

# OPINION

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## Vote 'Yes' to Prevent Devastating Harm We can do better for our vulnerable people and we must

The following guest commentary on the income tax measure facing voters in a vote-by-mail election on Jan. 28 is from our Portland legislators, Sen. Avel Gordly, Rep. Jackie Dingfelder and Rep. Steve Marsh.

If Measure 28 fails on Jan. 28, cuts to mental health programs and services would cause irresponsible and irreparable harm in communities across the state. The state would most likely face lawsuits.

Cuts to mental health would have severe, immediate impacts on people and services. Efforts to build a culturally responsive and competent system will be stalled. More

programs will close. More jobs will be lost. Homelessness, and crime will increase. Fewer children, already underserved, will have access to treatment.

Collaboration between the local mental health authorities and local law enforcement will be eliminated. Because thousands of Oregonians won't be properly treated or be able to function in the community, many will find their illnesses worsening; some will become suicidal.

Again, the only option left will be the streets, and the future costs of repeat acute stabilization will be far greater than the costs of prevention and rehabilitative ser-

VICES today.

Where are these people to go? How are these mental health clients to become self-sufficient if we don't provide the social support they need? With the state facing another huge budget shortfall, are we prepared to pay the legal costs of our actions?

If we consider ourselves a humane, compassionate and caring community, this scenario—which is already underway—is not acceptable.

This is Oregon. We can do better for our vulnerable people and we must.

Already over 20 percent of Or-

egonians with mental health disorders are not receiving the services and medication they need. If we are forced to make tens of millions of dollars in additional cuts, the long-term effects will be catastrophic.

These are not exaggerations; the consequences of the cuts will far exceed any savings to the current budget. We can do better than this and we must.

With one vote, you have a chance to save countless children, families, and communities from despair and irreparable harm.

Please vote yes on Measure 28 on Jan. 28.

## White House Doesn't Match its Rhetoric

It's time to revive Dr. King's commitment to civil rights, poverty and peace



Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr.

*The Bush Administration sold itself to the voting public as compassionate and conservative, but so far only the conservative part of the label has been revealed.*

— Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr.

that Lott also favored? Lott was demoted for his hurtful words; but the Justice Department and the White House were upset at him because the controversy was getting in the way of more hurtful deeds, such as joining in on the University of Michigan affirmative action suit on the wrong side and rolling back even more gains of the Civil Rights Movement.

The President last year hung Dr. Martin Luther King's picture in the White House, another nice photo-op. But what evidence is there that this White House has put any of Dr. King's ideals and beliefs into practice? Dr. King sacrificed a great deal for peace; but we are on the verge of unilateral war. Dr. King led the civil rights movement, but neither the President nor the attorney general will meet with top civil rights leaders. Dr. King died leading a march for union sanitation workers, but the President will not meet with John Sweeney and the AFL-CIO. The White House has an open door policy on trade, but a closed-door policy on civil rights and labor.

Most poignant of all, given the circumstances of Jesus' humble birth, Dr. King launched a War on Poverty, but the Bush budget slashes funding for those most in need. Consider this list of budget cuts from those most in need during this winter season (taken from a column by Molly Ivins):

"Number of seniors who will be cut off meal programs because of the Bush budget: 36,000. Number of families that will be cut off heating assistance because of the Bush budget: 532,000. Number of home-

less kids who will be cut off education programs because of the Bush budget: 8,000. Number of kids who will be cut off after-school programs because of the Bush budget: 50,000.

Number of kids who will be cut off child care because of the Bush budget: 33,000. Number of workers who will be cut off unemployment insurance because of the Bush budget: 1 million."

As we speak, the Bush Administration is planning for more tax cuts for the rich, and weakening taxes on dividends and stocks for the upper classes. Yet the Bush budget shows callous disregard for those most in need, the working families and poor people of America, even in this time of giving.

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## Letter to the Editor

### Pedestrian Killed Remembered

My childhood recollections of Anita Nichols were of a young girl who endured abuse and poverty with her siblings in a large house on 13th and Sumner.

On several occasions we would share our food with "Nita Ree" as we called her.

I am saddened that her life would end so violently. Although she endured much Nita Ree loved to laugh and play like any other child. I will not forget her as she was innocent and lacking love.

Anthony Orr