



Opinion

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Elect School Board Members by Zones

Forty community leaders and elected officials, led by the Rainbow Coalition, recently sent a letter to the Portland school board asking that it change election rules so that only voters in specific zones elect school board members, instead of by voters in the district at large. According to the coalition, the current system is unfair to low and moderate-income candidates. Board members Lorenzo Poe and Derry Jackson are said to support the change.

Below is the letter:

Dear Board Members:

We, the undersigned, representing a cross-section of Portland voters, urge that the Board of Education of the Portland Public Schools change the system of voting for school board members to election from zones.

Currently, all seven board members are elected at-large, by the entire city, even though they are each required to live in a different zone. We believe that, in the interests of democracy and fair representation, only the voters from that zone should elect the board member from their zone.

Our city is made up of diverse neighborhoods and populations, many of which are not currently represented on the board. It is common knowledge that citywide name recognition and substantial funds are necessary to run for school board under the present

system. Election from zones would require much less money, allow for more grass-roots campaigns, and provide neighborhood and local school activists a chance to win a board seat.

Your authority to change the present system is spelled out in "ORS 332.126 Election from zones. (1) If a majority of the district school board of a zoned common school district or a zoned union high school district so decides, the board may provide that directors of the district school board who are nominated from zones also shall be elected from the zones from which they are nominated... (The decision may be rescinded at any time)."

As the Portland Public Schools move toward more local school decision-making, it seems only logical that the Board itself should be more representative of those local school clusters. Thank you for your consideration.

Carrie Adams, Education Crisis Team; JoAnn Bowman, past state representative; Robert Boyer, King Neighborhood Facility, director; Dana Brown, Community Alliance of Tenants, director; Kate Brown, state senator; Willie Brown, Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods, chair; Rex Burkholder, Metro councilor; Margaret Butler, Jobs with Justice, director; Margaret Carter, Urban League, director; Serena Cruz, Multnomah County commis-

sioner; Michael Dembrow, PCC Faculty Federation, president; George Eighmey, past state representative; Dan Gardner, state representative; Avel Gordly, state senator; Rev. Leroy Haines, Allen Temple CME; Gary Hansen, state representative; O.B. Hill, Reflections Bookstore, owner; Linda Hunter, Neighborhood Mediation Center, director; Roy Jay, African American Chamber of Commerce; Tom Kelly, Neil Kelly Co., owner; Sy Kornbrodt, Multnomah Education Service District, director; Fr. Robert Krueger, St Andrew Catholic Church; Allyson Linfoot, Woodlawn ACORN, chair; Richard Luccetti, Hispanic Parents Assoc., chair; Jan Mihara, Oregon Action; Clara Padilla Andrews, El Hispanic News, publisher; Maceo Pettis, Oregon Uniting; James Posey, Black Chamber of Commerce, president; A. Halim Raahsaan, Coalition of Black Men, vice chair; Jim Robison, Multnomah Co. Democratic Party, chair; Diane Rosenbaum, state representative; Beverly Stein, past Multnomah County chair; Erik Sten, Portland city commissioner; Lucinda Tate, Portland New Party, chair; Betty Thompson, Negro Women's Club, president; Grant Walter, Service Employees Int. Union 140, president; Geri Washington, Multnomah Education Service District, director; and Jerry Watson, Rainbow Coalition.

Alcohol Problems Rise After Sept. 11

Don't drink and drive message is more important with more people looking for distractions from current events

BY BARBARA CIMAGLIO

As a nation, we've seen many changes since Sept. 11. Some are good like openly demonstrating concern for one another. Others are not so good. Cause for concern to all of us is increasing alcohol consumption and more people driving while under the influence.

State traffic safety experts confirm that drunk driving has been on the rise in Oregon since mid-September. This danger is heightened during the holiday season when drunk driving historically increases.

That's why the "don't drink and drive" message is especially important now. The increasing number of people looking for distractions from current events will be able to find liquor at holiday parties. This might be okay for socially responsible drinkers, but deadly for those who aren't.

Alcohol and driving just don't mix. Every 33 minutes, someone in the U.S. is killed in an alcohol-related crash. And, someone is injured every two minutes. But, fortunately, here in Oregon, we can help one another from becoming statistics.



Barbara Cimaglio

Talk to your children about the effects of alcohol consumption and the laws pertaining to minors. Make sure you know where they are and that the parties they are attending are alcohol-free and supervised by adults.

Be aware of your body's limit for alcoholic drinks, including beer and wine. The effects of drinking vary greatly based on a person's alcohol absorption rate into the blood, body weight and the amount of food in the stomach. For most people, even one drink can affect driving skills.

Pre-assign a designated driver or arrange for outside transportation such as a cab or local transportation service. If you are a host, serve non-salty food and offer non-alcoholic beverages throughout the party. Stop serving alcoholic beverages at least one hour before the end of the event and consider serving dessert instead. Contrary to popular belief, coffee will not dilute alcohol. Only time, and lots of it, works to "sober up" someone who has been drinking.

Take the car keys away from anyone who is about to drive drunk. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration provides great tips on how to do this:

With close friends, use a soft, calm approach at first. Suggest that they've had too much to drink and it would be better if someone else drove or if they took a cab.

Be calm. Joke about it. Make light of it.

If possible, avoid embarrassing the person and avoid being confrontational. This makes them appear vulnerable to alcohol and its effects.

Try to make it sound like you are doing them a favor.

If it's someone you don't know well, speak to his or her friends about getting the keys.

If it's a good friend, spouse, or significant other, say you won't go with them if they insist on driving. Suggest you will call someone else for a ride or even walk.

Take their keys while they are preoccupied. Most likely, they will think they've lost them and will be forced to find another mode of transportation.

Finally, if you encounter a drink driver, report it to the Oregon State Police toll free at 800-24DRUNK. By preventing or stopping someone from driving drunk, you may be giving someone the greatest gift of all.

Barbara Cimaglio is special assistant for child and adolescent health services in the Oregon Department of Human Services.

Focus On Promoting Safe and Stable Families

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

Every 11 seconds a child is reported as abused or neglected in America; 127,000 children are in foster care waiting for adoptive families; almost 20,000 youths leave foster care at the age of 18 each year with no place to go and very few resources. Imagine as an adult being put out on the street to fend for yourself. Now try it as a young person with no money, housing, or real world experience, and without family support or an education that prepares you to get a decent job.

During his campaign, President Bush acknowledged the need for increased funding to help these defenseless children and adolescents. As President, he included a guaranteed five-year funding increase in the 2002 Congressional Budget as part of the

Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program. Bipartisan bills introduced in the House and Senate guaranteed funds to protect abused and neglected children, promote adoption, support crisis services, and offer education and training vouchers to older youths leaving foster care.

Finally, it seemed that help was on the way for our nation's most vulnerable children who face daily uncertainty, loneliness, and terror. Then, suddenly, these children were left behind in a tangle of political machinations. The House Ways and Means Committee said it could not afford the guaranteed increases and rejected the President's proposal to ensure a little over a billion dollar increase over five years.

This is intolerable. Our children are not just

another commodity to be written off or squandered. The House of Representatives' actions make the words "Leave No Child Behind" ring hollow as the urgent needs of abused and neglected children remain unmet.

It is time for our political leaders to get their priorities straight and for citizens to hold them accountable for what they do and what they say they will do. No more big tax breaks should be given to the wealthy until the needs of abused and neglected children are met. No group of children in America is more in need of adult protection.

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund, which coordinates the Black Community Crusade for Children.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Don't Scapegoat People as Terrorists

When I read about the INS rounding up Farhad Toussi, a man who has lived in the U.S. for over 20 years, and 30 immigrant Portland airport workers being detained, charged, fired and likely deported, I thought I was in a 1940s film about fascist persecution.

Today, being from the Middle East or an immigrant of color marks you as a target for Attorney General John Ashcroft and his goon squad just as surely as a yellow star marked my forebears for the Nazis.

In another echo of the Third Reich, we are being dragged into a sinister war that scapegoats people of color as terrorists, guilty by ethnicity.

We must stop this erosion of our Constitution and our lives. Remember, first they came for the immigrants. Speak up now.

Adrienne Weller, Jews for Global Justice
North Portland