

Portland  
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**Opinion**

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# Give Thanks for Strengthened Property Rights

By JOHN A. CHARLES

The United States was founded in the principles of individual liberty and economic opportunity, but in the past 50 years those principle have been eroded by the growth of the regulatory states. Whether its medical marijuana use, over-sized garages, or the use of polystyrene foam cups, no problems is too small for a government bureaucrat to regulate in Oregon. The result is that we've all lost many of the freedoms that the American Revolution was fought for.

Fortunately, in the spirit of Thanksgiving Oregonians can be proud that the recent election charted a new course. Three successful ballot mea-

asures helped restore important property rights in Oregon: Measure 7 (passed 54 percent), requires financial compensation for certain government actions that diminish the value of private property. Measure 3 (passed 67 percent), prohibits the government from taking your property under so-called "asset forfeiture" laws unless you've actually been convicted of a crime, and Measure 88 (passed 51 percent), increases from \$3,000 to 5,000 the maximum amount that may be deducted on Oregon personal income tax returns for federal income taxes paid.

These measures all deal with the same basis issue: who controls your assets, you or the government?

In the first case, Measure 7 requires government officials to fully consider the costs of regulations before they adopt them. Under our present system, the government can wipe out the value of someone's property through a zoning ordinance, without having to pay that person one dime in compensation.

Measure 7 will force elected officials to weigh both the benefits and the costs of a government decision, and to spread the cost of regulation among all taxpayers, not just a few property owners.

Measure 3 significantly strengthens rights of property owners enough to be caught in the web of the government's "drug war". Prior to

the passage of Measure 3, law enforcement authorities could seize your home, car or bank accounts, even if you were never convicted of a drug-related crime.

In 1999, police reported taking \$2.1 million from 1,069 people in Oregon. In 72 percent of those cases, no one was arrested, charged or convicted of crime. The passage of Measure 3 will prevent this kind of abuse in the future, by requiring a conviction before property is seized, and by requiring that the seizure be proportional to the crime.

The passage of Measure 88 shows that a majority of Oregonians consider income to be a type of property, and resent paying a tax on property

they never received because the government took it first. Measure 88 will reduce state tax revenues, which means individuals will now have more control over their own assets.

Although our country was founded on the principle of freedom and economic opportunity, those principles are meaningless without strong rights. As Daniel Webster said, "No other rights are safe where property is not safe."

Your property is now just a bit more secure than it was on November 7. That is truly something to be thankful for.

John A. Charles is environmental policy director at Cascade Policy Institute, a Portland-based think tank.

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STAFF

EDITOR IN CHIEF,  
PUBLISHER  
Charles H. Washington

EDITOR  
Larry J. Jackson, Sr.

BUSINESS MANAGER  
Gary Ann Taylor

ASST. PUBLISHER  
Michael Leighton

COPY EDITOR  
Joy Ramos

CREATIVE DIRECTOR  
Robert Parker

4747 NE Martin Luther King,  
Jr. Blvd.

Portland, OR 97211

503-288-0033

Fax 503-288-0015

e-mail

news@portlandobserver.com

subscription@portlandobserver.com

ads@portlandobserver.com

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## Letter To The Editor Clark County Needs Diversity

I am a five year resident of Vancouver and I relocated here from Los Angeles. I have a concern that is of importance and I would like to bring it to your attention. I am an African American female and a single mother of two teens. My sons' friend was arrested a few weeks ago and taken to the Clark County Jail. He shared his experience with us during a conversation and said that he noticed only a few people of color working there. This became very intimidating to him especially after living in Los Angeles. We questioned why there was such a lack of diversity and it came to our attention that we have never seen a person of color in a patrol vehicle for the county. As we discussed this with other family members and friends, there appeared to be some validity to this observation. We then began to notice the numbers of people of color working for the county in general. The sad reality is that there are very few. As a resident of the county, I

would like to have the County Commissioners and Sheriff Lucas address why the numbers are so low and what plans, if any, they have to address this lack of representation. The sheriff department's lack of diversity has to have an impact on how they deal with people of color living in the county. I would like to see just how many times a young man or woman of color is stopped without a legitimate reason. I'm sure it's quite often, with an all white police force, and a lack of understanding/training on their part. The county is beginning to grow quite rapidly and I would hate for my children to become a target for racial profiling which is usually the result of a department lacking in diversity.

It is quite obvious that the population of people of color in the county is less than that of white occupants, but that should have no bearing on the counties hiring practices.

Mrs. Loritha M.  
Hazeldale

## Blacks in Government Promote Non-Discrimination, Professionalism

The newly formed Greater Portland Chapter of Blacks in Government is hosting a recognition and Chapter Presentation Ceremony at the Lutheran Community Center at 4219 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. on Dec. 2 at 5 p.m.

The actual charter presentation ceremony will start at 6 p.m. with local officers of the Greater Portland Chapter and regional Officers of Blacks in Government officiating.

Blacks in Government is a national, state, regional, and local organiza-

tion devoted to the following goals and objectives. 1. To be an advocate of equal opportunity for blacks in government. 2. To eliminate practices of racism and racial discrimination against blacks in government. 3. To promote professionalism among blacks in government. 4. To develop and promote programs which enhance ethnic pride and educational opportunities for blacks in government. 5. To establish a mechanism for the gathering and dissemination of information to blacks in government.

6. To provide a non-partisan platform on major issues of local, regional, and national significance that affect blacks in government.

Membership in Blacks in Government is open to any person who is in accord with the philosophy, principals, policies, and objectives of this organization. Regular memberships are open to any employee or retiree of federal, state, or local governments.

Those desiring more information can contact Everett Rice at 503-285-0886.

## NAACP Commends Record Turnout

Kweisi Mfume, President and CEO, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People commended African American voters for their record turnout in the national elections.

Mfume said, "The NAACP spent a tremendous amount of time, money and energy in a well-organized grassroots effort to increase the number of African Americans who cast their votes at the polls on Election Day."

The civil rights organization financed a \$12 million high-tech Get-Out-The-Vote campaign that

utilized scores of volunteers, paid staff, a multi-media blitz, the Internet, telephone banks and comprehensive polling studies, resulting in the most massive GOTV effort in the association's 91-year history.

"Let the record show that this unprecedented voter empowerment initiative signals that African American voters are rightfully claiming their place as powerbrokers and stakeholders in the nation's electoral process," said Mfume from the official NAACP Election Day 2000 Com-

mand Central in Baltimore. Some of the states the NAACP voter drive targeted included: Maryland, Florida, Michigan, Illinois, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama and Pennsylvania. Founded in 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its half-million adult and youth members throughout the United States and the world are the premier advocates for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter mobilization and monitoring equal opportunity in the public and private sectors.



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