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cards, mortgage and basic financial literacy used to be a mandatory part of the curriculum, and now it's barely brushed over.

I don't think people realize just how hard the schools have been hit. Twenty years ago, we had a school system that was funded largely by local property taxes, and people in Portland would vote for the schools. Now, we have a system where the money that's raised in Portland is thrown in a statewide pot, and our Portland schools are much, much worse off than they were.

S.B.: *With your experience in environmental law, arguing on behalf of the EPA for 10 years and tackling the Love Canal case in the 1980s, what are your thoughts on the Columbia River Crossing? Should they build the bridge?*

S.N.: I agree with a lot of points the critics are making. I would also caution that eventually you probably need to replace a 100-year-old bridge. If there's an opportunity to get federal money that we might not have down the road, that shouldn't be dismissed too easily, even if it's not a high priority at this particular time.

Now, if the people of Portland were being asked to pay for that bridge, then I would not say it's a high priority. But if it's combined funding from the federal government, the state governments, and the people of Vancouver, then it doesn't sound like the worst thing in the world to me.

In terms of how many interchanges we have to accommodate more people coming over from Vancouver, and whether we're just adding to the congestion in the Rose Quarter once they get over here, I think those are important questions to ask.

The argument that the trade unions have — that the CRC is a jobs project — that's not something I dismiss. If we can put a couple thousand people to work for awhile, I'm not going to say that's an irrelevant argument.

S.B.: *In your campaign, you've talked about spending less public-safety money on dramatic reactive procedures, like long prison terms, and spending more on preventative measures. How would that switch in spending work?*

S.N.: In the short term I think the city and the county should work more closely together on public-safety issues; do joint budgeting and joint strategy. But my big-picture dream is to work out a deal with the state for the county to get its public safety budget in a lump sum, allowing it to spend more money on prevention programs.

What we have right now is a system with a limited budget for police, a limited budget for supervision, a limited budget for treatment, a limited budget for re-entry programs, but in effect, an unlimited budget for prisons. The state pays for prison, and there's no incentive for the district attorneys to give shorter sentences.

If the state put the county in charge of its own public-safety budget, it would create a situation where the DAs would have to count the cost of prison sentences and figure out a way to divide it with other costs, like prevention.

People have talked about repealing Measure 11, but you don't need to repeal Measure 11 if you change the mix of prison versus prevention through the budget.

S.B.: *This summer, Street Roots wrote a series on traumatic brain injuries that examined Portland's health systems, and how we can improve them for people living on the streets. But affordable and navigable health care is an issue for everyone.*

You've done a lot of work with Oregon Health Authority to streamline Medicaid and generate ideas for Obama's health care reform. If you could shape health care in Portland however you wanted, what would you do?

S.N.: One of my ideas for economic development is to make Portland a leader in an area that's not traditionally thought of as economic development but should be: controlling health care costs.

For employers that provide health care,

health care is the fastest rising cost. If Portland became a leader in controlling health care costs, that would be an advantage for existing employers and attractive for anybody we're trying to recruit.

There are some models you could scale to a city. For example, the Atlantic City casino workers' union adopted a strategy where they identified their highest-cost employees and built a clinic just for them. The clinic included a couple of doctors, a couple of primary nurses and eight health care coaches — professional nudges — who would call people up and check on them. And they managed to significantly reduce their health care costs just with that model.

That's something I think the city could do as an employer: build a system for high-cost employees that would collectively reduce our health care costs, and invite public and private employers. Then, you can say to new employers, 'Come to Portland and you'll get the advantage of this network.' Over time, if a city has taken the initiative to control health care costs, that's a significant economic advantage.

Another of my health care interests is getting the city prepared for the huge expansion of Medicaid in 2014, if Obama's health care reform is not repealed. A lot of people who had no previous health care coverage will be eligible for physical health care, mental health care, and drug and alcohol treatment. Suddenly, we'll have federal money paying for Medicaid for a population that previously was going begging for services, and that's something the nonprofit community, the city and the county should be planning for.

S.B.: *You've spoken out against the Iraq War since 2003. What can Portland be doing better to help veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who face joblessness and even homelessness?*

S.N.: Working with employers to try to make sure to prioritize giving jobs for veterans, to the extent they're still able to

work, that's something we can do. Getting vets the health care they need and connecting them with resources at the V.A., that's something we can do.

S.B.: *You're reputed to be something of a budget wonk. How could Portland be spending our dollars better? In particular, what do you think of Commissioner Leonard's strategy of using water and sewage money for special projects?*

S.N.: If it were my choice, I wouldn't have done the special projects. There's an argument for doing less (special projects) in order to avoid distraction, and even if it's a small amount of money, we should spend money for what it's supposed to be used for. But they are not big-ticket items. They might look bad when they're on the front page, but they haven't added a lot to sewer or water bills.

I called up the Water Bureau and asked, 'How do we compare to other cities?' It turns out that our water is more expensive than most other major cities in the country, and I'd like to know why. I will keep pushing the Water Bureau on that. If we're higher than Milwaukie, (for example) let's ask them what they're doing differently.

S.B.: *What's on fire in Portland today that nobody else is noticing?*

S.N.: There are things that have happened over the past 20 years that I'm not sure a lot of people recognize. Portland is a great city to be an upper middle-class white person because there are all sorts of nice restaurants and pretty places to go. But the Communities of Color Coalition did this report last year that showed in terms of inequities between white people and non-white people, we're worse than a lot of cities that we think of as comparable, like Seattle. We've also gotten significantly poorer in relation to other cities in the past 20 years. I think there are a lot of good-hearted, civically engaged people in Portland who aren't aware of that.



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