

OPINION

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Home Ownership Slipping Away Troubled loans need fixing

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS



Owning a home is a key part of the "American Dream" and critical step in creating wealth; even low- and moderate-income homeowners are able to benefit from their investment.

Unfortunately, with the recent crash of both the housing and financial markets, fewer Americans own homes than they did just a few years ago. The biggest declines were among minorities, with blacks and Latinos homeownership rates falling at a rate much faster than whites.

A recent study by the Pew Hispanic Center shows that the rate of homeownership for all American households dropped from 69 percent to just under 68 percent over a four year period. However, African-American homeownership fell two percentage points during that same

four year period, while homeownership for native born Latinos dropped nearly three points. For whites, the decline was much smaller, around 1 percent.

Why is minority homeownership dropping at a faster rate? Many experts believe it is because black and Latinos were the recipients of subprime mortgages. A subprime mortgage is designed for borrowers who have either missed payments on a debt or have been late with payments. Mortgage lenders charge a higher interest rate to make up for any potential losses from customers who may run into trouble with their loans. Many of the subprime mortgages included interest only loans where, for the first year or so of the mortgage, the buyer paid only the interest, resulting in a

much lower payment. Later, when the payment went up and buyers weren't able to make it, they ran into trouble. Additionally, many lenders, fueled by greed, relaxed their lending

standards, allowing buyers to purchase far more home than they could actually afford. Long before the market meltdowns, both the mortgage and

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financial industries were well aware that these lending practices would result in an economic downturn. Despite this knowledge, they continued with business as usual...more concerned with profits than the buyer or the health of the economy.

Now, millions of Americans are watching that elusive "Ameri-

can Dream" slip away. More than 1.3 million homes have been lost to foreclosure since the market meltdown began in August 2007. Last month, one of every 374 U.S. homes received a foreclosure filing.

Banks need to aggressively work to keep buyers who have defaulted on their loans in their homes. The media has reported on the efforts of some banks to work with buyers by refinancing loans and negotiating payments.

However, a universal push, embraced by the entire industry, must be happen to not only save the futures of so

many families but to also strengthen our economy and to keep communities financially stable. Since minorities are the hardest hits, banking institutions must increase their presence in those communities, offering financial literacy classes to homeowners, sitting down with buyers before they get into trouble with their loan.

It's going to take time to fix the housing market and to rebuild the financial sector. But both industries can work together on behalf of all of those homeowners who fell victim to their greed-driven practices.



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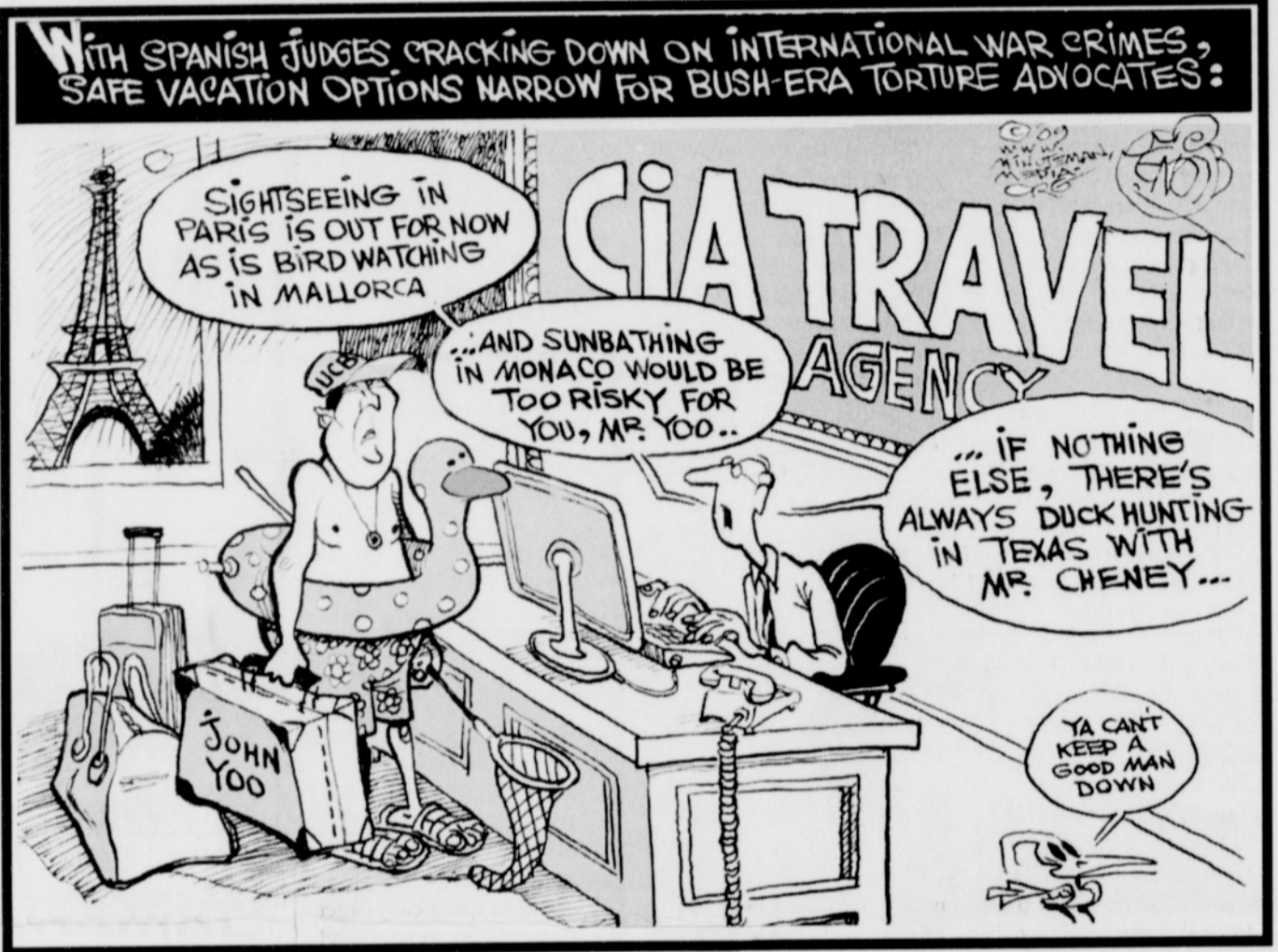
For a complete class listing & schedule, or to register call 503-281-8596 or visit our website at www.thehealthchallenge.org

ORIENTATION

Sunday, May 17, 2009 at 3:30pm

LOCATION

Community Learning Center
4212 NE Prescott St · Portland



Deceptive Credit Card Tactics

Restore consumer rights

BY SEN. JEFF MERKLEY

As a young man working for the Secretary of Defense in Washington D.C., I applied for a MasterCard and was declined because I didn't have enough credit history. So, I got an American Express card, paid off my balance every month as required, waited a few years to build up credit, applied again, and was approved.

The way our credit system used to work, credit card companies took into account a va-

riety of financial factors to lower their risk and ensure that people weren't approved for loans that they couldn't afford to pay back.

Now the credit card industry seems to be aimed at taking advantage of working families. Banks are marketing cards on college campuses in an effort to hook our young people on credit. Instead of helping keep people out of debt, they'll approve almost anyone for a card - even small children or the family dog.

Extra charges for late payments, ridiculous overdraft fees, and fees for paying your bill by check or online are all tactics that credit card companies use to strip wealth from Americans in bits and pieces.

One of the worst of these schemes is "universal default,"



through which credit card companies can alter your interest rates at any time, for any reason. If your credit score changes at all, which happens to all of us for a variety of reason, they can hike up your interest rate to 29 percent or more, even if you are current on your credit card. In a bait and switch move, the companies offer a low introductory rate they can - and do - change whenever they want.

To restore rights to American consumers and rein in these irresponsible lending practices, I've co-sponsored the Credit Card Accountability, Responsibility and Disclosure Act (Credit CARD Act). This bill will end these abusive practices, crack-down on marketing to young people, and ensure that the terms of credit card agreements

are fully disclosed instead of hidden in fine print.

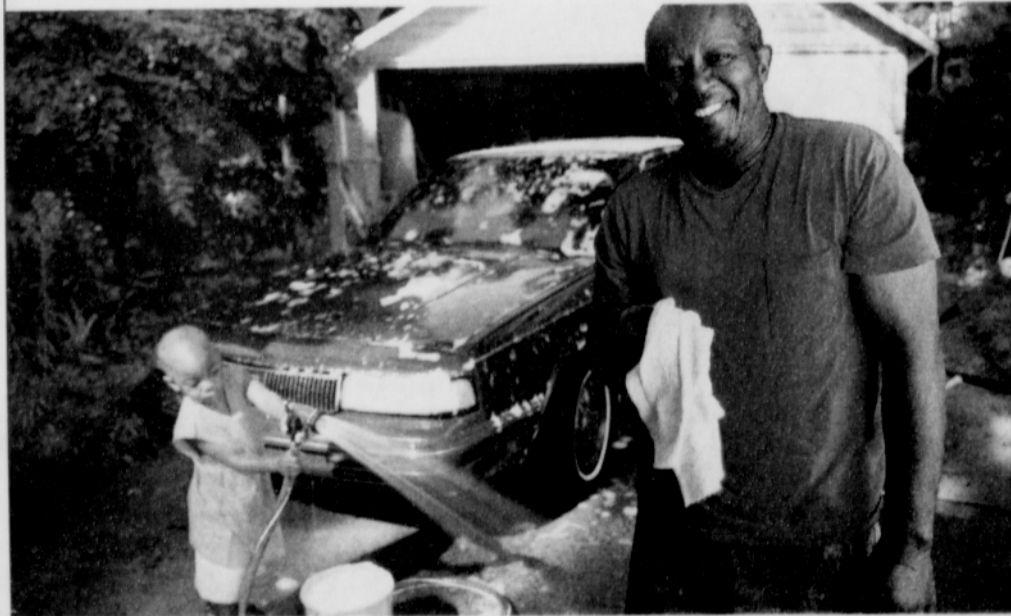
The Credit CARD Act is up for debate on the Senate floor. I'll be working hard to generate support for this important bill and restore fairness for American consumers.

If you have a credit card story about outrageous fees or deceptive practices, please consider sharing it. You can share your story by visiting my website at merkley.senate.gov or calling my office in Portland at 503 326-3386 or Washington, D.C. at 202 224-3753.

I'm encouraged by President Obama's strong statement of support for credit card reform and it is my hope that there will be a bill on his desk in the coming weeks.

Jeff Merkley was elected U.S. Senator for Oregon in November. He is a former state senator from Portland.

Don't sit still for arthritis pain.



Arthritis hurts. Physical activity can help. Studies show that 30 minutes of moderate physical activity three or more days a week can help you move more easily. You can break it up, too. Start with a walk. Later, rake leaves or wash the car. Keep it up, and in four to six weeks you could be hurting less and enjoying life more.

Physical Activity. The Arthritis Pain Reliever.

Call the Arthritis Foundation at 503-245-5695 for information about exercise and aquatics classes near you.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION • THE ARTHRITIS FOUNDATION • THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES



THE SPINAL COLUMN™

An ongoing series of questions and answers about America's natural healing profession.

Part 20. It's Just Your Nerves: Chiropractic's answer to an age old answer

Q: I have been to see a number of doctors about my headaches. The most recent one said it was, "just nerves." Can Chiropractic help?

A: Your doctor was probably right. Chances are it is your nerves. An independent research team recently announced that between 90% and 95% of all headaches were due to pressure on the nerves. Your doctor was probably talking about emotional nerves. The research team, of course, was talking about the nervous system.

When pressure or irritation gets on nerves (scientifically known as subluxation), tension in muscles will result. In the neck, this tension will work its way up to the skull. Next, blood flow will be altered. Before you know it, you will have another throbbing headache. In Chiropractic, we work with reducing

subluxations, releasing the irritation from the nerve fibers. Muscles can relax. The body will no longer send a message of pain and your headaches will be gone for good! If you're tired of hearing that your problem is "just nerves," call us today. We've got the answer to the "just nerves" answer.

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