



OPINION

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The Portland Observer

The Portland Observer

USPS 959-680

Established 1970

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.,
Portland, OR 97211



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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Portland Observer PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208
Periodical Postage paid in Portland, OR • Subscriptions are \$60.00 per year

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Ballot Puts Quality of Life at Stake

The fate of two important measures on the May ballot could profoundly affect the quality of life of neighborhoods here in north Portland.

Measure 26-29 is a responsible proposal by Metro to guarantee the health and livability of our neighborhoods. It will also protect some of Oregon's best farmland without allowing uncontrolled sprawl and all its negative consequences.

Measure 26-29 prohibits Metro from requiring increased density in existing single-family neighborhoods. It requires Metro to carefully study large urban growth boundary expansion proposals, and notify nearby property owners if an expansion will increase traffic in adjacent neighborhoods, or if their taxes will be spent for services like new roads and sewers.

In contrast, Measure 26-11 will harm our neighborhoods and threaten some of Oregon's most productive farmland. This poorly-written measure will also increase

traffic and reduce our transportation choices. It is being pushed by developers and special interest groups, including Oregonians In Action, and is a stealth attempt to encourage more sprawling development that will be paid for by taxpayers.

Measure 26-11 also undermines local control by requiring Metro to interfere in local zoning decisions. It is a direct attack on 20 years of innovative work by citizens and local governments to protect neighborhoods and farmland by controlling sprawl. That's why the mayors of all 24 cities in the metro area oppose Measure 26-11 and support Measure 26-29.

I urge my fellow residents of north Portland to reject the destructive Measure 26-11, and to vote "yes" on Measure 26-29 to protect our neighborhoods, our valuable farmland, and the quality of life that makes this region a special place to call home.

Gayle Killam
North Portland

Children Need More Than Nice Words

BY MARIAN
WRIGHT EDELMAN

We welcome the President and the First Lady's interest in early childhood. We agree that a strong early foundation is essential for young children to succeed in school.

However, reaching this goal requires substantial new resources as well as strong standards for early childhood programs. Unfortunately, the President's budget proposals do not include a single new dollar for child care for the next five years and do not allow any additional children to participate in Head Start or Early Head Start.

Today's proposal contains good rhetoric, but young children need more than nice words.

The President's plan also implies that most families' need for child care and early education are met. We beg to differ.

Millions of parents are struggling to pay for child care and early education. Only one in seven children eligible for federal child care assistance gets it and only three out of five eligible children can participate in Head Start.

Unfortunately, the President's budget proposals do not include a single new dollar for child care for the next five years and do not allow any additional children to participate in Head Start or Early Head Start.

— Marian Wright Edelman, Children's Defense Fund.

Millions of child care providers earning unacceptably low wages are also struggling every day to support young children. The average child care provider earns only \$16,350 a year and 30 states do not require providers to have any training in child development before they go to work in a child care center.

Sen. Christopher Dodd and Rep. George Miller have introduced legislation—the Act to Leave No Child Behind S.940 and H.R.1990—that makes the investments and comprehensive improvements in early childhood

education programs that young children need.

Our top priority this year is an increase of \$20 billion over five years for the Child Care and Development Block Grant. This would allow two million more children to receive child care help and offer new funds to bolster the quality of care.

To truly Leave No Child Behind, the President should support these new investments.

Marian Wright Edelman is the founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund.

A Missed Chance for Health Care

In an alarming survey, fewer and fewer small businesses in Oregon are able to afford health care.

When asked if they provided health insurance benefits, only 59 percent of the respondents said yes, down from 70 percent in 1996.

According to J.L. Wilson, state director of the National Federation of Independent Business, the culprit is skyrocketing costs in part due to demands state lawmakers place on health

insurers to include more and more procedures and treatments.

Almost 50 percent of the survey's respondents said they were hit with health insurance cost increases in excess of 20 percent. At least 15 percent experienced increases of more than 30 percent.

"The situation is clearly becoming a crisis," said Wilson. "With each passing year, we see that an ever-shrinking number of small employers are

able to afford health benefits. We are talking about a very significant number of people who are being priced out of the market."

Wilson blasted Oregon lawmakers for failing to pass Senate Bill 8 or House Bill 3993 during last year's session. The measures would have established a basic, affordable health plan for small businesses to buy, shorn of many non-urgent, non-emergency mandates.

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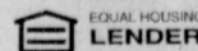
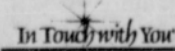
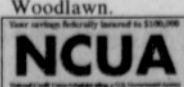
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