

EDITORIAL

Editorial Articles Do Not Necessarily Reflect Or Represent The Views Of The Portland Observer

Attention Readers!

Please take a minute to send us your comments. We're always trying to give you a better paper and we can't do it without your help. Tell us what you like and what needs improvement... any suggestions are welcomed and appreciated. We take criticism well! Get your powerful pens out NOW and address your letters to: Editor, Reader Response, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208.

The Portland Observer

(USPS 959-680) Established in 1970

Charles Washington
Publisher

Gary Ann Taylor
Business Manager

Mark Washington
Distribution Manager

Larry J. Jackson, Sr.
Editor

Joy Ramos
Copy Editor

Heather Fairchild
Graphic Designer

Tony Washington
Director of Advertising

Contributing Writers:
Richard Luccetti
Lee Perlman

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.,
Portland, Oregon 97211
503-288-0033 • Fax 503-288-0015
Email: Pdxobserv@aol.com

Deadline for all submitted materials:
Articles: Friday, 5:00 pm Ads: Monday, 12:00pm

POSTMASTER: Send Address Changes To: Portland Observer,
P.O. Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208.
Periodicals postage paid at Portland, Oregon.

Subscriptions: \$60.00 per year

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 1996 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED.

The Portland Observer--Oregon's Oldest Multicultural Publication--is a member of the National Newspaper Association--Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc, New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association • Serving Portland and Vancouver.

SUBSCRIBE TO The Portland Observer

The Portland Observer can be sent directly to your home for only \$60.00 per year. Please fill out, enclose check or money order, and mail to:

SUBSCRIPTIONS
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER; PO BOX 3137
PORTLAND, OREGON 97208

Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State: _____
Zip-Code: _____

THANK YOU FOR READING THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

CHILDREN'S NUTRITION RESEARCH CENTER HEALTH TIPS

Food Safety Tips Put Lunchbox Bugs on Ice

HOUSTON—(July 27, 1999)—Parents who do their food-safety homework can protect their children's brown-bag lunches from hungry bacteria.

"Bacteria love school-room temperature, which allow them to multiply quickly when there's also a source of food and moisture," said Dr. Debby Demony-Luce, a registered dietitian with the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

To keep harmful bacteria at bay, she offers the following suggestions.

Before School Begins

Add well-insulated lunchboxes or bags, insulated bottles for hot and cold foods and several days' supply of freezer gel packs to your back-to-school shopping list.

Stock up on shelf-stable foods, such as canned fruit or puddings with pop-top lids, peanut butter, crackers, fresh fruit, bottled water, single-serve packets of mayonnaise, and boxes of 100 percent fruit juice.

Disposable silverware and individual hand wipes are also a good idea.

Wash hands, food preparation surfaces and utensils with hot soapy water before lunch-box fare.

Wash raw fruit and vegetables thoroughly.

Avoid using mayonnaise or mayonnaise-type dressings as a spread or salad base for take-along lunches that can't be refrigerated. Handle other perishable foods like sandwich meats with care.

Prepare lunch-box offerings the evening before and store in the refrigerator or freezer. Frozen sandwiches, bottled water and juice boxes offer additional protection and will usually thaw completely by lunchtime.

Tightly wrap cold foods in water-proof plastic and pack around a frozen ice pack or juice box.

Pre-heat or pre-chilled insulated bottles to maximize the protection they provide. Fill with piping hot water or ice water and let stand a few minutes.

At School

Store lunchboxes and bags out of direct sunlight and away from schoolroom radiators.

Discard leftovers. Gel packs and insulated containers won't keep foods safe all day.

After School

Wash lunchboxes, gel packs and insulated bags with hot, soapy water and air dry. Using a little baking soda helps control food odors. Return gel packs to the freezer.

Should Congress Take Away Your Electric Company?

Many people may be unaware that right now Congress is considering legislation that will affect your electricity. It could affect your air conditioning, lights, appliances, controls, and home entertainment center. What Congress wants to do is to make electric companies compete for your business. This would let consumers choose their electric suppliers, the way you now choose telephone service. And this is good. But buried in the legislative discussion is a provision that could take away your choices.

The idea of competition is to let you decide whether some company other than your local electric company is able to offer you better prices and better services. To make the decision, you would, in theory, compare the offer with what your current electric company is providing now or what it might provide to meet, or beat, the competition.

But here is where it gets complicated. Certain provisions being discussed would limit your current electric company's ability to offer you a better deal. You might

not even be able to choose to stay as a customer of your current utility. How? If Congress passes these provisions, the federal government would be allowed to cut apart your electric company and force it to sell the power plants that generate the electricity that you use. This is to give the competitor an advantage in competing for your business. It's a way of protecting competitors, not competition. Still other provisions being discussed would prevent your local electric company from being able to sell to you at all.

Local electric companies have served local communities in cities and elsewhere for a long time. They know their customers, and the customers know them. They have contributed to the quality of life of these communities paid taxes and provided good jobs.

Forcing the break up of your local electric company hurts consumers in critical ways. If a new market entrant makes you a service offer, you can't compare services if you don't know who to compare it against. You are left

without a standard for comparison if your local electric company is taken out of the picture and the other suppliers in the market are new to you.

This could open the way for 'slamming'—that is, the switching of energy suppliers without your consent; or for 'slice and dice'—carving up of service territories into regions or consumer classes and changing the supplier without consumers' direct consent; and for other practices with adverse effects for consumers. We need to make sure that there are adequate consumer protections to prevent such practices.

Federal mandates that force utilities to sell their electric generation plants and restrict their ability to market to their current customers reduce consumer choice by shrinking the pool of competitive power companies. Mandates expand federal regulation over electricity. Such actions are anti-consumer and anti-competition.

Congress can enhance competition and bring benefits to consumers by ensuring the widest possible

choices, ensuring that the rules of competition apply to all competitors, and ensuring consumer protections, among other steps.

In drafting electric competition legislation, Congress should keep in mind certain principles to ensure that the legislation is pro-competition and pro-consumer:

- Ensure that consumers choose their supplier, not the federal government.

- Ensure that consumers have the widest range of possible choices. Don't eliminate choices.

- Ensure consumer protections without needlessly expanding government.

By following these principles, Congress can ensure that electricity deregulation fulfills its promise of lower prices and customer choice without sacrificing consumer protection.

As Congress moves forward with this legislation, the voice of the all communities will be important. We should see to it that our voices are heard in Washington, DC. For more call Edison Electric Institute at 202-508-5000.

ANOTHER VIEW

Biased Hiring Drug Tests

By Emory Curtis

Almost all personnel directors of government units and companies of medium size require two completed pieces of paper before making a hiring decision—a completed application and a negative slip from the required drug test.

That second piece of paper is a report from a lab that tests urine or hair samples. They like hair samples more because they can register positive for drugs used months before. Urine tests only catch drugs used a few days before.

But, scientific results suggest that we ought to be concerned about the extensive use of hair testing for drug use.

One of my step-daughters, Judith Peterson, told me about a co-worker in the food preparation unit for Daily City schools, who had been steadily working her way up the bus driver candidate list for the school district.

Judy said her friend came to work one day smiling from ear to ear. She was at the top of the bus driver list. All she had to do was pass the drug test in the next day or two. She wasn't worried. The strongest drug she had was coffee, and she probably put cream in it.

She took the drug (hair) test. It came out positive. She cried so much that they broke tradition and retested her. It came back positive again. She couldn't understand it. Then she put two and two together and concluded that her husband's nightly joint had affected her test results.

However, according to information about testing hair for drug use, she maybe wrongly accusing him. It could be that she is one of the few with the kind of black hair that makes that test return a false positive for drug use.

It has happened before. Complaints have been filed against the Chicago Police Department by six recent candidates for the Police Academy there.

One of them was filed by a Sister, mother of two, who had a lifelong dream of being a police officer. They tested a sample of her hair, and it came back positive. The Sister was floored. She couldn't believe it. "I don't even smoke or drink," she said. "I was heartbroken."

Since she couldn't get into the Police Academy, she is now a criminal justice major at Chicago State University.

Another Sister there had the same problem. She was a senior in college and submitted a hair sample which returned positive. She said, "Everybody knows I don't use drugs. They have shattered me."

Eight Chicagoans have filed complaints of racial discrimination against the Chicago Police Department because of hair testing which gives more false positives on black hair, which we have.

A brother in the Army who passed seven random urine tests in a two-year period had a forced hair test come back positive. He protested and wanted another test but ended up with a bad conduct discharge. He was only six years away from retirement.

According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse's leading researcher, Edward Cone, "The consensus of scientific opinion is that there are still too many unanswered questions for (hair analysis) to be used in employment situations." That opinion is backed by Dr. Bruce Gurlington, director of the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Devices and Radiological Health.

A 1995 U.S. Navy study shows that the dark coarse hair of African Americans, Hispanics and Asians is more likely to absorb drug residues from the environment (second hand smoke) and then test positive, even if the individual never used drugs.

And, a 1997 National Institute for Drug Abuse hair test study showed a "significant ethnic bias" in their tests for cocaine. In African-American hair there is a significant amount of melanin which acts as a binding site for cocaine. That means, with equal exposure, we don't pass and they (Whites) do.

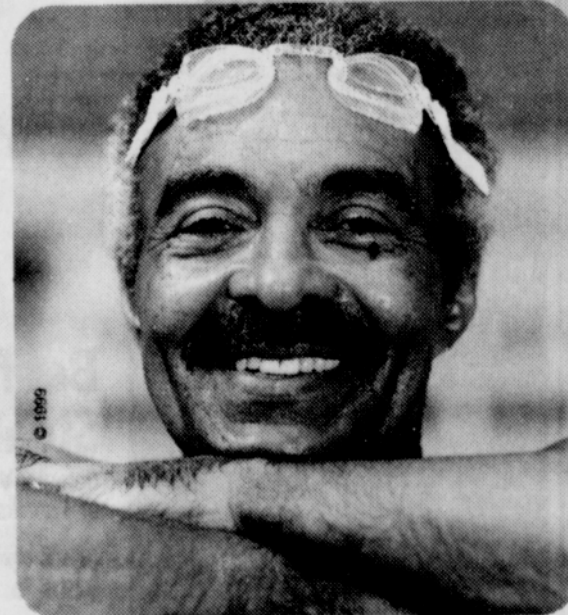
Because forensic toxicologists have found it to be racially biased, Representative Cynthia McKinney (D-GA) is trying to stop the Defense Department from using the hair test. If it stops, why should Police Departments and private companies keep administering the test? It's just another screen the system is using to pick off a few more of us who were able to get through other screens. Let me hear from you: Call (916) 492-9527; fax (916) 492-9146; or e-mail ecurtis@hotmail.com. Visit <http://home.earthlink.net/~ecurtis>.

Imagine this: You're proud of the children you raised. Your grandkids are talented and beautiful, too. The reality of retirement has finally arrived and it's even better than the fantasy.

You have family behind you.

You couldn't have done it without family behind you. American Family Mutual Insurance. When it comes to your future, over 70 years in the insurance business is experience you can trust. With over six million policies in an operating area of 14 states and a consistent rating of A+ (Superior) from insurance rating authority A.M.

Best, we've got the kind of stability that invites you to relax. And isn't that precisely what you had in mind? So, call today and talk to a helpful, friendly agent. Then dive right in. We'll be close behind you.



All Your Protection Under One Roof.

American Family Mutual Insurance Company and its Subsidiaries, Madison, WI 53783-0001 www.amfam.com