



Opinion

The Portland Observer

USPS 959-680

Established 1970

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

POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to

Portland Observer
PO Box 3137
Portland, OR 97208Periodical Postage
paid in Portland, ORSubscriptions are
\$60.00 per year

DEADLINES

FOR ALL SUBMITTED MATERIALS:

ARTICLES:

Monday by 5 P.M.

ADS:

Friday by noon

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.

New Vaccine Plan Needed to Protect Children

State Sen. Margaret Carter, vice chair of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, has called for the State Health Division to develop a plan for immunizations to protect children against the deadly bacteria, strep pneumoniae (a cause of meningitis) and Hepatitis A.

"Meningitis is a dreaded bacteria infection that can be fatal if not treated quickly, and especially for children at high risk — and cancer," Carter said. Another serious problem is that other diseases, such as



State Sen. Margaret Carter

sickle cell anemia, impairs the

spleen's role in protecting against certain bacterial infections, including pneumococcal disease. Hepatitis A is a serious liver disease.

"It is important that parents know that new vaccines are now available," Carter said. The pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PREVNAR) was released last July, providing protection against meningitis, pneumonia, sepsis (blood stream infection) and infections around the eye (orbital cellulite).

The vaccine also has been

shown to be helpful in decreasing recurrent ear infections in some children.

The PREVNAR vaccine for meningitis is administered with other routine vaccines to infants and toddlers under 24 months of age on the following schedule: 2, 4, 6 and 15 to 24 months.

Carter wants a state plan developed to administer the vaccine to most children before they enter the school system. She said children, who are at high risk, with sickle cell, diabetes, or

cancer, should be identified and immunized appropriately for their age.

Amendments to Carter's immunization legislation, Senate Bill 482, calls for the Oregon Health, in consultation with members of the medical community, educators and county health departments, to formulate a plan to be reported to the Health Interim Committee prior to the next Legislative session and for implementation by July 1, 2006.

The 'American Dream' is Fading for Too Many Families

Hard work no longer guarantees families can meet their basic needs in Oregon or in the nation

BY MICHAEL LEACHMAN

To develop good public policy, Oregon's elected officials need an accurate picture of what is happening in the lives of their constituents. Yet, most policy makers have missed a fundamental development in the lives of Oregon families: families who work hard and play by the rules can no longer expect to get ahead.

The average working household in Oregon in the late 1990s was working 278 more hours per year than in the late 1970s. These additional hours spent at work have failed to compensate for the wage decline over the same period.

Adjusted for inflation, Oregon's median hourly wage fell from \$13.21 in 1979 to \$10.99, in 1996, rebounding somewhat to \$11.98 in 1999. In the midst of the economic expansion of the late 1990s, the median annual income of four-person families in Oregon was about the same as it had been 20 years earlier.

Poor families have been burdened heavily by the shift in Oregon's working family life since, contrary to myth, poor families work. In 1997-99, 84.2 percent of poor families with children in Oregon worked at

some point during the year, up from 72.7 percent in 1991-93. On average, these families work nearly 39 weeks per year, even though some jobs, such as canner and agricultural jobs, provide only seasonal wages. Just 8.5 percent of all poor families with children in Oregon received the majority of their income from public assistance in the late 1990s.

Hard work no longer guarantees families can meet their basic needs in Oregon or in the nation. There are plenty of lousy jobs out there today - jobs with paltry wages and no benefits - and these are the jobs held by Oregon's poor. Welfare reform ignored this reality. Poor people were told to get a job, any job, and they'd be better off. The result: despite a strong economy and minimum wage increases, the poverty rate among Oregon's working families with children rose from 10.4 percent in 1993-94 to 15.3 percent in 1997-98.

Oregon's poor families with kids in 1998-99 earned an average annual income from work and cash assistance of just \$8,800, essentially the same income they were earning before

welfare reform. And thanks to welfare reform, the next time a recession hits the poorest Oregonians will fall back towards a safety net that is incapable of catching them.

Welfare reform only exacerbated a trend that has been developing over the last generation. Although the poverty rate among working families with children increased dramatically following welfare reform, the rate has been increasing for 20 years and has doubled since the late 1970s.

The promise of success through work weakens as the quality of jobs declines.

Oregonians are working more hours, spending less time with their families, and are frustrated that they still aren't getting ahead. This is the new reality that policy makers and the media do not fully understand. The "American dream" is fading for too many families. Will Oregon wake up in time to act?

Michael Leachman is a policy analyst at the Oregon Center for Public Policy. He can be reached at mleachman@ocpp.org, OCPP, P.O. Box 7, Silverton, OR 97381-0007, or by calling 503-873-1201.

Minister Speaks Out Against President Bush's Faith-Based Initiative

At a news conference called by the Coalition Against Religious Discrimination, the Rev. Arnold Howard joined religious leaders from across the country and the theological spectrum in voicing opposition to the Bush administration's plan to fund religion with tax dollars. Rev. Howard, who called the plan "bad for government, and worse for religion," is vice chair of People For the American Way Foundation's African American Ministers Leadership Council and the pastor of Enon Baptist Church in Baltimore.

At the news conference, a petition to the president and Congress bearing the signatures of hundreds of faith leaders opposing the administration's plan was unveiled. Rev. Howard commented that African Americans have a particular interest in opposing government's funding of religion, because such a plan "would weaken the African American church's voice and moral power as a force for social justice." Citing the African American church's historic role, Rev. Howard added, "When we go to the government, it must not be with our hands out, but with our heads high and our voices unrestrained."



CEASEFIRE Oregon

Gun Turn - In 2001

Saturday, May 12

ONE DAY ONLY 10 am - 2 p.m.

Turn in your gun and receive a \$50 Merchandise Certificate and learn more about how to keep your home safe from gun violence.

Beaverton

Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue Station #67
13810 SW Farmington Road @ Menlo

Gresham

Gresham Fire Station #4
NE 192nd & Halsey

Hillsboro Human Resources

Tuality Healthcare Building
232 SE 8th

N Portland

Martin Luther King Blvd
@ Jarrett Street

SE Portland

Eastport Plaza
4104 SE 82nd Street, Ste 300

Clackamas County

Clackamas Fire District #1
1130 SE Fuller at Causey
(2 Blocks North of Clackamas Town Center)

For More Information, Call 220-1669

Cforegon@teleport.com www.ceasefireoregon.org
921 SE Morrison, Ste 424 Portland, Oregon 97205

Heads up.



Safety is the first step in all your outdoor home and yard fix-up projects.

Look Up!

When you're working outside, always check for overhead power lines before you climb a ladder or tree, do any work on your roof, install an antenna, etc.

Stay as far away as possible!

Electricity takes the easiest path to the ground, and to get there it will travel through a conductor such as metal, wood, trees, water or our bodies. If you accidentally become part of the pathway, you could be electrocuted. Always keep yourself and anything you are in contact with more than 10 feet from overhead power lines.

To order free safety education materials, call us at 1-800-791-6093 or visit www.pacificcorp.com and click on Energy@Home.

PACIFIC POWER

Making it happen.