

# Washington Hot Line

by Congressman Ron Wyden



Last month, the National Commission on Excellence in Education presented its report on the quality of education in America.

Its message was clear and simple: "The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people."

This charge is not one to be taken lightly. As the Commission reported, if an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war.

Some of the indicators supporting this charge of "unilateral educational disarmament" include:

- Some 23 million American adults are functionally illiterate by the simplest tests of everyday reading, writing and comprehension.

- Approximately 13 percent of all 17-year-olds in the United States can be considered functionally illiterate.

Functional illiteracy among minority youth may run as high as 40 percent.

- The College Boards' Scholastic Aptitude Tests (SAT) demonstrate a virtually unbroken decline from 1963 to 1980. Average verbal scores fell over 50 points and average mathematics scores dropped nearly 40 points.

- Average tested achievement of students graduating from college is also lower.

What is worse, these deficiencies come at a time when expanding high technology opportunities in new and traditional industries are burgeoning.

It is easy to point the finger at these problems, but it is obviously more difficult to arrive at solutions to these dilemmas.

The report calls for two kinds of changes. The first are changes which may cost no money, but which require changes in policy and priority — such as rethinking each

school's use of classroom time, or insistence by local school boards that publishers produce higher quality textbooks.

Other proposed changes will be more expensive. These include higher teacher pay, longer school days and longer school years, expansion of required curriculum offerings to include more years of math, science, language and computing, and reforms in teacher education.

But the Commission points out — and I wholeheartedly agree — the nation cannot afford *not* to make these changes. All levels of the public and private sector have a stake in these changes and will need to share in their cost.

We need to develop a national educational policy that looks beyond our immediate fiscal constraints at our needs through the end of the century. Our current shortsighted, bargain basement approach to education in this country has left

us high and dry.

Other efforts I have supported this year in the Congress include the Emergency Math and Science Education Act, which passed the House of Representatives in February and is now awaiting action in the Senate, and the American Defense Education Act. Both these measures address the glaring inadequacies present in the teaching of math and sciences — areas of crucial importance if we are to keep pace with foreign counterparts in a booming high-technology era.

In short, our educational system, and, therefore, our nation and its security, face some very real problems. Yet, we are the products of past generations that have risen to similar challenges and overcome them. We need to move beyond lamenting our shortcomings and begin the uphill climb that will bring us to the pinnacle of educational excellence.

## Citizen Utility Board proposed

by State Rep. Wally Priestley

One of the most exciting ideas being proposed in the 1983 legislature is House Bill 2934, a bill to set up a statewide Citizens Utility Board. If you've ever been frustrated about rising utility bills, but didn't know what to do about them, you'll like CUB.

The Citizens Utility Board would be a statewide, citizens organization which would represent residential ratepayers in electric, phone, and gas utility rate hearings. Through a special notice included in their

utility bills, consumers will learn about CUB and will be invited to join for a few dollars a year. CUB's board of directors will be elected by its membership.

The proposal is modeled after similar legislation passed in Wisconsin in 1979. Wisconsin's CUB now has over 60,000 members and its estimated budget for 1983 is about \$400,000. Having hired a staff of experts, it has participated in over 20 rate and policy hearings. Estimates have pegged CUB's savings to Wisconsin consumers at over \$43 million.

Opponents (primarily utilities) of a Citizens Utility Board argue that a CUB is unnecessary because the Public Utility Commissioner already represents ratepayer interests. I strongly disagree and I'm sure most ratepayers don't buy that argument either. In fact, our present Commissioner, John Lobdell, has adopted policies which make it much harder, if not impossible, for citizens to participate in a utility rate case. Ratemaking has become a one-sided affair and Oregon's tradition of fair and open government has been tarnished as a result.

Seniors, people on fixed incomes — all of us — have a great deal at stake in utility issues. A CUB can help assure that consumers have an effective voice and strong representation in rate cases. I look at it not as a duplication of the PUC staff, but a much-desired addition to what we currently have. Recent experience has shown, for both private and public utilities, that when citizens are actively involved in the process, you get better public policy in the end.

CUB has a very valuable role to play in making the utility rate-setting process more fair, equitable, and open. That's why I'm proud to join House Speaker Grattan Kerans and many other legislators as a sponsor of this very important bill.

## Death penalty on state agenda

by Greg Wasson

In 1914, Oregon voters abolished capital punishment only to bring it back in 1920. Between then and 1953, thirty-three people died at the hands of the state. In 1964, the voters again abolished the supreme sanction.

Just a little over ten years later — in 1976 — a group that included the late Rep. Dick Magruder filed an initiative to put the state back in the execution business. The measure failed to make the ballot.

During the 1977 session, Senate Pres. Jason Boe warned that the people wanted protection from a perceived increase in violence.

"The public wants a program that assures that when a guy like Brudos has been tried and convicted, he's going to be put away forever. He's gone, he's away and we never have to worry about him getting out again."

The legislature refused to adopt such a plan, however. The people responded by restoring capital punishment the next year almost

two to one.

The State Supreme Court entered the debate in 1981, overturning Oregon's death penalty for what it termed fatal constitutional problems; the 1981 legislature refused to deal with the issue; and a 1982 initiative drive failed.

However, Republican Gov. Vic Atiyeh is championing the return of executions. The middle of last month, Atiyeh demanded that the House Judiciary Committee approve legislation referring the death penalty to the people, citing a public clamoring to bring it back.

Rep. Dick Springer, a member of the committee, answers that there has to be a limit to government by applause meter and that no matter what the public wants, the death penalty is wrong.

A majority of the legislators who control crime and punishment issues this session share Springer's views and it's unlikely that the body will refer the issue to the people.

A proposal given a greater possibility of success is advanced by Rep. Larry Hill, D-Springfield.

Known as the civil death penalty, Hill's idea is to provide the possibility of a life sentence that means just that — locked up for the duration.

"It's the death of the person's civil rights," explains Hill. "The sentence for the conviction of aggravated murder (for example, murder for hire) would be the permanent loss of the ability to live among the rest of the people in society."

Legislative opponents of capital punishment would do well to consider Hill's proposal against the backdrop of the last five years. The fate of those who ignore history is well established.

A second suggestion for quieting public fears comes from Rep. Peter Courtney, D-Salem. Courtney proffers that the state be required to notify the sentencing judge and district attorney if the Parole Board is considering letting a prisoner out before he or she has completed the minimum sentence imposed at trial. The effect, says Courtney, would likely be to make parole less likely in instances where local officials chose to appear before the board.

## Letters to the Editor

### Prison practices bring fear

To the Editor:

Lately, Governor Atiyeh has been pushing for the re-instatement of the death penalty. For government officials and Correctional Officers, only.

In addition to this Bill, Governor Atiyeh and other agencies throughout the State are pushing, for another penitentiary. Eastern Oregon State Hospital is the main focus of attention, and in the eyes of the government, this new facility would provide an economic upswing for the city of Pendleton, while presenting nothing more than a temporary patchwork solution to the long range problem of overcrowding; as will the 200 man dormitory that is still under construction here at OSP.

There are ironies involved, that you, the public should become aware of:

1) On two occasions the Prison Bond Iss. has been voted down by the public. The Legislature, however, has the power to provide the funds for the acquisition of another penitentiary. If this is in fact, true, then what purpose is there — in voting?

2) You, the public, are being

asked to reinstate the death penalty. But only for the purpose of protecting those whom you have elected to public office; who in turn, have hired family members and friends as Correctional Officers, to insure that whatever policies and standards set forth are enforced. Why not provide the same protection for one and all? Or, why at all?

3) Predicting the over-crowding problems, as they now exist, as well as the results of having these problems, took place in 1977, or, at the same time the Matrix System (Parole Standards) was first introduced into Oregon. Government Officials were aware then, that these predictions held truth, and yet, ignored them anyway, and instead, threatened the life of this writer if he continued to challenge the political aspirations of the Corrections Division for Oregon.

I am 31 years young, and already I have been threatened for my life on three occasions, for my outspokenness, and for my affiliation with the Native Americans. I have been paralyzed in one leg; the result of a shotgun blast while trying to resolve a situation initiated out of frustration. And, I've been vindictively sentenced for an unlawful act

I committed after being denied compensation and the physical and emotional stress that I yet endure, as a result of being shot.

I am only one inmate among thousands, lucky enough to be gifted with 'insight.' There are programs that have been implemented within the Correctional System, that has an inmate's signature stamped on the program's origin. These programs, however, are only accepted if they provide a step toward the ultimate goal of expanding the Corrections System.

I have a story to tell that will prove (beyond a reasonable doubt) that the problems, you, the public are confronted with, were premeditated in their implementation by a number of Government Officials and Agencies.

I am frightened by what I see taking place, in the Corrections System. Most people could care less what happens to a prisoner, until that prisoner becomes one of their own. There is a great deal of progressive thought within the minds of the inmates, but it requires the attention of you, the public to understand the reality of what is going on.

Jerry L. Albers



**Grand Opening!**

**Saturday  
May 21  
1983**


**Thee Barber Shop**

**407 N.E. Mason**

On the corner of Union

**284-4181**

INTERESTING FACTS



brought to you every week by

**AMERICAN STATE BANK**

MEMBER FEDERAL DEPOSIT INSURANCE CORPORATION


---

Thomas Edison and his staff at Menlo Park invented something new every ten days.

A skywriter travels about twenty miles for a three word advertisement.

One fourth of the body's bones are in the feet.

Snails and slugs have a remarkable homing instinct. Each has been observed to return to the same area, even the same plant, from which it was removed.



We do not do business with South Africa.

**American State Bank**

AN INDEPENDENT BANK

Head Office  
2737 N. E. Union  
Portland, Oregon 97212

## Street Beat

by Lanita Duke and Richard Brown

Commissioner Charles Jordan announced his decision not to run for mayor. The Street Beat team wondered how his announcement went over with the public with, "How do you feel about Commissioner Jordan's decision not to run for mayor?"



**Ron Vandyk**  
Manufacturing Engineer

"His decision is based upon his own personal situation at home. I kinda wish he had ran. He would have made a good mayor."



**Paulette Davis**  
CSD

"Charles feels that he was so railroaded last time when they put him into the frying pan and forced him into the fire. I don't think they would have given him the chance to win. In campaigning the dirt would have been worse than what was thrown in Chicago."



**J. Overland**  
Housewife

"It's nice. He's concerned about his family. I felt his chances to win were fair."



**Lillian Bell**  
Teacher

"I accept it with regrets. He is a wonderful person. I believe his type of leadership is badly needed right now in Portland, Or."



**W.W. Simmons**  
Retired

"The reason I understood him giving was that his wife was ill. I think that is reason enough. He has done a pretty good job. He would have given the other candidates a run for their money."



**Bob Rogers**  
Private Consultant

"It was a tough decision for Jordan. He did the right thing by considering the health of his wife. He was the best one for the job and he would have beaten Ivancic."