

# OPINION

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## Back to the Issues that Matter Appeal for children's health

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

Making sure the healthcare needs of our nation's children are met, regardless of their family's income, should be a top priority.

As such, many of the country's governors are raising their collective voices and standing up to the White House, demanding that the national Children's Health Insurance Program not only maintains its current funding, but receives additional monies.

The coalition is made up of both Democrats and Republicans, the type of nonpartisan demonstration that is needed to help redirect the country's priorities back to the is-

...sues that matter.

During a White House meeting, while President Bush was discussing the war, the governors asked him to provide additional federal dollars for the Children's Health Insurance Program, which provides health insurance for children from uninsured working families.

Initially, the states were encouraged by the administration to expand their programs to include parents and even some childless adults. Having done so, many governors now say they aren't receiving the support they need to keep the programs running.

Fourteen states, including Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, Mississippi and Wisconsin will run out of the federal money allotted for the program by September. When presented with this information, a White House staffer told the states they should have managed the money better. Interesting, especially coming from an administration that has mismanaged and wasted \$10 billion in Iraq. This does not include spending on the Iraq War, which has exceeded the \$500 billion mark.

The federal government currently spends \$5 billion a year on the Children's Health Insurance Program. States are facing a total shortfall of \$700 million this year



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and expect more than a \$13 billion shortage from 2008 to 2012. The money that was wasted in Iraq could cover the majority of this deficit.

If the U.S. were to redirect the funds spent on the war in Iraq into the healthcare program, we could ensure the country's children had access to quality medical care, whenever they needed it. The funds that would be generated if the government repealed the tax incentives for the wealthy could also serve as an additional revenue source for funding the

insurance program.

Data shows that the concentration of wealth among the richest Americans has grown significantly over the last several years. The growth is directly related to several tax incentives the current administration has provided the wealthy.

By helping the rich grow richer, Bush has, in effect, stalled the growth of many of the country's much needed social programs. The millions the wealthy get to save under these cuts could be put to better use.

The nation's governors have

taken a critical first step in helping to move this country's attention back towards the needs of the average American. By putting aside their partisan differences, they've shown that the health and well-being of America's children is more important than political affiliation. Let's hope more policymakers follow suit. And let's hope the White House pays attention.

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

## Giving Back in good times and in bad

Looking beyond ourselves

BY JOYCE FURMAN

Now is a perfect time to look beyond ourselves and recog-



Feeling good about doing good is something longtime philanthropists know first hand. For those of you who give for the first time, your contribution or "investment" will indeed have a positive impact.

The effects of giving are profound and immeasurable: discovering a sense of well-being, inspiring family members and friends, becoming more knowledgeable about a cause or a group, helping to create a better way of life for those in need and passing along your philanthropic values to all you encounter.

Your generosity also helps your community thrive. If you care about the quality of life of your community and the legacy it will leave for generations to come, giving back is the first step toward helping to secure a healthy future for our children and grandchildren.

Giving back meaningfully, and often, doesn't need to be a challenge. Spend some time reflecting, and then resolve to express yourself by giving back in 2007.

Every single day of the year allows each of us to embrace the opportunity to give in ways that count.

Joyce Furman is a founding member of New Avenues for Youth and is on the board of the Oregon Community Foundation.

nize the needs of the less fortunate and share our good fortune with them. Even during the best of times and through the recent generosity of holiday giving, nonprofits continue to need our help—every day. Charitable giving always seems most important in the hard times of recession, but so many needs in Oregon continue despite the swings in the economy. And when the economy is strong, we all have the opportunity to give more and to really make a difference in the community issue we care about the most.

Ask yourself what truly interests you and satisfies your spirit. Do your passions lie in education, youth mentoring, health care, arts in the schools, the environment, college scholarships, volunteer work, home meals for the elderly, rural libraries, or the homeless?

A charitable organization such as The Oregon Community Foundation is one of many excellent resources that can help identify your special interests and make it easier for you to get involved.



## Veterans Treated Badly

Editor's note: U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., issued the following statement in response to reports of poor conditions and treatment at Walter Reed and other Veterans medical facilities:

I am appalled at the mistreatment of our active duty military and veterans, who have put their lives on the line for our country.

What's happened at Walter Reed is symptomatic of the mismanagement that has plagued the

administration's handling of the Iraq war from the start. Their failure to support our troops and deal with the basics - equipment, training, adequate medical facilities, and treatment of the wounded - is yet another example of misplaced priorities and incompetent leadership.

It also shows what happens when the Legislative Branch shirks its responsibility of providing necessary oversight. The new Democratic Congress is finally addressing not only the treatment of our military and veterans, but the underlying problem of a mishandled war.

## Letter to the Editor

### Anti-Troop: I Don't Think So

At what point does common sense prevail over a political agenda? Republicans are calling a proposed plan to protect the men and women in our armed forces anti-troop! I don't think so.

Supporting the troops means protecting them from being sent into the middle of a civil war inadequately equipped and under-prepared.

We need legislation to ensure adequate training, support, and equipment for our troops—and remember, this simple requirement would also make George Bush's reckless escalation impossible.

Service members in Iraq and Afghanistan have experienced shortages of force-protection equipment, including up-armored vehicles, electronic countermeasure devices, crew-served weapons and communications equipment.

The military has been borrowing gear from units stationed in the United States, reducing their ability to respond in case of other military threats around the world.

The Arkansas National Guard's 39th Brigade Combat Team, sched-

uled to return to Iraq next year, is 600 rifles short for its 3,500 soldiers.

Soldiers of the 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division had so little time between deployments to Iraq they had to cram more than a year's worth of training into four months. Two army brigades heading to Iraq due to the escalation are skipping their counterinsurgency training session at the Army's premier training range.

Our injured troops from Iraq and Afghanistan also are not being adequately treated:

Soldiers recovering at the Walter Reed Army Medical Hospital, a mere five miles from the White House, were found living in rooms infested with mold, soiled carpet and cockroaches.

More than 30 percent of all soldiers meet the criteria for a mental disorders related to emotional problems from deployment stress. Military health providers are straining under the pressure and are unable to meet the psychological health needs of our soldiers and their families.

David White  
Northwest Portland

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