

OPINION

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School Casino Night? Use it to teach gambling's risks

BY JEFF MAROTTA

A representative of a rural Willamette Valley high school wrote a letter recently asking if my agency would help support an alcohol- and drug-free casino night as part of the school's graduation activities.

"We are planning a casino theme," she wrote, "with all the thrills of Las Vegas, including all casino games.

Although well-intentioned, the letter — and the large number of other schools holding casino-type activities — points out our blindness to the risks associated with gambling.

There's no question that gambling has entered our mainstream culture and that social gambling can be an entertaining, fun and harmless activity.

But most people don't know that, just as with tobacco or alcohol,

people who start at an early age are more likely to become addicted as adults.

Nor are they thinking about how students who gamble are much more likely than other students to smoke, drink alcohol, use illegal drugs and commit crimes.

They probably don't know that the rate of problem gambling among teens is double that of adults — 4 percent to 6 percent of youth have a severe gambling problem. Compare that with national statistics showing 4.2 percent of youth abuse alcohol and 2.3 percent have an illicit-drug problem.

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think about what message our students are receiving: If our trusted school is organizing it, then it must be safe and good for us, right?

I recently got a phone call from two Portland high school seniors who were writing papers about gambling and teens. As we talked,

they disclosed that as freshmen and sophomores, their social lives consisted mostly of video games, playing sports and hanging out. Now, they said, it's mostly Texas Hold 'Em with stakes of \$1 to \$20. They told about a friend who spent his entire spring vacation playing

online poker.

Schools and parents have a responsibility to ensure that students understand the risks of gambling, just as we educate our kids about the risks of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

OK, maybe it's too late to come up with a new senior night activity. Then at least follow the example of some Canadian casinos that have on-premises "responsible gambling centers." They not only detail the potential dangers, but also help casino guests understand how the games work and the true odds of winning and losing.

Set up a booth not only with brochures but also with available videos that look at gambling from a teen viewpoint and interactive computer CDs that describe gambling odds, permit the user to see general

and personal risks, and dispel myths (such as that which says that a "near miss" on a slot machine suggests a winning pull is close at hand).

My office can provide the teen-friendly brochures, videos and interactive CDs to schools.

I don't recommend that our schools host gambling events. But if the Class of 2005 is going to an alcohol- and drug-free casino night, then we ought to educate our graduates about the risk of gambling so they can hold a winning hand as young adults by making informed and responsible choices.

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Letter to the Editor

Stand for Full Citizenship

Thank you so much for your fine work for our community. I vote. I paid my taxes. The Oregon Supreme Court annulled my marriage to my long time life partner April 14.

I support Senate Bill 1000, a bill that would outline discrimination based on sexual preference and create civil unions.

I am hardworking, honest, mom involved with my child and her school. I volunteer in the community. I'm 51 years old and a college student. I am tired of accepting "crumbs from the table of joy" as standard Oregonian cuisine.

I encourage every citizen to take a stand for full citizenship rights for all and lend their support to this proposed legislation. SB1000 keeps open the door of hope for full rights for those whom wish to marry. The only real obstacle to the law is ignorance fueled by fear.

I have personally decided to "reclaim the pink triangle". If folks are so afraid of us, they should at least know our face. In the 20th century, Germany under the Hitler administration, required homosexuals were forced to wear pink triangles to identify them. Today, I wear the pink triangle to reclaim it, to say, "I'm your neighbor, your everyday person in the street - I'm an ordinary citizen."

K.E. Wells

Northeast Portland

Declining State of African American Health

Ethnic healthcare disparities weaken American lives

BY U.S. REP. MEL WATT



The Congressional Black Caucus is committed to eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in health care and

believes this should be a priority for our nation. Unfortunately, disparities between African Americans and other Americans continue to exist in every aspect of our lives, making it more difficult, and often impossible, for African Americans to reach their full potential.

The state of minority health care under the Bush Administration has deteriorated precipitously and has

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continued to decline in his second term. Since President Bush took office, health care premiums for family coverage have increased nearly 60 percent, while wages have only increased 12.3 percent. About 19.7 percent of African Americans are uninsured.

While health care premiums skyrocket, President Bush has proposed decreasing Medicaid funding by \$60 billion over 10 years. This would harm minority populations, particularly African Americans, that depend on this program for their health care.

The President has also proposed eliminating programs designed to promote a diverse healthcare workforce. Presently, African Americans are only 2.9 percent of doctors, 9.2 percent of nurses, 1.5 percent of dentists and 0.4 percent of health care administrators, yet

African Americans comprise 12 percent of the population.

The CBC supports universal access to health care, affordability and prevention. It also supports meaningful coverage for prescription medications to every American and would like to increase African American representation across all health care professions.

In December, the American Journal of Public Health reported that 886,000 more African Americans died between 1991 and 2000 than would have died had equal health care been available.

Minority populations often suffer disproportionately from many diseases. African American men experience twice the average death rate from prostate cancer. In 2002, the African American AIDS diagnosis rate was 11 times the white

diagnosis rate - 23 times more for women and 9 times more for men.

African American and Hispanic children make up over 80 percent of pediatric AIDS cases and roughly 78 percent of women with HIV are minorities. African Americans are two times more likely to have diabetes than whites, four times more likely to see their diabetes progress to end-stage renal disease and four times more likely to have a stroke; and Death rates from heart disease are 29 percent higher among African Americans than among whites and death rates from stroke are 40 percent higher.

These statistics are startling and unacceptable to me as an African American male and as a member of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Eliminating disparities, whether in health care, education or employment is consistent with the mission and objective of the CBC. We invite all Americans to join us in the quest to remove disparities. African Americans will be better for it and America will be better for it too.

U.S. Rep. Mel Watt, D-N.C., is chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus.

A Blow to Middle-Class Americans

BY U.S. REP. NANCY PELOSI

Middle-class Americans are paying the price for Republican policies. Wages are not keeping up with inflation. People are working the same amount of time for less money and are paying higher prices at the pump and for prescription drugs. Republican policies are making the middle-class squeeze worse.

President Bush struck another blow to Americans' wallets Thursday night when he proposed the single biggest cut in Social Security benefits for the middle-class in history.



The President is right about one thing: the American people do expect their leaders in Washington to address Social Security's long-term problems. The difference is that Democrats believe that slashing Social Security benefits to pay for privatization is the problem, while Republicans believe massive benefit cuts are the answer.

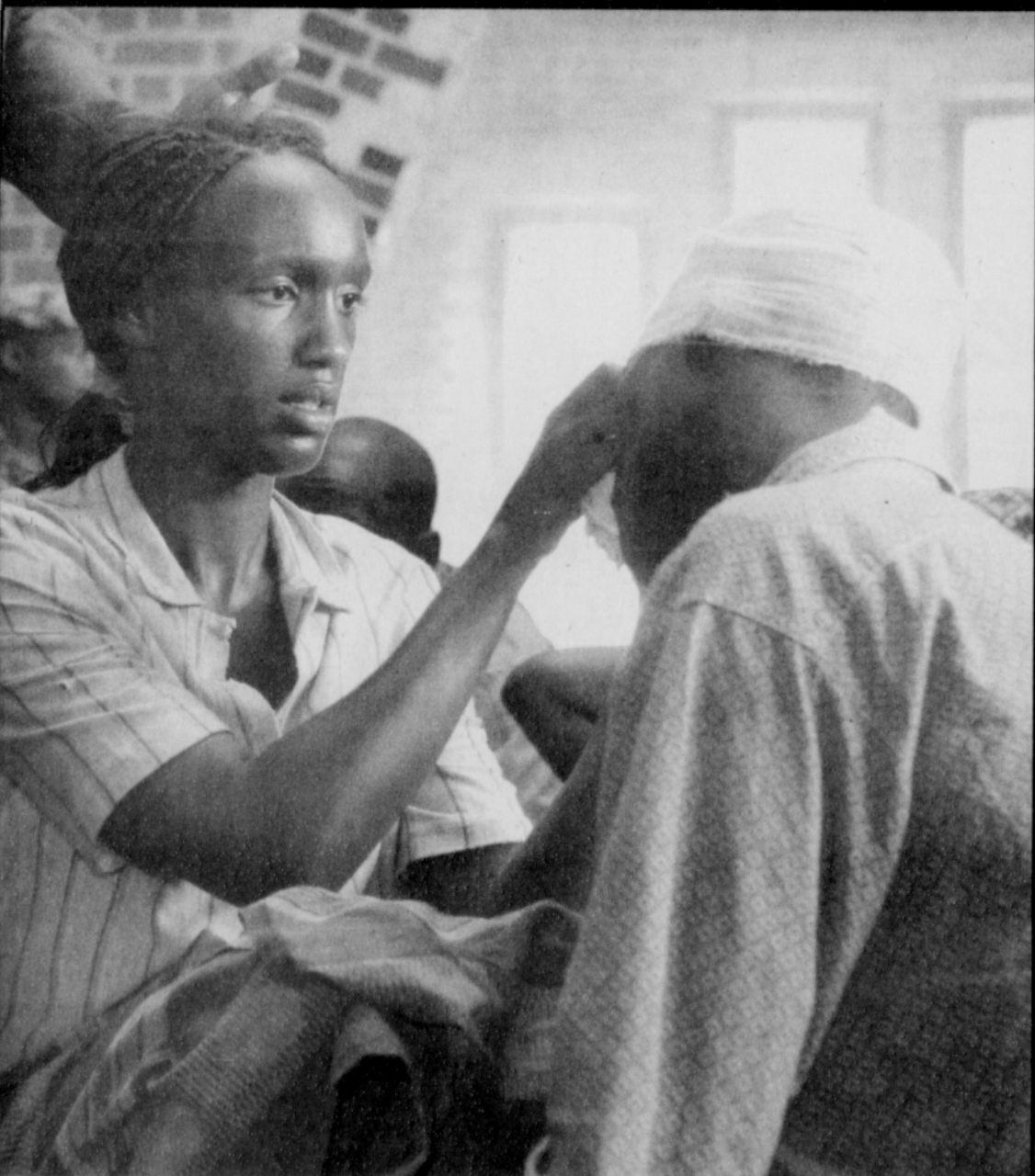
The first step we must take to strengthen Social Security is to pay back the money the Republi-

cans borrowed from Social Security to pay for their misguided policies.

Democrats stand ready to strengthen Social Security on a bipartisan basis so that all Americans get the guaranteed benefits they have earned. The President and Republicans in Congress should begin considering proposals that strengthen Social Security in a way that does not gut benefits for middle-class families and does not place retirees at the mercy of the stock market."

U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif. is minority leader in the House of Representatives.

OPB Terror and Tragedy



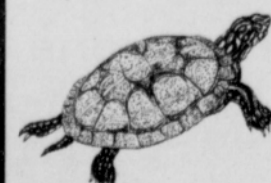
SOMETIMES IN APRIL

This drama brings to life the 1994 Rwandan genocide — how the world failed to respond and how the events tore apart one family. CNN's Jeff Greenfield moderates a discussion about genocide following the film.

Wednesday, May 4, 9pm

Channel 10 opb.org

Wetlands and Wildlife



Grand opening adventure exploring the wilds of Smith and Bybee Wetlands Natural Area

11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Sunday, May 15

Take I-5 to exit 307. Go west on North Marine Drive for 2 miles to event parking. The event also is accessible via the 40-Mile Loop Trail, 2 miles west of the MAX Expo Center stop. Bicycle corral provided. Leave pets at home.

www.metro-region.org/parks

Visit the Metro web site for event information and details about the Peninsula Crossing Family Fun Pedal and the Bluff Ride.

Event partners: eNRG Kayaking, Weir's Cyclery and Metro

What's wild about it?

Free guided kayaking, equipment provided

Painted turtle viewing and spring bird watching

Wildlife-friendly outdoor art tours

Two group bike rides to the event

Nature games and activities for all ages

Free turtle-shaped cookies

Enjoy Nature in Neighborhoods

