



# Washington Hot Line

by Congressman Ron Wyden

**Q. After weeks of unfavorable publicity, the Reagan administration recently exempted a number of recipients of disability benefits from a review process. What did that policy change accomplish?**

**A.** Its biggest accomplishment was a saving of face for the administration. Unfortunately, it did virtually nothing to address the fundamental question: What criteria should be used to determine which disability benefit recipients should be reviewed and which should not?

In 1980, Congress directed the Department of Health and Human Services to review the cases of disability recipients. The purpose of the review was to determine if the recipients could reasonably be expected to resume work.

In its zeal to prune benefits, however, the administration questioned the eligibility of groups obviously unable to resume work. These

groups include persons who are mentally handicapped with IQs below 70 and at least one other disability as well as persons over 55 with muscular, lung or circulatory disorders such as arteriosclerosis or emphysema.

Such ham-handed procedures have contributed to several embarrassing situations for the administration, including the recent cutting of benefits of a Vietnam veteran to whom President Reagan awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. In addition, a significant majority of those who have appealed the cutbacks have had their benefits restored.

The administration's recent change of heart, which exempts tens of thousands of mentally and physically disabled Americans from review, sounds good on the surface. In reality, however, it does little to bring sense to the review process.

For example, mental patients diagnosed with severe depression would still be subject to review under the administration's new plan.

Disabled Americans deserve better than a mere healing of the administration's self-inflicted wounds. They deserve a benefits review process that is just and equitable, and that meets their legitimate needs.

**Q. What is the significance of President Reagan's recent firing of three members of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights?**

**A.** The only possible conclusion is that the president is attempting to staff the commission with members that reflect his own views, making a once prestigious impartial body into a rubber stamp for his administration's often controversial civil rights policies.

The nominees, Morris B. Abram,

John H. Bunzel and Robert A. Destro, have a history of echoing the president's views on busing, affirmative action and racial quotas, a disturbing turn of events for civil rights advocates.

But perhaps the most odious and far-reaching portent of the president's action is the implied threat to the independence of the commission. Originally established by Congress in 1957 to document shortcomings in equal protection, the commission has historically relied on insulation from political pressure to pursue its mandate.

Under the threat of wholesale firings, I do not see how the commission can carry out its work. And if it does not carry out its work, the hardwon gains of civil rights activists may be seriously jeopardized.

# Hearing addresses minority role

Chairman Jack Brooks (D-Tex.) of the Committee on Government Operations announced today that the Government Activities and Transportation Subcommittee will hold a hearing in Chicago, Illinois, on implementation of section 105(f) of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982. The subcommittee is chaired by Congresswoman Cardiss Collins (D-Ill.).

The Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982 authorized a 5¢ per gallon increase in the Federal gasoline tax to finance repair of the nation's deteriorating roads and bridges, completion of the interstate highway system, and investment in mass transit capital projects. It is hoped that the legislation will create approximately 300,000 jobs through the authorization of \$70.1 billion through fiscal year 1986. Section 105(f) of the act stipulates that 10

percent of the amount authorized be expended with Minority Business Enterprises (MBE). This translates into approximately \$7 billion for fiscal years 1983 through 1986.

"The jobs and infrastructure repairs are badly needed. I want to make sure that these funds are used wisely and that the program is managed as effectively as possible," Congresswoman Collins said.

"Section 105(f) has positive potential. However, my chief concern is that the sudden influx of funds without concomitant measures to guard against abuse will sabotage the intent of the legislation, as well as result in inefficiency," she added.

Illinois is expected to increase MBE participation from \$9 million to \$24 million this fiscal year alone. "That is an increase of nearly 170%. This sudden infusion of money invites fraudulent activity.

For example, my staff has reviewed one case where a minority member had literally been given 51% of a construction company's assets at one board meeting. The individual had no knowledge of construction. This type of activity hurts legitimate minority businesses, and damages the credibility of the program," Mrs. Collins continued.

"Our hearing will document the potential problems in implementing section 105(f) and the ability of state highway and mass transit authorities to meet the 10 percent requirement. The evidence we gather will be used as a basis for recommendations to improve the operation of the program," Chairwoman Collins said.

"Later this month, I will hold a second hearing on the same subject in Washington, D.C. Officials of the U.S. Department of Transportation will testify at that time," she concluded.

# NAACP discusses MHRC cuts

The Portland Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People will meet at the Mount Sinai Community Baptist Church at N.E. Sixth and Prescott Street at 4:00 p.m. Sunday, June 19.

The program will feature a report on the plight of the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission. Those speaking on MHRC will be Linda Roberts, Director; Armando LaGuardia, Chairman; and Fred Milton, Chairman of the Committee for the Restoration of the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission.

Hazel G. Hays, President of the Portland Branch of the NAACP says, "The NAACP supports the

concept of an independent Human Relations Commission and feels the Portland City Council has stripped MHRC of its independent and non-partisan means of functioning. We are asking people who feel as NAACP does to come out to the meeting Sunday and pick up petitions to be filled and forwarded to the Mayor and City Council of Portland." Mrs. Hays noted that we all know in general what has happened, but if people wish to carry petitions, they should be well-informed on this issue, and on Sunday they will have that opportunity by hearing Mrs. Roberts, Mr. LaGuardia and Mr. Milton. "It is important for NAACP to join with other community organizations in

the effort to save the integrity of the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission, and to restore its functions," Hays said.

The NAACP Branch membership will be briefed on the recent Northwest Area NAACP Conference held in Seattle. Music will be provided by the Mount Sinai Baptist Choir.

The Portland Branch has voted to dispense with the general meetings in July and August, but will continue to hold Executive Committee meetings. The next general meeting will be September 18 unless there is an emergency requiring a Branch meeting. Executive Committee meetings are always open to anyone interested in auditing them.

# Grenadan leader visits States

(Continued from page 1 col. 4)

country and our collective progress as well, we must respect the rights of the sons and daughters of Sandino to seek their solutions to the problems of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and underdevelopment. . . . We join international public opinion in supporting initiatives by the peoples of Latin America to solve the problems of our region."

**Hailed call**

He hailed the call for a negotiated settlement of the war in Central America by the so-called "Contadora group," Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Panama. "It offers concrete hope for finding negotiated solutions," he said, "and additionally underscores the importance of peacefully settling disputes through dialogue and without resorting to

the use of force or interference in the affairs of our neighbors."

"Despite the popular and definitive character of the Sandinista victory of July 19, 1979, the Nicaraguan people are not people left to develop their own process in peace. . . . This is a matter of grave concern to Grenada. . . . Grenada shares in the broad international outrage at the provocation to which Nicaragua has been subjected over the last week. . . . we decry the tremendous loss of life. . . ."

"We oppose any attempt to give support to those whose objective is to destabilize the Sandinista regime and to promote strife and discord in Central America. What matters is the future of the people of the Latin American region as perceived by the people themselves. The region cannot be held to ransom or made to

adhere to values and systems which others choose."

(Editor's note: Bishop was refused an audience with Reagan, but did see William Clark, Reagan's national security advisor, and Deputy Secretary of State Kenneth Dam. He revealed that he had twice requested meetings with Reagan — in April and in August of 1982 — but his requests were not answered.

While in the U.S. he had private meetings with Orfila and U.N. General Secretary Javier Perez de Cuellar, and spoke to the Detroit City Council, the U.N.'s Latin American delegation, a TransAfrica dinner, and Hunter College.

He said the meetings with Clark and Dam went "reasonably well" and that he feels the threat of an attack on Grenada has been delayed, although not removed.)

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# Street Beat

by Lanita Duke and Richard Brown

In Salem a bill is awaiting passage or failure that would decide whether two-parent families could receive public assistance. The Street Beat team asked, "Should the Department of Human Resources provide assistance for two-parent families where both parties are unemployed?"



**Sheri Marsden Unemployed**

"Yes, they should if the persons need the assistance and they are both not able to work. When you can't get unemployment insurance and you can't get a job there aren't very many alternatives left."



**Roale Ruffin Housewife**

"They should give money to both mom and dad. If they are not working, where else will they get money from?"



**Layne Barnes Student**

"I think they should. I don't think families ought to be split up. Children from broken homes are disadvantaged in terms of future employment and education."



**Kelli Cunningham Student**

"I think the State should. If one of the parents is unemployed or they can't make ends meet, they shouldn't cut them off. Especially, if there are children."



**Darwin Hemmingson Claims Representative**

"I believe that they should. Sometimes neither the husband or the wife can find work. I think we all share a common responsibility and if we don't have some sort of funds for these people in need, what do we expect them to do — starve?"



**Rhonda Baker Unemployed**

"There are a lot of people out there who are married and they can't get a job. It's hard right now. I'm going through that same trip. There are people out here with the best education in the world who can't find a job. I think they owe it to the people."

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