

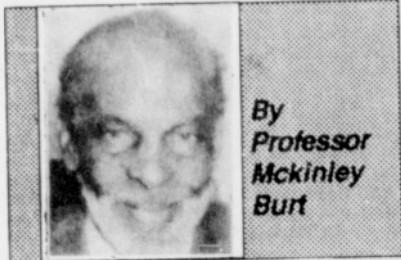
EDITORIAL

The Portland Observer

p e r s p e c t i v e s

Oregon's Health Plan: Are You Still With Us?

If you are, good! If not, you wouldn't be able to read this anyway—which wouldn't be surprising because it has been four years since the legislature enacted our vaunted Health Plan and a number of uninsured Oregonians have passed away in the interim. Not by intent, they just ran out of time (and money). Let's see what the Associated Oregon Industries says on recent events.



By Professor Mckinley Burt

Oregon Health Plan Moves Forward
The 67th Legislative Assembly has completed its work on refinements to the Oregon Health Plan. Senate Bill 5530 represents the 1993 Legislature's vision of health care reform.

3684, introduced by Rep. Greg Walden (R-Hood River). It does the following things:

- Creates the office of Health Plan Administrator. This individual, appointed by the Governor in consultation with the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate, will be charged with coordinating all facets of the plan's implementation.
- Establishes a work plan and time frame for the numerous decisions that must occur for the plan to be enacted.
- Funds Oregon's Medicaid demonstration project. This will bring full Medicaid benefits to 120,000 low-income Oregonians previously denied coverage by the state.
- Directs the Governor and the

state to apply for and receive exemption from conflicting federal laws relating to the employer mandate.

• Reschedules the employer mandate if those exemptions are received. Large employers (26 or more employees) would be subject to the law beginning March 31, 1997. Smaller businesses (25 or fewer employees) would be required to participate beginning January 1, 1998.

It is clear that both the 1995 and 1997 legislative sessions will revisit the plan and make further refinements as implementation occurs.

Now that seems like a pretty straight forward assessment, factual and prioritized. However, a little back tracking to media reports of late July does lend more clarity to the issues. "...finally, the House and Senate have decided somebody needs to be hired to figure out what they meant. Both bodies are promising the creation of a

new post of health administrator who would study issues relating to the employer mandate and look at alternative ways to ensure everybody has access to health care."

And early on there was much disagreement on how the plan would be funded. The governor and Senate wished to raise new revenues through a provider tax and a cigarette tax. But this ran into conflict with the intent of the plans architect, John Kitzhaber, that funding here would compete with other state agencies for available resources. In the House, HB 3684 passed which in part uses lottery dollars to fund the Oregon Health Plan, and this approach satisfied both Mr. Kitzhaber and the business community.

All of these discussions and controversies brought the "poor" back into the act. Many, who never in their political or business careers had cause to shed a tear for the disadvantaged,

now waxed forth eloquently: "The governors proposed new cigarette tax to help fund the Oregon Health Plan will fall most heavily on the poor, uneducated, chronically unemployed and minorities—the very people the Oregon Health Plan was designed to help." But what about using the Lottery Funds that were to create jobs to hire the poor?

Thousand more Oregonians will get health care as a result of the legislature's actions—and scores of doctors, hospitals and other health care providers will celebrate as they looked at their bottom line. Under the plan, Oregonians with an income below the federal poverty level, which is set at \$991 a month for a family of three, will be eligible for expanded Medicaid coverage. That coverage includes a guaranteed basic benefits package and begins February 1. This adds 120,000 more

to the Medicaid including pregnant women and young children with incomes up to one third above the poverty level.

Except for distant rural areas, coverage will be available principally from health maintenance organizations (HMOs), like Good Health Plan (Providence), Kaiser Permanente, ODS, Pacificore, Legacy (Emanuel) etc. This "HMD" approach to expanded health care for all is that of the Clinton administration. Although there have been some comments to the contrary, I have found through both personal experience and reports that these 'managed care' systems not only can function well but clearly are the only ways to deliver massive health care in an economical fashion.

Both locally and nationally, it is still to be decided who shall be brought aboard, how fast and in what order. But it's a start.

Hatfield Announces Dislocated Worker Funding

Senator Mark Hatfield announced that the State of Oregon will receive another \$1.1 million for dislocated workers affected by job losses in the timber and commercial fishing industries.

The \$1.1 million announced is the third installment in the \$7.5 million commitment obtained by Senator Hatfield from the Federal Department of Labor during the Bush Administration.

This installment will serve approximately 250 workers and will be administered by the Job Training Partnership Act Administration in the Oregon Economic Development De-

partment. The funds are distributed to the state by the Department of Labor and will provide workers with assessment, job development, job placement, job search assistance, counseling, classroom training, relocation assistance and supportive services.

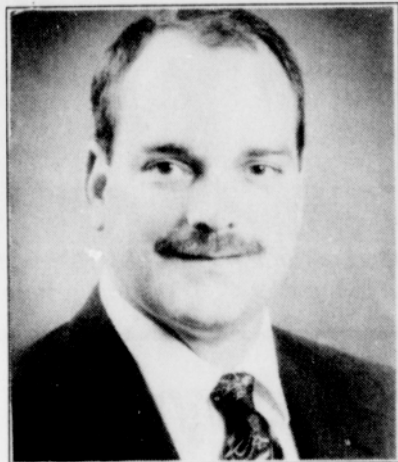
In 1992, Hatfield was able to secure a \$7.5 million commitment from the Department for Oregon Workers dislocated as a result of restriction on federal forest lands to protect the spotted owl, and as a result of commercial fishing restriction imposed by Federal and State regulators due to poor ocean conditions.

A total of \$8.4 million, including

two previous installments on the commitment arranged by Hatfield, has been awarded to the State of Oregon between January of 1991 and April of 1993 to serve dislocated timber workers.

"I'm encouraged by the Clinton Administration's efforts to uphold the commitments made during the previous administration. Timber employment levels in Oregon are at their lowest levels in recorded history and the federal government, which has imposed the restriction that have displaced so many workers, plays a key role in providing the necessary assistance to guide the transition."

Appointment Of Deputy State Treasurer



Deputy State Treasurer Gary Bruebaker

State Treasurer Jim Hill announced today that Gary Bruebaker will be his Deputy State Treasurer. Bruebaker has been the acting Deputy State Treasurer since Treasurer Hill took office. As Deputy,

Bruebaker will be responsible for the day-to-day management of the Treasury operations. Bruebaker has extensive knowledge of and experience with Treasury operations as former Director of Treasury's Cash Management Division. Prior to working for the Treasury, Bruebaker was the Controller of the Oregon Housing Agency and was a Senior Auditor for the Secretary of State's Division of Audits. Bruebaker is a Certified Cash Manager and a Certified Public Accountant and recently received the Award for Distinction in Financial Management Improvements from U.S. Secretary of the Treasury, Lloyd Bentsen.

Darren Bond will replace Mr. Bruebaker as the Director of Cash Management. Bond has been the acting Director since January 1993 and is responsible for providing state-

wide banking services for state agencies. Bond is a Certified Cash Manager and has been with the Treasury since 1989. Prior to his working for the Treasury, Bond was a Vice President for First National Bank of Anchorage.

Randall Edwards was also appointed to be the Executive Assistant to the Treasurer, a position he has filled since January 1993. Edwards' responsibilities include public and legislative affairs and project coordination. Edwards has an MBA and worked in Washington, D.C.

"I am very confident that Mr. Bruebaker, Mr. BOND, AND MR. Edwards will serve Oregon and the Treasury very well. They have demonstrated over the last eight months that they can make a significant, positive impact on Treasury and state operations," Hill said.

Packwood Makes Stops In Ontario And Baker City;

Budget Deficit, Taxes And Watershed Focus Of The Day

On the first day of his swing through Eastern Oregon, Oregon Senator Bob Packwood spoke to a crowd of about 90 people at an Ontario Chamber of Commerce luncheon, visited a truck brokerage company, and received a briefing on the Baker City municipal watershed.

During his stop at the Idaho-Oregon Truck Stop, Packwood learned firsthand how the fuel tax contained in the Clinton tax package will affect businesses and citizens in the Ontario area. John Duvall of Action Truck Brokerage noted that the new 4.3 cents per gallon gasoline tax included in the Clinton tax plan would make life on the road even tougher for trucking

businesses. Don Forsyth, who owns the local garbage collection franchise and a manufacturing company, expressed concern over the inflationary aspects of the gasoline tax. Forsyth believes that the gas tax will result in higher prices for goods and services at both the wholesale and the retail level.

At the noon Chamber of Commerce speech, Packwood discussed the federal budget deficit and advocated reducing the rate of increase for federal entitlement programs, including Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and federal retirement programs. Currently, these four programs, plus interest on the federal debt, consume 55 percent of all federal government spending.

In Baker City, Packwood was given a briefing about the municipal watershed by local Forest Service personnel and community leaders. City officials believe that the abundance of dead and dying trees in the watershed could lead to a catastrophic fire. If a fire occurs, the city could be forced to spend millions of dollars to construct a filtration plant.

Packwood told local officials he would work with the Forest Service in an effort to reduce unnecessary delays which the city is facing in restoring the watershed to a healthy condition.

In addition to the appearance mentioned above, Packwood also had interviews scheduled with local media. Packwood is on a three week trip through Oregon.

Governor's Developmental Disabilities Council Seeks New Members

The Oregon Developmental Disabilities Council is seeking advocates for people with developmental disabilities to serve on the Council.

Self-advocates, parents of children with developmental disabilities and advocacy organizations that represent individuals with developmental disabilities are encouraged to apply. Members are selected based on their knowledge and interest in developmental disabilities in accordance with federal guidelines governing membership. The Council seeks people who represent different ethnic backgrounds, different geographic regions of the state and a variety of developmental disabilities.

Individuals interested in applying for a position on the Council must complete an interest application. Members serve three year terms. Interest applications must be received by the Council office prior to September 30 and can be obtained by contacting the Oregon Developmental Disabilities Council at 373-7555 (Salem) or 1-800-292-4154 (Oregon).

The Oregon Developmental Disabilities Council is a federally-mandated program whose members are appointed by the Governor. The Council advocates for Oregonians with developmental disabilities and provides community education and public awareness about the needs of people

with developmental disabilities and their families.

A developmental disability is a severe and lasting mental and/or physical impairment which occurs prior to the age of 22 and is likely to continue indefinitely. The disability results in substantial functional limitations in major life activities, such as self-care, speaking, understanding language, learning, mobility, ability to make decisions, living alone and financial independence.

For more information about the Oregon Developmental Disabilities Council please contact the Council at 373-7555 (Salem) or 1-800-292-4154 (Oregon).

New Service System For Children And Families Becomes Law

House Bill 2004, signed into law by Governor Roberts this week, establishes a new service system for children in Oregon. For information on the impact of this legislation, its implementation, or the creation of the new State Commission on Children and Families, contacts are: Oregon Commission on Children and Families, John Ball, Rita Trevino Flynn, Steve Nelson, Jeff Nunn, Phone: 373-1283

HB 2004 Highlights:
• Creates a new State Commission on Children and Families, separate from the Department of Human Resources, and abolishes the Oregon Community Children and Youth Services Commission (OCCYSC). The new State Commission will be staffed by the staff of the former OCCYSC.
• HB 2004 also creates new county commissions on children and families and abolishes the county

children and youth services of commissions. The Boards of County Commissioners will appoint new local commissions on or before February 1, 1994.
• Effective July 1, 1995, HB 2004 will create a new State Office for Service to Children and Families in the Department of Human Resources. It transfers certain duties and powers of the Children's Services Division (CSD) to the new State Office.

Oregon "SAT" Scores Increase

Oregon scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, which measures student preparedness for college based on application of verbal and mathematical skills, climbed to their highest total since 1972. The math score reached a record high and scores for minorities including Blacks, Native Americans, Hispanics and Asians, increased.

For the third year in a row, Oregon is number one of the 23 states in which at least 40 percent of their graduates took the tests.

Oregon's college-bound Class of 1993 scored 492 on the math test, up 6 points, and 441 on the verbal test, up 2 points. The national math score was

478, up 2 points, while the verbal score was 424, up 1 point.

The scores increased with a higher percentage of students taking the test. The College Board, which administers the SAT, said scores generally go down as the percentage increases.

"I'm pleased by any national indicator that shows academic improvement," said State School Supt. Norma Paulus. "There's no question that Oregon's college-bound students can compete with students from any state."

"However, we need to view these scores in perspective," said Paulus. "We need to keep our focus on all students, especially the 44 percent

who did not take the SAT."

Oregon males scored 518 on the math test, up 7 points, and 442 on the verbal test, the same as the previous year. Oregon females scored 468 on the math test, up 4 points, and 441 on the verbal test, up 5 points.

Paulus said out-of-school factors, such as family income and parental education, affect scores. As family income and parental education increase, so do test scores.

The College Board, which administers the SAT, reports school results only to participating schools. It said some schools may not have received their scores when national results were released.

The Portland Observer

(USPS 959-680)
OREGON'S OLDEST AFRICAN AMERICAN PUBLICATION
Established in 1970 by Alfred L. Henderson

Joyce Washington
Publisher



The PORTLAND OBSERVER is located at
4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Portland, Oregon 97211
503-288-0033 • Fax 288-9015

Deadline for all submitted materials:

Articles: Monday, 5:00 pm—Ads: Tuesday, noon
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