

**OPINION**

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**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

**Repeal Student Aid Drug Provision**

I don't know, maybe I am from the "old school" where education was a right for all those that wanted to obtain it, but it looks like things sure have changed these days.

Even the university that we all go to was created to give educational access to Veterans that returned from the war and wouldn't have otherwise had it. Our legislators however, one in particular, David Wu, have a different opinion on who deserves to get an education to change their lives for the better.

In the Higher Education Act of 1998, there was a drug pro-

vision that was added that limited access to higher education by denying financial aid to those that had been convicted of a drug offense.

Don't get me wrong, I do believe that people should be punished if they break the law, but I also believe that if you have been punished for a crime once, you should not be punished again for the same crime.

Communities of color and low-income people are the ones that really get hit hard by this drug provision. People of color are convicted of drug offenses

at higher rates due to racial profiling, and low-income students need financial aid the most.

The Higher Education Act was created over three decades to increase opportunities to college for millions of students, but today it has the potential to limit it.

There is way to correct this problem: with HR 786, the amendment would be repealed.

Hopefully our legislators will regain their sanity and vote for this repeal.

**Cynthia Sartin**  
Associated Students of  
Portland State University

**Oregon's Working Families Suffer**

BY STATE REP. JACKIE DINGFELDER

After two disappointing special sessions in the legislature, I want to share my thoughts with you on our efforts to balance the state budget. Lawmakers had to make up an \$830 million budget shortfall by cutting programs, finding new sources of revenue, or emptying state reserves and one-time revenue sources such as the Educational Endowment Fund or the national tobacco settlement.

It had been my hope that the House could come together as a bipartisan group to make these difficult decisions, as our colleagues in the Senate did. Instead, conservative Republicans pushed for unacceptable cuts to education and social services and drained nearly all of the state's reserves. I refused to support a budget solution that will further drain our schools' limited resources and create a half-billion shortfall next year. I heartily supported Gov. Kitzhaber's use of his veto to demand that House Republicans negotiate a balanced and fair budget.

Prior to the first special session, I sent out a survey to the members of my district to better understand their priorities in the budget process. I would like to thank the hundreds of people who took the time to respond. The overwhelming majority supported new sources of revenue to fund the budget shortfalls in education and social services. In addition, statewide polling con-



State Rep. Jackie Dingfelder

firmed that over 65 percent of Oregonians support raising taxes on cigarettes and alcohol to balance the budget. Unfortunately, there was not support for these measures among the Republican members of the House.

Thank you to all the dedicated folks who went to Salem to express their concern about potential budget cuts. My office has been inundated with calls and letters from parents, seniors, educators and concerned citizens demanding that we protect vital programs. The students who took an active role in opposing cuts to our schools particularly impressed me.

Gov. Kitzhaber's veto of portions of the latest budget means that we will likely return to Salem in June for a third special session. I will continue to fight for a balanced approach to the budget shortfall and hope that we can find a bipartisan compromise. In addition, we must address the consequences of the state's economic recession. Oregon has the highest level of unemployment and hunger of any state in the nation. It is our responsibility as legislators to provide assistance for working families that are suffering in this economic downturn.

It is my commitment to continue working to protect programs and services that are vital to providing a high quality of life for all Oregonians. Hopefully with this breather between the sessions, some of my colleagues in the House will start to see things the same way.

Jackie Dingfelder, represents northeast Portland, in House District 45.

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**Gun Safety Efforts Leave No Child Behind**

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

The shameful and sad fact is that 3,761 children and teens were killed by gunfire in the United States in one typical year—10 every day. One thousand, four hundred and sixteen of them were black.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the rate of firearm deaths among children under age 15 in the United States is almost 12 times higher than in 25 other industrialized countries combined.

Over half of our children and youths killed by gunfire were murdered, and another one-third were victims of suicide. And 261 other children were simply accident victims—they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.

About 40 percent of American households own a gun. Children live in nearly half of those households. One study found that 1.4 million

homes with 2.6 million children living in them had firearms that were stored unlocked and loaded, or stored unlocked and unloaded but kept together with the ammunition. Every one of them is a disaster waiting to happen.

It is time for adults to wake up and protect their children. During this dangerous time in our nation, many of our children are worried about external threats and about how adults will keep them safe. Doing everything we can to keep all children safe is our job but it must include protecting them from the gun violence epidemic in our own country.

Marian Wright Edelman is president of the Children's Defense Fund, which coordinates the Black Community Crusade for Children. CDF's mission is to Leave No Child Behind.

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