# UPINION

Opinion articles do not necessarily represent the views of the Portland Observer. We welcome reader essays, photos and story ideas. Submit to news@portlandobserver.com.

# Letters to the Editor

### **Unworkable Model**

Thank you for covering the controversy over House Bill 3274 (Medical Marijuana Debate, March 18 issue) which would establish a state monopoly medical marijuana garden.

This bill points out a big problem with the current medical marijuana law - lots of patients can't obtain the medicine, but it proposes an unworkable model.

First, pharmacies can't dispense marijuana under federal law and second, a state monopoly will produce miserable results there are many examples of this. Most importantly any effort to recriminalize medical marijuana patients, as the bill does, would be an unbelievably expensive boondoggle.

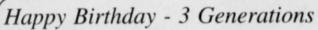
There is another proposal to create a regulated medical marijuana supply system and that's Initiative Petition 28, which is also introduced as Senate Bill 812. This proposal creates stateregulated, nonprofit medical marijuana dispensaries and produc-

The Obama administration has indicated it will not prosecute such nonprofits if they follow state law. Initiative 28 will get patients the medical marijuana they need in a highly controlled setting. But it won't recriminalize the patients who can produce their own medicine.

Initiative 28 will also generate millions of dollars in revenue for the health department, and create a regulated program to assist indigent patients in obtaining their medicine.

We hope the Legislature will create a workable medical marijuana supply system. If not we will continue petitioning to put Initiative 28 on the November 2010 ballot. We already have 30,000 signatures and polls show this initiative will pass.

John Sajo Director, Voter Power







Rose L Trice 79 years old

Miracle Trice-Barber 9 years old

Love from your family Thank you

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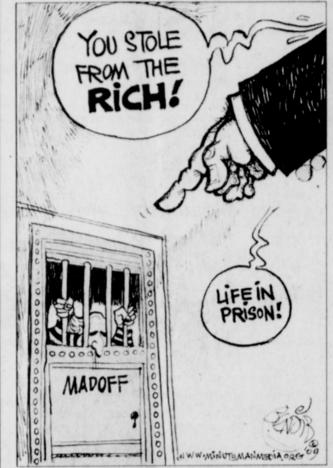


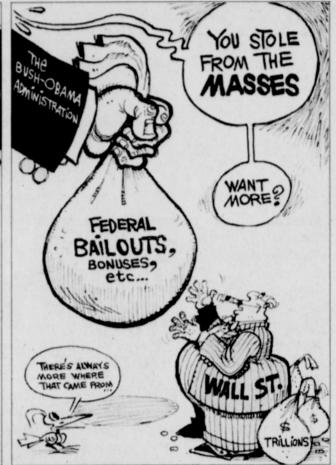
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## DNA Testing should be a Right

#### Let's hope the Supreme

Court agrees

BY MARC H. MORIAL Imagine being con-

victed of a crime you didn't commit and languishing in prison for 11 years until new DNA evidence proved your innocence. That's just what happened to Ronald Cotton whose story was recently told

on CBS' 60 Minutes. Cotton's accuser, Jennifer Thompson, was absolutely certain she correctly identified the man who broke into ment and raped her on the night of July 28, 1984. But she

was wrong.

Her mistake produced more

nal who remained free. What finally turned the tide the lucky ones. in Cotton's case was the scito use to prove his client's in 1985 after being wrongly

convicted people are now be- fore DNA testing and the jail-

of eyewitness flaws, but also

inmate later cleared his name. According to the Innobecause of the cence Project, a national non-

refusal by a profit legal clinic dedicated to small number exonerating innocent people of states to al- through DNA testing, there low DNA evi- are thousands of prisoners dence to be desperate to have their cases used to prove evaluated.

There is no good reason to deny prisoners the right to DNA testing if it can prove their innocence, identify the guilty and prevent a her Burlington , N.C. apart- tragic miscarriage of justice.

than one other victim of that utes report, there have been forgotten and have used up that's what the court should brutal crime - Ronald Cotton, 233 people exonerated by all legal avenues for relief. do. an innocent man who was DNA evidence across the The hope they have is that sentenced to life in prison, country. More than 75 percent biological evidence from their on the rule of law, there is no and several other women who of them were convicted bewere raped by the real crimi- cause of mistaken identity.

Ronald Cotton was one of

innocence. The real crime is identified by a rape victim. In

According to the 60 Min- row. Most of them are poor, oners that right. We believe cases still exists and can be subjected to DNA testing.

Dallas County District Attorney, Craig Watson, the first Timothy Cole of Lubbock, African American District Atence of DNA testing which Texas was not so fortunate. torney in Texas, has made this Cotton's lawyer was allowed He was sentenced to 25 years issue a centerpiece of his work.

Watson believes the DA's the National Urban League.

that hundreds of wrongly 1999, Cole died in prison be- job is not only about prosecuting the guilty, it is also hind bars, not only because house confession of another about protecting the inno-

That's why, in 2007 he established the Conviction Integrity Unit, the first division of its kind in the country dedicated to overturning wrongful convictions and securing the release of men and women who have been wrongfully imprisoned in Texas. His efforts have helped secure the release of more than 19 wrongfully convicted prisoners thus far.

Unfortunately, six states still deny prisoners access to DNA testing: Alaska, Alabama, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Mississippi and South Dakota. The Supreme Court is now deliberating an Alaska Some of them are on death case that could grant all pris-

> In a nation that prides itself good reason to deny prisoners the right to DNA testing if it can prove their innocence, identify the guilty and prevent a tragic miscarriage of

Marc H. Morial is president and chief executive officer of

## Inspirational Leadership Takes Initiative

#### New Mexico repeals the death penalty

BY BENJAMIN TODD JEALOUS

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson and the state Legislature made the right ing capital punishment. The derstand that capital punishour nation well.

We congratulate our

growing conthe death penalty has failed the people of New Mexico.

They are joining millions of decision last week in repeal- citizens nationwide who ungovernor's inspirational lead- ment risks executing the inership is an exemplar of the nocent, is unfairly applied, intersection of morality and fails victims' families and law wise governance that serves enforcement and wastes scarce taxpayer dollars.

NAACP New Mexico State said, "As one whose hus-Conference and Sante Fe band and mother-in-law have Branch that worked tirelessly both died as the victims of to support the repeal. Their murder assassination, I stand efforts helped result in a firmly and unequivocally opstrong bipartisan vote in the posed to the death penalty for enable New Mexico to use the officer of the NAACP.

New Mexico those convicted of capital of- savings gained from ending upheld by legalized murder." Coretta's prescient quote

> presaged a growing chorus of deep concern about the death penalty across the country.

In this time of fiscal crisis, it is more important than ever to make smart choices when it comes to meeting the needs of our citizens. By repealing the death penalty, New As Coretta Scott King once Mexico can now focus resources on the important issue of providing tangible as-. sistance to the families of low. murder victims.

legislature re- fenses. An evil deed is not the death penalty to provide redeemed by an evil deed of a reparation award to children retaliation. Justice is never of murder victims, provide sensus that advanced in the taking of a services and programs to murhuman life. Morality is never der victims' families, create a murder victim family services fund and require employers to provide leave to crime victims to attend judicial proceedings.

Gov. Richardson and the state legislature are to be applauded for their moral courage. In doing so, they light a candle for smart crime policies for our entire nation. We sincerely hope that their enlightened leadership will clear a path for other states to fol-

Benjamin Todd Jealous is Additional measures will president and chief executive

#### The Hortland Phserver Established 1970

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PUBLISHER: Charles H. Washington EDITOR: Michael Leighton DISTRIBUTION MANAGER: Mark Washington

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Paul Neufeldt POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Portland Observer,

PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208

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