

OPINION

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Change Direction with Universal Healthcare

Current plan cuts budget at expense of poor

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

House Republicans have passed a bill that, among other things, makes cuts to Medicaid, the federal government's health insurance program for the poor. President Bush praises the bill, saying these cuts will help control government spending.

However, a recent report says the cuts will result in higher co-payments and premiums for program participants, eventually forcing many people to drop out of the programs because the out-of-pocket expenses will be too high. Control-

ling government spending is a noble goal, but should achieving that goal come at the expense of the poor? Once again, it seems this administration's priorities don't include the well-being of some of our country's most vulnerable citizens.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, about 13 million low-income Americans — that's about one fifth of Medicaid recipients — would have to deal with higher co-payments for doctor's visits and other medical services. The office estimates that one-third of those affected will be children and almost half would be people living below



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the federal poverty level.

In his State of the Union address, President Bush briefly touched on several topics, including the current state of America's healthcare system. He urged Congress to address rising healthcare costs and asked small businesses to work together to secure lower insurance rates so more workers could be insured.

Keep costs under control and expand access, that's what the President wants to do. But he didn't reveal a plan for making this vision a reality. The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), however, does have a plan: a government-run health insurance program.

The organization has urged Congress to institute universal health

insurance for all Americans. The group has begun to push for legislation that requires companies to pay a specific percentage of their payroll toward the cost of health insurance. The state of Maryland has already introduced such a measure; 30 other states are expected to roll out similar programs.

The AFL-CIO is a federation of more than 50 national and international labor unions, representing nine million working people from every walk of life — teachers, musicians, firefighters, doctors and more.

President Bush insists that a government-run healthcare system isn't the way to go. He prefers a private health care system, where Americans are free to "choose." But, with the cuts to Medicaid, too

many Americans will have to choose between paying the light bill or paying for medicine. No one should be forced to make such a decision.

Americans should rally behind the AFL-CIO's push for universal healthcare. Write your local legislators and demand they support this initiative. Ask that they work to control government spending by putting and end to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, not by cutting poor people off from necessary medical services.

Our elected officials work for us and their priorities and values should mirror our own.

Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Coretta Scott King: Pillar of Strength and Bravery

She Lived Under Constant Threats

BY U.S. REP. MAXINE WATERS

I was deeply saddened by the passing of Coretta Scott King and wish to express my sympathy and my deepest condolences to her family for their loss.

Mrs. King was a pillar of strength and bravery during the civil rights movement and she remained dedicated to her late husband's dream of achieving racial equality. She suffered mightily during her husband's lifetime and lived under the constant threat of persecution, at times from her own government. It was within this framework, that she

raised four children, constantly shielding them from the violence of the times.

She served as the glue that held the family together which allowed Dr. King to have the prolific impact that he had not only on this country but the world at large. I am certain that on nights too numerous to count, it was she who answered the telephone only to hear death threats on the other side. Yet she remained a picture of grace and dignity during these tumultuous times.

Given the recent controversy surrounding the President's authorization of wiretap surveillance on American citizens, I am reminded of



I am reminded of the many injustices faced by the King family during the civil rights movement.

the many injustices faced by the King family during the civil rights movement. Dr. King was under constant surveillance by the United States government. The organization he founded, the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, was infiltrated by government agents that attempted to disrupt the good work that he and others

were doing in an effort to obliterate racism and bigotry from our nation.

The government even spied on Mrs. King and her children and sent hateful letters in the mail in an attempt to undermine her love and dedication to her husband. Through it all, Mrs. King was steadfast in her support of her husband and refused to bow

down to the injustices they faced. It is unfortunate that once again, we must confront a government that spies on its citizens and ignores an individual's right to be left alone.

I am saddened that causes that her husband worked so hard to address: poverty, affordable housing, and equal employment opportunities are issues that we continue to struggle with today. She and her husband struggled to force this country to live up to a standard of justice and democracy that we have yet to see.

I am certain that President Bush will express his sympathy regard-

ing her death. However, it is ironic that the President laid a wreath on the grave of her slain husband to honor the anniversary of his death, yet just one year earlier, his Administration filed a brief to oppose affirmative action. He has also refused to meet with the NAACP, an organization that works to carry on the legacy of Dr. King's vision. I am sure that he will have kind words for the King family, but wouldn't it be a cause for celebration if his actions matched his words?

So, on this fateful day, I honor Mrs. King for her strength, her dignity and her dedication. She will be sorely missed.

Maxine Waters is a member of Congress from California.

Black History Month Tribute to Civil Rights Champions

BY U.S. REP. JULIA CARSON

A woman of great stature has left us behind. A woman whom many leaned on for support and guidance.

Coretta Scott King left behind a legacy of compassion, love and standing for what is right. She was a phenomenal woman who was kind to all she met and worked tirelessly for those she had not. The mark she has left on America and the world is indelible and we are all better for her having lived the life she led.

However, we must remember all those



who have passed and left a mark on our lives. Today, in honor of Black History Month, I would like to pay tribute to some of those we have lost in the past year.

Over one year ago we lost Shirley Chisholm, the first African American woman to serve in Congress. Ms.

Chisholm served honorably for seven terms and was never one to back down from a fight. A founding member of the Congressional Black Caucus and the first viable African American and female candi-

date for President, she won 152 delegates to the 1972 Democratic Convention.

Ossie Davis was the consummate American entertainer and a paragon of integrity. While he spent many years of his life as an entertainer he also served our country as an activist working alongside the likes of Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X and Jesse Jackson.

Rosa Parks, when she sat down the whole world stood up to change America. If it were not for her, the Mother of the Modern Day Civil Rights Movement, we may never have heard of Martin Luther King Jr. Rosa Parks

marched to a drumbeat in pursuit of liberty, in pursuit of equality and in pursuit of justice for all people.

Johnnie Cochran served as an attorney to the stars. He worked in court not only on behalf of African American entertainers and athletes, but championed the cause of everyday people. He understood the law and worked hard to make sure his clients were served fairly by the courts, often taking cases in which police brutality was a factor.

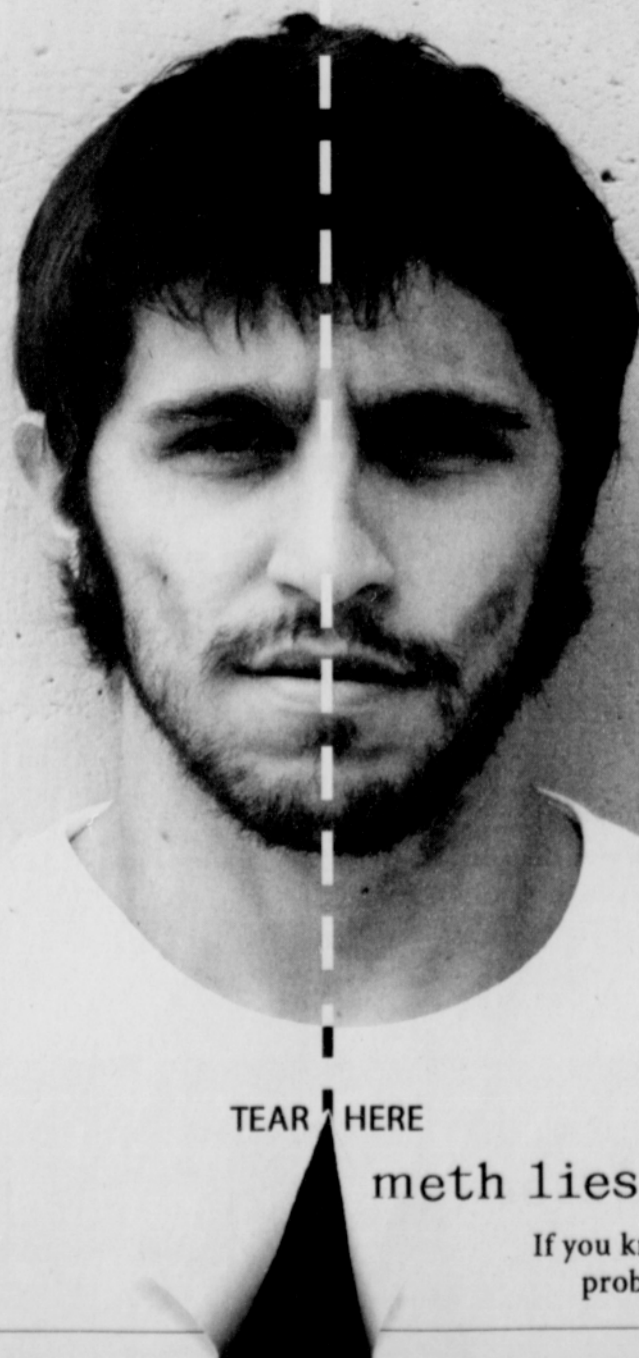
Dr. C. Delores Tucker, starting in 1971, served as the first African American Secretary of State in Pennsylvania. During this

time she worked to appoint more women and African Americans to boards and commissions. She led the fight to move the voting age to 18 from 21, as well as started voter registration by mail. As a younger woman she participated in the 1965 March on Selma.

These are but a few of those who left us this past year. I urge you to take some time to look over one of these biographies this month. Let us never forget the sacrifices of those who came before us.

Congresswoman Julia Carson is a member of the Congressional Black Caucus from Indiana.

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Letter to the Editor Coretta Scott King

It is symbolic that Coretta Scott King died on the 141st Anniversary of the 13th amendment to the Constitution, which abolished slavery.

The passage of this amendment by two votes during the Civil War reminds us that the fight against racial discrimination and for human dignity has been a pitched battle throughout our history.

Coretta Scott King was in the forefront of the revolution of progress and heartbreak. She will be remembered, not just as the widow of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., but as a woman of great courage and dignity in her own right, whose role in the civil rights movement is only now being fully appreciated.

I join with the nation in extending condolences to the King family and in honoring the life of Coretta Scott King.

U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, Oregon Congressman from Portland