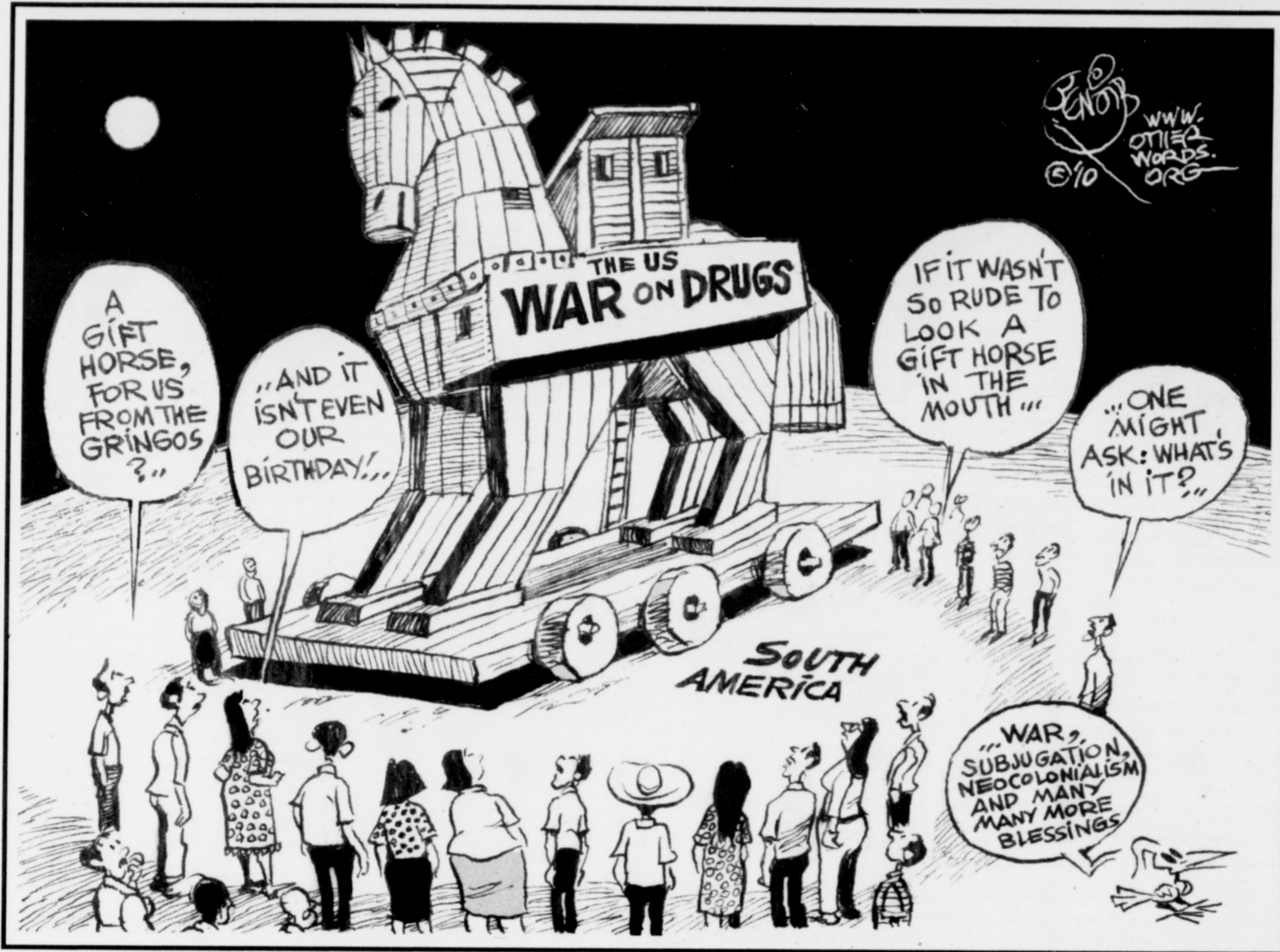


OPINION



Obama Investing in Our Future

Financial aid opens doors to more students

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

In a significant sign of progress on the higher education front, financial aid has increased dramatically since the Obama administration took office.



that's \$10 billion more than was issued the previous year. This news makes it clear the federal government is mindful of the rising costs of

a college education and willing to invest to provide an opportunity for anyone willing to put in the work to obtain a degree.

Pell Grants are federally funded

grants awarded to those who demonstrate a financial need. In the past,

the number of institutional grants - awarded by universities to students for a variety of reasons, not only financial, - surpassed those awarded by the government. Last year, however, more government grants were issued.

Additionally, the amount available to individual students and families has increased. The government provided, on average, about \$3,600 in grants for low-income students and allows middle class families to claim education tax credits. In the last year, however, around \$3,400 in federal grants were awarded to students at two-year colleges, \$6,100 to those at public four-year schools and \$16,000 to those attending private four-year institutions.

This increased funding, which students don't have to pay back, opens up higher education to more students than ever before, despite increasing tuition costs.

According to the College Board, the average in-state student at a public four-year university pays over \$16,000 a year in tuition and room and board. After the grant money is applied, the balance can be paid through family contributions, work study programs or stu-

dent loans.

A financially savvy student could opt to live at home while attending college, eliminating fees for room and board. This would lower their costs significantly and, in many cases, result in no out of pocket expenses. With the economy forcing many of those in the middle class into uncertain financial conditions, this increase in college funding could not have come at a better time.

Many critics complain this elevated education spending, in conjunction with other investments, created a national budget deficit that will negatively impact future generations. Nothing could be further from the truth.

As more and more Americans receive college degrees, this country will be able to once again compete in the global marketplace. Business sectors will grow as the pool of qualified, educated workers grows.


The Obama administration has wisely chosen to invest in education and, by doing so, it is investing in America's future.

Greg Mathis is a former Michigan District Court judge and is currently syndicated television show judge.

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