

OPINION

Opinion articles do not necessarily reflect or represent the views of The Portland Observer

Letter to the Editor

Hallmark Church

I was saddened to hear about the recent fire that devastated the Morning Star Baptist Church. The church has been a hallmark of the northeast Portland community for the past several decades and has impacted many Portland lives.

The loss of this historic and special building has affected us all as a community, yet I have faith that the church lives on and will continue to flourish for decades to come.

Tom Potter
Mayor of Portland



SO FAR, I'VE FISHED OUT THE REMAINS OF TWO KORANS, ONE BILL OF RIGHTS, A GENEVA CONVENTION, A HABEAS CORPUS.. YOU GUYS EVER HEARD OF TOILET PAPER?

Subscribe! 503-288-0033
Fill Out & Send To:

The Portland Observer

Attn: Subscriptions, PO Box 3137, Portland OR 97208
subscriptions are just \$60 per year
(please include check with this subscription form)

NAME: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ ADDRESS: _____

or email subscriptions@portlandobserver.com

The Portland Observer Established 1970
USPS 959-680
4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Portland, OR 97211

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PUBLISHER: Charles H. Washington
EDITOR: Michael Leighton
PUBLIC RELATIONS: Mark Washington
CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Paul Neufeldt
OFFICE MANAGER: Kathy Linder
REPORTER: Sarah Blount

Send address changes to Portland Observer, PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208

Subscriptions are \$60.00 per year
503-288-0033 FAX 503-288-0015
news@portlandobserver.com
subscriptions@portlandobserver.com
ads@portlandobserver.com
classifieds@portlandobserver.com

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 1996 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED.

The Portland Observer—Oregon's Oldest Multicultural Publication—is a member of the National Newspaper Association—Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc. New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association, Serving Portland and Vancouver.

Diversity and Power in Congress

Influential predecessors paved way

BY MARC H. MORIAL

This year's Black History Month arrives just as African-American lawmakers are expected to have their greatest influence to date within the hallowed halls of the U.S. Congress.

Not only did Americans last November vote for a sea change in Washington, they also paved the way for one of the most diverse House chambers in history as well as House leaderships.

Two of the founding members of the Congressional Black Caucus, New York Rep. Charles Rangel and Michigan Rep. John Conyers - have become the chairs of two of the Capitol Hill's most influential panels - the House Ways and Means Committee and the House Judiciary committees. Mississippi Rep. Bennie Thompson has taken the reins of the House Homeland Security Committee, while California Rep. Juanita Millender-McDonald is leading the House Administration Committee.

African Americans officially secured the right to vote and serve in the U.S. Congress through the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments

that were ratified following the Civil War. Under the Reconstruction Act, Congress dissolved governments in formerly Confederate states, required them to forfeit their representation in Washington and to ensure citizenship rights for blacks, who were the majority population in several states and had aligned with the party of President Abraham Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation.



In 1870, Hiram Rhodes Revels of Mississippi was the first black elected to the U.S. Senate, where he served the last year of the unexpired term of Jefferson Davis. That paved the way for the election of 23 other blacks to the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate during Reconstruction.

The disputed presidential election of 1876 quickly reversed the fortunes of black officeholders and voters in the South, however. As part of the Compromise of 1877, Republicans agreed to stay out of the South's affairs as long as Democrats conceded to the election of Rutherford B. Hayes as president and agreed to respect the political rights of blacks.

Southern Democrats regained their power in state legislatures and took steps to disenfranchise black voters through literacy tests, poll taxes and white primaries. North

Carolinian George Henry White served as the last black representative elected under Reconstruction until 1901.

It took nearly three decades for another black - Republican Oscar De Priest of Chicago -- to win election and another 30 years for one to win a committee chairmanship - at least in the House. And nearly another three decades for a black to become chairman of a committee as powerful as the House Ways and Means Committee or House Judiciary Committee.

The Ways and Means chairmanship is a long time coming for Rangel, who threatened to retire if Republicans continued to control the institution in 2007. His patience won him one of the most coveted chairmanships, putting him in charge of writing the nation's tax laws. Ironically, he stands on the shoulders of the man he defeated to win election to the House back in 1970 -- Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., the second black to lead a House committee.

It is my hope that Rangel and Conyers as well as the Thompson and McDonald will match the output of their predecessors as our new Congress attempts to move our country into a new direction. It is also my hope that we see a black Appropriations Committee chair in the not-too-distant future.

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of the National Urban League

It all started on a bus



Rosa Parks

On December 1, 1955, in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks took the first step toward bus desegregation. This African-American woman chose arrest rather than relinquishing her bus seat simply because of the color of her skin. Her stand against racism inspired a boycott which has improved all our lives.

TRIMET

See where it takes you.

503-238-RIDE • trimet.org

Going in the Wrong Direction

Proposed federal budget would increase disparities

BY JANET BAUER

The president's proposed budget for 2008 has the wrong priorities for Oregon and America. It would worsen the problem of stagnant living standards and would increase disparities in health care, housing, child care and income.

Oregon is beginning to chart a path to address these challenges; the president's proposal would mean a step in the wrong direction.

At a time when 116,000 Oregon children under 19 lack health insurance, 169,000 Oregon families can't always afford enough food, and 230,000 Oregon families pay more than half of their income for rent, action is required to help working families meet basic needs and give their children a decent start in life.

Yet the president's budget weakens vital services like health care to help pay for the President's tax cuts that provide windfall gains to the very wealthy, while saddling future generations with large debts.

For example, the president's budget fails to adequately fund the

The president's budget weakens vital services like health care to help pay for the President's tax cuts.

children's health insurance program, placing health coverage for many low-income children at risk and undermining Oregon's efforts to cover all uninsured children.

In addition, the president proposes roughly \$26 billion in cuts to Medicaid over five years, further jeopardizing Oregon's and other states' efforts to provide health care to the poor, the elderly, the disabled, and working families.

The president's budget also cuts \$123 million from the 2006 level in federal funding that comes to Oregon for key priorities such as the environment, law enforcement, transportation, health care (other than Medicaid), and child care. State lawmakers will be hard pressed to

absorb these cuts.

Oregon's congressional delegation must take a different approach and help create a budget that reflects Oregon's true values.

Congress should invest in critical priorities like children's health insurance, food stamps for people who struggle to put food on the table, child care for working parents, and affordable housing.

By making the right choices, Congress can craft a budget that meets Oregon's priorities while charting a more fiscally responsible course than the president has laid out.

Janet Bauer is a policy analyst for the Oregon Center for Public Policy.