate alleged attacks on homeless people.

The Seattle City Council amended its own municipal hate crimes ordinance in 2007, adding the homeless as a category. Since 2008, when the change took effect, the city attorney's office has charged three people under the law, none of them for a crime

committed on a homeless person.

Even if every officer did investigate crimes reported by the homeless, they'd never catch up because there are too many, Shirey said.

Real Change vendor Mona Joyner said the law won't bring back her fiancé, José Lucio. In 1999, a group of men pushed him off a freeway overpass in downtown Seattle. The state patrol did little to investigate and never answered her calls or letters, she said.

White, the bill's author, said it's up to local police and prosecutors to use the law. He said if they don't, he'll look at adding the homeless to the state's hate crimes statute, something he tried in an earlier bill in 2010 and lawmakers shot down.

"Yeah, it's a symbol — and it will help," White said. "But do we have a lot more work to do? You bet we do, absolutely."

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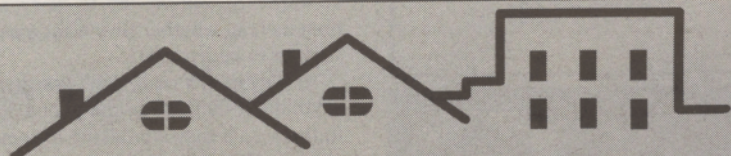


Street Books is a bicycle-powered mobile library, serving people who live outdoors.

Library Location & Hours:  
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Saturdays, 10-2, Park  
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Street Books will use an old-school card catalogue system, checking out and accepting returned books, twice weekly through the summer. You do not need an address to be able to check out books. The website [streetbooks.org](http://streetbooks.org) will feature photos of patrons who wish to be featured with their book of choice, on-line book reviews submitted by patrons, and updates about Street Books news and library hours. At the end of the summer, Street Books will host a reception, inviting patrons to come talk about their favorite books, and share their experiences with the project.

To find out more about the project, or to donate paperbacks, contact Laura Moulton: [laura@ideacog.net](mailto:laura@ideacog.net).



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