

# EDITORIAL

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Gary Ann Taylor  
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Laphael Knight  
*Graphic Designer*

Joy Ramos  
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Iesha Williams  
*Graphic Designer*

Tony Washington  
*Director of Advertising*

#### Contributing Writers:

Professor McKinley Burt,  
Lee Perlman,  
Yema Measho  
Richard Luccetti

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.,  
Portland, Oregon 97211  
503-288-0033 • Fax 503-288-0015  
Email: news@portlandobserver.net

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## 1999-2000 Oregon Blue Book Available On-Line

Salem - Secretary of State Phil Keisling announced today that the 1999-2000 Oregon Blue Book will be available on-line at bluebook.state.or.us beginning Monday, February 15. The Blue Book, Oregon's official government directory and encyclopedia of history and facts has been published biennially since 1911.

"This is the first time that we have released the Internet version of the Oregon Blue Book before the print version," said Keisling, "but we had an overwhelmingly positive reaction to the last Blue Book when we put it on the web."

Keisling pointed out that the new Blue Book has live web and e-mail links, a color tour of the State Capitol,

and color photographs from each Oregon County. A current version of the Oregon Constitution, a complete history of elections in Oregon, and chapters on the three branches of government, the economy, cities and countries, and government are also included.

"The on-line version of the Oregon Blue Book contains all the information that the print version will, and it's free," said Keisling. He added that the winner of the Blue Book Cover Contest would be announced in conjunction with the release of the print version of the 1999-2000 Blue Book in mid-March. The Blue Book will be available for \$14 through the secretary of State's office and at bookstores throughout the state.

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# RAINBOW PUSH

## Rev. Jackson Takes on Pataki Over Cuts for Schools

Chicago—Reverend Jackson, testifying before the New York State Education Committee on February 9, strongly condemned proposed budget cuts in state funding for schools.

Governor George Pataki, a potential candidate for the Republican Presidential nomination, proposed cuts in state spending for the public schools totaling \$733 million. This was done despite a state budget surplus of more than \$2 billion.

As a result, state funding has been effectively eliminated for goals such as: universal kindergarten, smaller class sizes for children in grades K through 3, and full day Kindergarten. Funds for teacher training were also frozen.

Jackson warned that while the

old-time segregationists might have stood in front of school entrances to block admission to public schools, today's blow-dried politicians achieve the same results when they propose budgets that permit savage inequalities in public education quality to persist.

In 1997, nearly 42% of eligible students in the State of New York either failed or did not take the New York State Regent's English exam.

In response to declining student achievement, the New York State Regents adopted a set of goals considered to be the highest academic standards in the country—requiring, for example, that all 11<sup>th</sup> graders to pass the English exam in order to graduate.

Pataki's school budget is re-pudiation of these goals, goals that might have been met with a more reasonable budget—a budget that is well within New York means, given the size of the state surplus.

While Pataki cuts general funding for public schools, he proposes to boost spending on "charter schools" to a total of \$175 million, thereby choosing the few over the many.

This is the real battleground of the next campaign: whether the dream of quality, universal public education shall be at long last realized—as our nation enjoys an era of surplus, after a generation of deficits—or whether that dream will be deferred and indeed destroyed. George Pataki's moder-

ate image belies a radical disregard for the greatest hope of America's working families: that their children might attend schools that are the finest in the world.

Rev. Jackson spoke at Union College in Schenectady, NY on Wednesday about the challenge of crumbling public schools, the rise of the jail-industrial complex, the next stage of the civil rights movement (economic) and range of other issues.

After his remarks, as Richard Fox observed in the New York Times Thursday, members of the press asked six questions — one question about whether Rev. Jackson planned to run for the presidency in 2000, four questions about impeachment, and one question about the Super Bowl.

## Social Security Reform: What Else Is In Pandora's Box?

BY DOROTHY R. LEAVELL AND JEFFREY R. LEWIS

As the White House, Congress, economists, academicians, advocates and the myriad of lobbyists comprising what is known as the "Inside the Beltway Washington Establishment" jockey for position on how best to "save" Social Security without losing their constituents and clients, critical questions go unanswered. We hear a lot about the impact on the unified budget and what is required to strengthen and solidify the financial solvency of Social Security, but we hear nothing about what else is in Pandora's Box.

There are a variety of proposals being brandished about. What do we really know and more importantly, what don't we know about the impact these various proposals will have on the business community, labor markets, and the overall health of the nation's economy?

The fact is, many of the reform options may cause significantly greater costs for businesses and their employees. Employers need to know if they will shoulder the burden of increased administrative costs to set up individual Social Security Accounts. If so, how would the extra cost affect business growth and expansion? Would the American business community look to foreign markets with cheap labor to produce even more of their goods and services? How many small businesses would be forced to retrench, or even close down?

What about the effect on high-wage earners and high-bracket tax payers? If Congress lifts the cap on income subject to the Social Security tax, can high-income earners expect greater or reduced Social Security benefits when they retire?

How about the middle and lower income employees? Will increases in employer-paid Social Security taxes create an incentive for employers to move away from offering private pension programs for their employees?

Let's not forget the impact on health care. If Congress raises the retirement age—an almost seeming fete accompli

directly by employer reaction and labor market effects.

Before Pandora's Box is opened and unleashed on a trusting public and a booming economy, Congressional oversight should closely examine what's inside. Our nation's most important social program is at stake, and we deserve nothing less.

We need deliberative, thoughtful study and debate in the Congress to prevent the partisan feeding frenzy that typically surrounds any mention of changes in Social Security. An informed electorate offers the best potential for true bi-partisan, responsible reform. The prerequisite for that is asking the right questions and making sure we get the

right — the true — answers.

Congress should venture outside of the Beltway to hold town meetings all across the country. Local forums would give all Americans the opportunity to understand the consequences of what is being proposed — who wins, who loses, and what the "after shock" effect from employer to employee will be.

Absent such full and open disclosure and discussion, we are headed for a replay of NAFTA and the health care reform debacle. Let's talk openly and honestly with the American people. Congress needs to be reminded that even tiny changes can translate into massive consequences. There's still time to take a peek inside before we lift the lid.

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