

Washington Hot Line

by Congressman Ron Wyden

Congressional oversight—or the business of keeping tabs on how existing laws and programs are being implemented by the Administration and federal agencies—is one of the least used, but most important, powers of the Congress.

The value of this function was demonstrated earlier this week when Health and Human Services Secretary Richard Schweiker appeared before the House Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee to explain the Administration's actions on a variety of important matters.

Some of the information that came out at that hearing:

•Schweiker says he has no intention of backing down on a proposal he made to weaken nursing home inspection and certification standards.

•The Secretary did say, however, that he was not a party to or supporter of proposals by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to make elderly persons prove financial need in order to qualify for

Medicare benefits. Under the current Medicare system, all persons 65 years of age and older qualify for Medicare benefits, regardless of income. Although Schweiker said he intends to oppose the OMB proposal, he admitted he has lost several rounds to OMB on other issues.

•Schweiker also promised, at the request of subcommittee members, to look into allegations that the Administration earlier this year rubber-stamped a regulation promoted by the infant formula industry that would weaken quality control of the product.

•Finally, the HHS Secretary said his department will launch a series of radio ads during upcoming weeks to warn parents of the dangers of giving aspirin to children with the flu or chicken pox. Last spring, consumer groups sued the Secretary for failing to issue warnings that use of aspirin in such cases might increase the risk of contracting a rare and sometimes fatal disease. Schweiker

also says aspirin manufacturers would be required to post warnings on their products' labels by next spring.

The hearing served two valuable purposes. First, it gave Members of Congress information we need to do our jobs. For example, it gave me the ammunition I need to continue the fight against the proposed weakening of nursing home inspection rules, and to take up the fight against the proposal that Medicare be subjected to a means test.

But the greatest beneficiary of the hearing was the public. By highlighting Administrative policies and positions on important issues, the hearing gave Oregonians and other Americans a better handle on how federal laws and programs are being implemented.

By so doing, it gave Oregonians and other Americans a better chance to play a real role in the decision-making process.

Host program needs volunteers

Volunteer tutors for children who need individual help with reading are needed in six northeast Portland schools offering the HOSTS reading program.

Citizens may contribute as little as one-half hour a week through HOSTS (Help One Student to Succeed), a nationally recognized and federally approved reading program to improve basic skills.

Any interested adult who wants to help children can take part in the program.

The resource teacher in a HOSTS center develops a plan for each child, who is tutored one-to-one by a volunteer following the prescribed plan.

The HOSTS program is a supplement to regular classroom instruction for students who read below grade level.

HOSTS was piloted in three Portland schools in 1980-81 and made

available to 20 Portland schools last year through a \$134,000 grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust.

Marsh Farrow, coordinator for HOSTS in Portland Public Schools, said the children in the program last year gained more in reading skills than children with similar deficiencies not in the program.

She said an added benefit is the positive relationship the children develop with an adult who becomes a friend and a role model. She said the program is being expanded to 24 schools this school year.

Tutors are strong supporters of the program. June Terry, who tutors at Humboldt and Sabin schools, summarized her feelings. "Basically, having been a social worker, helping people is part of my life," she said. "I'm not working any longer and wanted to benefit people still and find something that

would give me fulfillment.

"HOSTS is worthwhile. A lot of kids aren't getting the time and help they need at home with reading. They need extra help. Without this program, they wouldn't get it. Anyone who tutors would feel some satisfaction."

Citizens who want to volunteer in Northeast neighborhoods should contact one of the resource teachers in these schools:

Beach School, Barbara McKinney, 285-5469; Boise School, Ron Dieu, 288-6309; Humboldt School, Renee Banks, 281-8797; Irvington School, Denise Jackson, 288-6401; King School, Marilyn Garfield, 288-6391; Sabin School, Lynn Montgomery, 288-6538, 288-1198.

Adults wishing to volunteer in HOSTS schools in other neighborhoods should contact Marsha Farrow at the School District's HOSTS office, 249-2000, ext. 381.

Street Beat

by Lanita Duke and Richard Brown

The U.S. Congress might have deferred the proposed constitutional amendment of prayer in the schools but the **Street Beat** team didn't. This week our question was, "Should the Portland Public Schools institute prayer in our schools?"



Donna Washburn
Clerk

I'm not sure. I don't think it is necessary. It puts pressure on too many people. It's like telling people what they have to do. I think it should come from the home.



Mikal Shabazz
Plumber

Prayer in school should be allowed. There should be some time out allocated for prayer—non-mandatory, of course. It should not be a Christian, Jewish or Islamic prayer. It should be left up to the individual to decide which type.



Mrs. Beakman
State Employee

I'm a Christian and whether or not children pray depends on the parents. Children aren't going to become Christians unless their parents are. Praying is like talking to God and that is something they won't learn in school.



James Linton
Tri-Met Driver

I send my children to private schools so I don't know about what they do in public school. To answer your question I don't care if they have prayer in schools. If the children want to pray that's fine. If they don't, that's fine too. It's an individual's decision. It should not be left up to the government.



Kathy Wentz
Mortician's Asst.

I think they should for families who believe in it. It will help the students because as it stands now things are really out of hand. I think prayer will help.



Ada Jackson
Teacher

I feel that prayer should be allowed in school because we have seen the example when they took prayer out of school. This can be seen with a student's grade average. Prayer has a direct effect on a student's character.

Leek explains candidacy

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several small pieces.

Observer: What are the "pieces"?
Leek: That is the black concentration. Black people think they can resolve the political problem with structural changes—that they can solve the problem of the nonassertiveness of the black community with structural change. The reality is people have to speak for themselves and they have to become involved in the process. And had they been organized in a political sense, and had they presented a legislative agenda to Wally [Priestley] and Jane [Cease], they could have effected changes. . . .

From a political science view you don't just say, "We're going to make Harold Williams the District Representative." What has to happen is there needs to be the political involvement and support of the people in the community. . . .

My perception is that you [black people] would do better with [your] hands on four or five people as opposed to just one. So, from a political standpoint, I support the multi-member district. It was my personal preference, but I didn't take any action to bring it about. Since I was going to be a candidate, I didn't want to be cast in the light of trying

to maneuver things to my own advantage.

[Leek was questioned about the appropriateness of laying low during the hearings instead of speaking out as other community and political leaders were doing.]

Leek: I felt it was the appropriate thing for me to do.

[The Saturday before this interview, Leek appeared along with two other candidates at a forum sponsored by the Oregon Assembly for Black Affairs. In response to a question, "How do you as a legislator attempt to cure the social and economic problems of the area?" Leek said, "District 18 will always be behind the rest of the state. Minority communities in this country will always be behind the rest of the country." The way to assist minority communities, he told the predominantly black assembly, is that "the overall society has to be improved throughout and move down." It was pointed out his remarks had so infuriated people that Calvin Henry, the moderator, had raised his hand and joined the chorus voicing objection to what they took to be the implications in his remark. "And you looked blank," the *Observer* said, "like you didn't know what all of the concern was about."

In addition, it was pointed out, Leek had made like remarks before the Metropolitan Club, a group of young black professionals located in inner Northeast, and before Bruce Broussard's Friday morning breakfast group. They, too, had been offended.]

Leek: That's one of the things I have not learned to do in my personal politics is to hide. . . . to sublimate my honesty. . . . If I get too much flak for it, I will either withdraw from my honesty or keep on taking the flak.

Observer: How would you help people in your community in inner Northeast?

Leek: You have got to make the whole healthier before the part gets better. And while you are working on the whole you make the part better, too. . . . It's not fair to characterize this as "trickle down."

[Leek identified his approach to curing the ills of inner Northeast Portland as a legislator: Creation of youth conservation corps jobs on a state-wide level; using first-source agreements like those offered by the City of Portland requiring companies to use the city's job applicant list in return for tax and other benefits; stricter monitoring and enforcement of affirmative action programs and use of set-asides in contracts let by the state. In addition, he said he had always wanted to create a community development corporation which would get HCD and SBA money which a balanced board of members of community groups "would be able to leverage with companies to come into the area. The profits would be put back into the community."]

Observer: What groups have you worked with in the past?

Leek: King Neighborhood Association, Northeast Neighborhood Coalition, Fair Share and the Democratic Party.

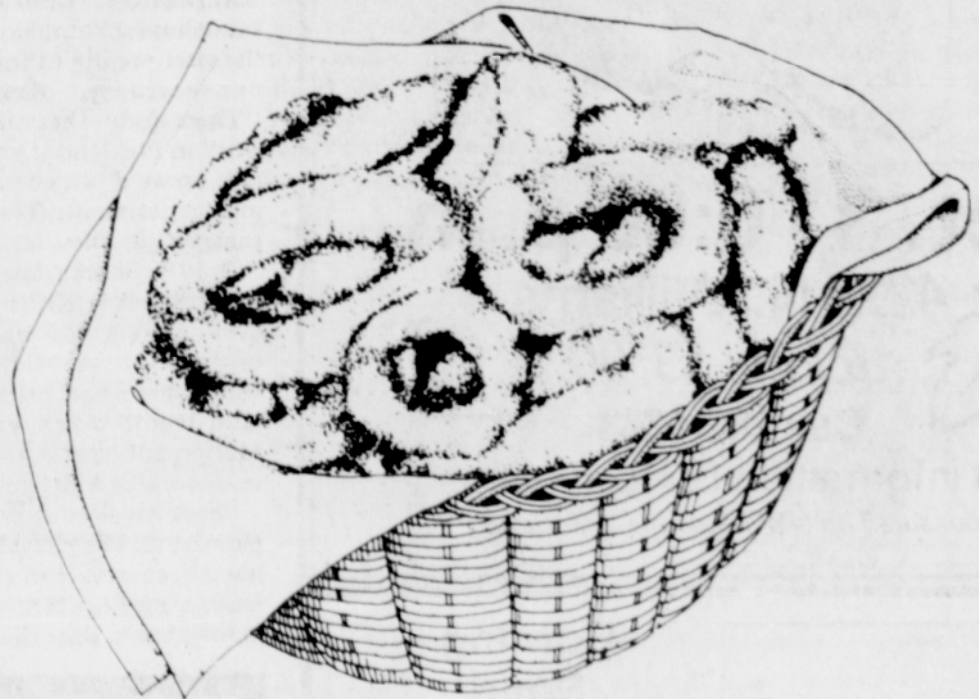
Observer: Why not work with the churches?

Leek: I didn't, except those involved with Fair Share.

Observer: You don't appear to have black friends.

Leek: I'm a loner, too. My relationships are limited to my politics, my neighbors and my work.

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