

OPINION

College Dropouts Cost Everyone

Support students to ensure they graduate

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS



Oftentimes, when we think of a student who drops out of college, we think of how that will affect them. We become concerned about the limited career options and decreased earning potential they'll face without a college degree. Rarely do we think of the cost to the larger society. But we should.

College dropouts cost taxpayers billions in both the short and long term. We owe it to them, and ourselves, to ensure they complete their education.

A new report shows that states allocated more than \$6 billion to four year colleges and universities over a five year period to pay for the education of students who did not return for their second

year. The study also shows that the federal government and states together spent almost \$3 billion on grants for students who didn't start their sophomore year.

In a depressed economy, it's particularly disturbing to learn that money is essentially being wasted to pay for educations that are not being received. However, the answer is not, as many critics suggest, to discourage students who may not be ready for college from attending. Rather, schools and the government must work together to figure out how we can

support students throughout their college careers and ensure they graduate.

Graduating from college is a great personal achievement. Doing so can dramatically change the graduate's quality of life. College graduates earn almost \$1 million more over the course of their

career than those with a high school diploma.

But it's not just the graduate's who win. The additional money they earn is then put back into the economy. Additionally, a more educated workforce helps lift the American economy since the workers companies have to choose from

the skills to handle all that is required of them. That isn't always the case.

From dealing with increased financial pressures that come with paying for school to juggling a more rigorous course load, to new social pressures, college is a different world and, unfortunately, many students crack under the pressure.

Schools must work to increase their student service programs to provide financial, academic and psychological counseling to students at every step of their academic career.

College readiness is not always determined by academics; we must take the neces-

sary steps to ensure our kids are able to handle all of the new pressures and responsibilities of college.

Judge Mathis is a longtime advocate for equal justice. His live story of a street youth who rose from jail to judge has provided hope to millions.

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Most parents, and society at large, expect young adults attending college to have

Taking Power at the Ballot Box

We must keep the public on our side

BY RICH COHEN

In a previous opinion piece, I suggested that the Occupy Movement will likely hit a wall if it doesn't link its street dissent to the ballot box.

Protest and disruption alone will never put this country in our hands. It is imperative that we move away from a mindset of challenging power to one of taking power by changing our focus from pressuring the powers that be to becoming the powers that be. But how?

First and foremost, we must keep the public on our side by going beyond agitating and resisting, tactics that in the end can

only get us a watered down outcome. To remain credible our movement must lay out a believable plan to the solutions and vision we propose, a path that is perceived as doable, and that remains nonviolent!

It must go beyond jobs to a deeper more visceral appeal that can actually get us to those jobs and to governing authority.

The power center of our country is the U. S. Congress, controlled by Wall Street majorities in the House and Senate. To replace their majorities with ours we must win 218 seats in the House and a 60 seat filibuster majority in the Senate. Without

those numbers there is no government of, by and for the people.

Now is the time for the Occupy Movement to call for a national summit to target the needed 218 + 60 congressional seats, and that puts Occupy can-

didates in each targeted state. The goal is to mobilize victories for congressional and senate seats, that over time, inch us up to the majorities needed.

Occupy supporters should use the next several years to build the kind of relationships and public

trust to give our candidates credibility and election victories.

The decisive winning factor in each election will be our message, one that is compelling, motivating and can be heard and trusted over the corporate bullhorn. It must go beyond jobs to a deeper more visceral appeal that can actually get us to those jobs and to governing authority.

In my view no message is potentially more impacting and inspiring than speaking directly to who we are as Americans. We are literally born into ownership of this democracy. We, not Wall Street, are the source of power in the United States with an inherited birthright to govern. That means reclaiming and controlling what we own by asserting our ownership authority, and affirming, that never again will Wall Street have our obedience.

To acquire a pride of ownership mindset, we need to review our cherished documents (Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Bill of Rights, etc.) that define and guide us back to our American core. There we find the four chambers of the American heart—democracy, justice, equality and freedom that bless us with an authentic patriotism elevating the "general welfare" over selfish individualism.

American revolutionaries Thomas Jefferson and Tom Paine urged us to reclaim our spirit of rebellion, without which democracy cannot survive, and reminded us that "we have it in our power to begin the world over again." Together, We The People can make it so!

Rich Cohen is a local activist and Occupy Portland organizer.

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