

OPINION

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Zero Tolerance for Wrongdoing

Build a stronger voter-owned system

BY CAROL CUSHMAN

The League of Women Voters of Portland is committed to creating a more open and fair system for city elections, but also a level playing field with strict and meaningful safeguards against fraud.

Emilie Boyles violated the strict spending rules of the Voter-Owned elections system and we are committed to learning from these start-up issues to build a stronger system moving forward.

The League of Women Voters of Portland and the grassroots coalition behind Voter-Owned Elections were the first to call for a full and swift investigation into the Boyles campaign. The penalties levied against the Boyles campaign should send a clear

message that if you violate the system, there are harsh consequences.

The League of Women Voters has zero tolerance for wrongdoing. Our coalition will continue to be watchdogs over this fair, open and accountable system, one that was supported and advocated for by a diverse coalition of grassroots organizations representing tens of thousands of Portlanders.

I'm encouraged by the auditor's quick and strict response to spending abuse by the Boyles campaign as well as careful review and denial of Lucinda Tate's certification due to rule violations.

Carol Cushman is the president of the League of Women Voters of Portland.



Massachusetts Moves Toward Universal Health Coverage

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

With the rising costs of healthcare, it is becoming more and more difficult for many Americans to access necessary medical services. Realizing that the U.S. has a bona fide crisis on our hand and with no help coming from the federal government, the Massachusetts State Legislature has approved a bill that would require all residents to buy health insurance.

Supported by the state's Republican Governor and reported Presidential hopeful Mitch Romney, the bill would require all uninsured adults to purchase some kind of

insurance policy by summer 2007 or face a fine.

With this bill, Massachusetts is positioned to become the first state to provide nearly universal health care coverage to its residents. While this is a great accomplishment on the part of the Massachusetts, the state shouldn't shoulder this responsibility alone. The federal government needs to follow Massachusetts' lead and provide universal healthcare coverage for all Americans.

President Bush says that a gov-



Past studies by the Congressional Budget Office have shown that a universal health care system would save the country hundreds of billions of dollars each year.

ernment-run healthcare system isn't the way to go. He prefers a private health care system, where Americans are free to "choose." Unfortunately, most Americans are forced to choose between food and medicine, between heat and a trip to

the doctor. There are about 45 million Americans without health insurance and, while many of them are poor, a significant number are working class people that simply can't afford to have the fees required by their employer-provided plan deducted from their paychecks.

Under Massachusetts' plan, residents of the state would be able to choose from a wide selection of policies, private and government subsidized, that would accommo-

date a range of income levels.

Low-income residents wouldn't have to pay a premium and would only be responsible for small fees for visits to the emergency room and doctor's office. If residents fail to purchase the required insurance, they will still be treated - and will face their fines later.

The healthcare lobby is very powerful and has been able to convince or pay policymakers to believe that universal healthcare coverage would be too expensive. The truth is that past studies by the Congressional Budget Office have shown that a universal health care system would save the country hundreds of billions of dollars each year.

Currently the U.S. spends more on health care than any other industrialized nation - and all of those countries provide health insurance to all of their citizens!

The unlimited spending power of the healthcare lobby shouldn't dictate whether or not Americans have adequate healthcare coverage. Write your local legislators and demand they push for universal healthcare. As candidates gear up for the next election cycle, research and support those that support a universal system. The U.S. government should serve the needs of its citizens, not corporate interests. Your vote can make sure the message is heard loud and clear.

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

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Letters to the Editor

Jefferson Closure Talk

An Oregonian editorial last week suggested Jefferson should be closed because it is the high school with the smallest number of students. This reasoning fails to recognize that the Jefferson attendance area actually has the largest number of high school students living within its boundaries. The numbers are Jefferson-1,950; Marshall-1,864; Wilson-1,697; Grant-1,622; Madison-1,524; Franklin-1,476; Roosevelt-1,395; Cleveland-1,379; and Lincoln-1,323.

For years, the federal No Child Left Behind law and Portland Public Schools policies have encouraged students to transfer out of Jefferson.

The school's design team members and parents repeatedly asked PPS to get feedback from neighborhood families during the recent Jefferson redesign process to determine what programs and other changes were needed at Jefferson to retain and attract more neighborhood students. But it never happened.

So, rather than adopting changes that will increase student enrollment, PPS sealed Jefferson's fate by approving narrowly focused programs (two single gender programs, and two technology-based programs) which will appeal to a smaller fraction of the neighborhood students and result in further declines in enrollment. Only 34 students have applied for those programs so far.

Statements in the district's reconfiguration proposal (which are being parroted by the Oregonian and others) suggest that we can expect a closure announcement in 2009 for Jefferson and even earlier for Marshall, Madison, or Roosevelt.

Those statements indicate to me that the district and others are banking on the failure of schools that serve a higher percentage of low income and minority students.

Nicole Breedlove
North Portland

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OHSU Shield Unfair

OHSU privatized its doctors so they could double their pensions. More egregiously, with the protection of the Oregon Tort Claims Act, the OHSU Medical Group solidified its immunity from malpractice liability while shamelessly concealing its negligent doctors.

Adding to the serious problems of patient safety and rising costs, the absence of accountability makes the prognosis grim for our state's health care system.

I support the legal challenges to tort immunity by Ken Ackerman and others, as I think that OHSU physicians now enjoy an irresponsible shield of corporate protection.

While this discrepancy may be unfair to non-OHSU physicians, I am more concerned about my patients, who I may need to refer to OHSU. They deserve full constitutionally guaranteed protections of our civil justice system.

I pray that a jury will level the playing field for all patients and physicians, helping to heal our health care system.

Tom Sadoris II, M.D.
Northeast Portland

Supporting Foxworth

Without question Derrick Foxworth has been the best role model for African Americans in the Rose City's 160-year history.

As Northeast Precinct Commander and later as Police Chief, Foxworth was cool, dignified, reasonable and sensible.

He did much to heal the rift between the police and the public; and between the white community and the black community.

Let us hope it will not take another 160 years to find a role model as good as the one shattered by one newspaper story.

Charles E. Long
Northeast Portland