

OPINION

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Why Not Number One? America is behind in child care

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

The U.S. likes to be number one in most things and we boast about being the leader of the free world. Why then are we so content to lag behind many other less wealthy industrialized nations in policies protecting children? What does it tell us about what and who we value?

Among industrialized countries, the United States ranks first in military technology, military exports, defense spending, gross domestic product, in the number of millionaires and billionaires and in health technology.

But we are ranked 12th in living standards among our poorest one-fifth of children, 13th in the gap between rich and poor children, 14th in efforts to lift children out of poverty 18th in the percent of children in poverty, 22nd in low birth weight rates, and



25th in infant mortality.

The U.S. is next to last among donor nations in the proportion of GDP devoted to international aid to impoverished peoples, and next to last among 16 industrialized countries in the proportion of GDP devoted to income support for non-elderly families.

We are at the very bottom among 16 industrialized countries in the proportion of children living in poverty after all income supports are counted, and last in protecting our children against gun violence.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. children under age 15 are 9 times as likely to die in a firearm accident, 11 times as likely to commit suicide with a gun, 12 times as likely to die from gunfire, and 16 times as

likely to be murdered with a gun, as children in 25 other industrialized countries combined.

Of the 191 members of the United Nations, the United States of America and Somalia (which has no legally constituted government) are the only two nations that have failed to ratify the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Black infant mortality rates in our nation's capital exceed those of 55 nations including the Bahamas, Barbados, and Libya. Twenty-six major industrialized countries provide paid parental leave; the United States is not one of them. The United States is the only industrialized nation that does not provide guaranteed prenatal care for every pregnant woman.

Marian Wright Edelman is founder and chief executive officer of the Children's Defense Fund.

Democracy Under Threat Patriot Act renewal is not justified

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution promises Americans freedom of speech and the right to assemble peacefully and speak out against the government and its actions.

Over the years, these rights have been threatened, all in the interest of national security. Under the guise of "protecting" the American public, the FBI has routinely investigated those that dare to criticize the policies of the American government, even though they aren't accused of any crime. This monitoring not only fails to protect the American people, it also undermines our basic rights to organize and participate in the democratic process.

In the shadow of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, Congress rushed into law the Patriot Act. Among the act's provisions are the expansion of terrorism laws to include "domestic terrorism," subjecting political organizations to surveillance and accusations of criminal activity. The law also authorizes secret searches, gives law enforcement officers the right to monitor phone and Internet usage and allows them to access personal records, all with little supervision from the courts and without any proof that a crime has been committed.

Under the Act, the FBI has investigated several civil rights and antiwar protest groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union. In its files, the FBI has nearly 1,200 pages of information on the ACLU, a leading critic of President Bush and his war on terror. The ACLU is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has worked to defend the rights of people across the country for over 80 years.

This is not the first time in this nation's



history that civil rights groups have been subject to such invasive actions. During the black liberation movement, the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program (Cointelpro) focused its energy on investigating and disrupting the activities of organizations that were considered "radical." Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Black Panther Party, Malcolm X, Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam were all heavily monitored.

Cointelpro's sole purpose was to discredit these powerful voices, stifling the movement and maintaining the status quo. Thankfully, they were not successful. Though many of the groups, the Black Panther Party especially, were destabilized by the FBI's efforts, the message prevailed. Let's hope that righteousness triumphs once again.

Though the Patriot Act was signed into law at a time when the nation was still reeling from the terrorist attacks, Congress was perceptive enough not to extend the law too far into the future. Key provisions of the Act expire on Dec. 31. President Bush has already urged Congress to renew the bill, saying it doesn't violate Americans rights, but protects them. Too often in this country's history, the government has attempted to silence the voices of individuals and organizations committed to ensuring all Americans are respected members of this society. We must raise our collective voices in protest and demand the government balance the need for national security with the need for individual freedom and justice.

Judge Greg Mathis is chairman of the Rainbow PUSH-Excel Board and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

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Strengthen Asbestos Protections Complacent public not aware of dangers

BY YUGEN FARDAN RASHAD

As Portland's summer heats up a flick of the air conditioner brings cool relief. Stepping from the shower you reach for the hair dryer. You rumble through a humid attic to find a dust-covered photo album for visiting relatives. Not thinking that any of these activities may increase your exposure to asbestos.

Contact with this fiber can cause lung cancer, asthma, and mesothelioma, a deadly asbestos-related disease. And routine contact is exactly the issue at hand.

Asbestos is found in any number of commonly used household items, and construction of houses and buildings from tile floors to ceilings, roofing materials, and insulation used in attics and walls. Extreme warning should be exercised for home remodeling, and public buildings and businesses scheduled for retrofit or demolition as dust is release into the atmosphere.

Because the disease is latent, meaning a gestation period of up to 20 years typically follows illness, most people diagnosed discover they have a disease only years later. And now the U.S. Senate wants to pass a bill that, among other prob-

lems with the legislation, fails to make asbestos illegal in the United States.

One of the things SB 852 does is take the burden off the court system. What it doesn't do is provide protections to industry workers and consumers. The bill allows companies to pay into a trust fund (\$140 billion) in the form of a tax. Victims will be compensated from the fund and avoid court cases. But opponents wonder what happens when the money runs out, and how will the bill affect cases currently being tried?

One advocacy group believes bureaucracy will complicate matters because paying compensation from a trust fund is compromised as money runs out.

Judy Arndt's husband was diagnosed with a lung cancer consistent with asbestos exposure and died in 1999. Chris Hilsenback worked in the shipyards of Portland during the 1960s. Arndt says the right to a jury trial makes all the difference, a right that will disappear under SB 852. What about the housewives and sons and daughters that washed dirty laundry of factory, dock and shipyard workers exposed to the fiber?

In Oregon, between 1948 and 1993 approximately 164,040 tons of asbestos was shipped to 11 sites from Libby, Mont. From 1979 to 2001 838 people in Oregon have died from mesothelioma or asbestosis. National numbers of fatalities from this period range from 5,000 to 10,000. A study by the RAND group estimates 2,500 people are diagnosed with asbestosis each year in the U.S.

If SB 852 is to pass revisions are disparately needed regarding the amount of the trust fund, medical criterion, and consumer/worker protections. Most of all, ban asbestos use.

Make no mistake this is a very complicated document. But going to an air-conditioned public building, drying your hair, or searching your attic for a family loom isn't.

Oregon Action encourages citizens to contact the offices of Senators Gordon Smith at 503-326-7525 and Ron Wyden at 503-326-3386 to make a prudent decision informed by what is best for all Oregonians. Vote no on SB 852.

Yugen Fardan Rashad is a field representative for Oregon Action, a local non-profit group dedicated to economic and social justice.

Administrative Assistant, Council Office. \$15.51 - \$20.17 hourly. FT. Deadline: 8/15/05. Provides secretarial and administrative support to Metro Council and staff; provides back up to front counter.

Assistant Curator - Condors, Oregon Zoo. \$56,410 - \$78,410, annually. FT. Deadline: 8/11/05. Assists in overseeing the daily activities of the Animal Care Section of the Living Collections Division primarily in the Jonsson Center for Wildlife Conservation and the Zoo's Bird Section.

Catering and Restaurant Manager, Oregon Zoo. \$44,940 - \$61,100, annually. FT. Deadline: 8/9/05. Plans, organizes and oversees catered event activities; assists with the management of the food services outlets.

School Resource Specialist, Solid Waste & Recycling Department. \$42,079 - \$56,338 annually. FT. Deadline: 8/16/05. Performs public outreach and planning activities including providing technical recycling program assistance to schools (K-12), and developing and implementing waste reduction education activities for children and families.

Secretary, Planning Department. \$12.41 - \$16.59/hour. FT. Deadline: 8/11/05. Performs clerical, receptionist and secretarial duties to support department staff and office operations.



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The City of Portland is Seeking Proposals From Professional Trainers



The City of Portland is seeking proposal from professional training firms or individuals to design and implement a Citywide Employee Development Program targeted to managers and supervisors. Tasks include curriculum development, training delivery, and program evaluation for approximately 700 City of Portland employees. The anticipated cost for the services is \$150,000. **Proposals are due by August 26, 2005, 4:00pm.**

To review RFP No. BHR005 go to the City of Portland Bureau of Purchases website, www.portlandonline.com/omf/purchases. Please direct your questions to Lynda Lewis, Project Manager (503) 823-4140, llewis@ci.portland.or.us. **Minority, women and emerging small businesses are encouraged to submit proposals.**

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