

OPINION

A Mountain of Misleading Rhetoric

The truth about Pentagon spending

BY SUZIE DERSHOWITZ



There's a debate raging about the federal budget, our national spending priorities, and how best to protect our national security and our men and women on the front lines.

With the U.S. war in Iraq officially over and our operations in Afghanistan drawing down, this is the perfect time to stop partisan squabbling and rethink the way we fund the Pentagon. Americans on both sides of the aisle agree that economic security goes hand-in-hand with national security. A majority of us support cutting the defense budget by 18 percent, or more than \$100 billion, according to a recent Stimson Center study.

It's time we started spending smarter on our military and weap-

ons. We need a sensible, balanced, and long-term approach to national security.

But all the fear-mongering about Pentagon budget cuts potentially spurring massive job losses makes it hard to have a conversation about our national security priorities. A mountain of misleading rhetoric put forth by big Pentagon contractors — who are spending millions on lobbying and campaigns — has buried the facts.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, the top 10 government contractors spent a combined total of more than \$56.3 million on lobbying expenditures and more than \$9 million on campaign contributions last year. A number of these companies spending millions on expanding their undue influence collect most of their revenues in taxpayer dollars. Now mem-

bers of Congress are parroting their talking points.

The public has a right to know the truth. First, shelling out more money for the Pentagon budget doesn't necessarily mean more jobs. As my colleague Ben Freeman at the Project on Government Oversight demonstrated in a recent report, the top five defense contractors were cutting jobs while being awarded more taxpayer dollars between 2006 and 2011.

Over this five-year period, total employment at companies such as Lockheed Martin and Boeing declined as these military contracting giants thrived, not just in terms of federal contract collars but in overall financial performance. Apparently these Beltway bandits have no qualms about letting workers go when it helps their bottom line.

Meanwhile, major defense contractors' top executives enjoy compensation packages on par with Wall

Street CEOs. The chief executives of Lockheed, Boeing, United Technologies, and Northrop Grumman all made between \$22 and \$27.6 million in total 2011 compensation. So when contractors threaten to send thousands of layoff notices leading up to the 2012 election, it's clear they are playing politics with national security.

Military contractors' capacity to launch such a large-scale campaign to defend their profits is symptomatic of underlying structural issues with the way the United States does national defense.

The Pentagon's budget has continued to grow unchecked for decades because our national security policy is still mired in the Cold War industrial defense paradigm. The world has shifted, and the Pentagon needs to make the transition towards leaner, smarter spending to face today's threats, like terrorism and cybersecurity.

Mismanagement and Pentagon waste, not a lack of funding, are the real problems. In fact, authorizing less money may spur reform. Instead of wasting taxpayer dollars on building costly new weapons systems and more nuclear lab construction projects we don't need, our military needs to reset its priorities.

The bottom line is that when private companies exert so much influence over the defense budget process, they divert resources away from what our troops and veterans need. National security policy should aim squarely at protecting the American people, not giving taxpayer-financed subsidies to multibillion-dollar corporations. Spending smarter, not bigger, on defense will make us safer in the long run.

Suzie Dershowitz is a public policy fellow at the Project on Government Oversight.

Relationships are How People Get Along

Winning marriage equality

BY REV. MICHAEL SCHUENEMEYER



My mother did not congratulate me when I announced my engagement. It

wasn't because she didn't like the person I was going to marry. It was because she was not comfortable with the idea of two men getting married, especially when one of them happened to be her son.

It wasn't that she wanted to deny me any of my civil rights or for me to be treated differently than anyone else under the law. She was uncomfortable because this just didn't fit her idea of marriage to the point she wasn't even sure she could come to

the wedding.

I became engaged in the spring of 2004, the year when 11 states enacted anti-gay marriage measures in the general election, including my own state of Ohio. But much has changed since then.

A shift in the polls shows a steady increase of support for marriage equality, particularly since the 2008 passage of Proposition 8 in California. A Gallup poll last May showed that 53 percent of Americans believe gay marriage should be legal, up from 36 percent in 2006.

What has changed? For one, same sex-marriage is now legal in six states and the District of Columbia, accomplished mostly by

the legislative process. However, the main thing that has changed is that more people know someone who is same-gender loving. That same Gallup Poll reported that people who know someone who is gay are 20 percent more likely than others to support gay marriage.

"Relationships are how people get along," was the mantra of an agency I served while a seminarian. People are coming to recognize the importance of marriage equality for same-sex couples by encountering the people who are affected by the policies we, as voters, enact at the ballot.

These relationships make the worth and dignity of every family real. These relationships bring to light the values of equality under the law and the pledge we make as

citizens of "liberty and justice for all."

What got my mother to my wedding was our relationship (along with some advocacy from my sister, for which I'm deeply grateful). My mother's love for me and her trust of my character proved more valuable than her discomfort.

She also has come to recognize the deep love that my husband and I share, as well as the integrity of our relationship as we work to faithfully live the vocation of marriage. Both my parents love and support us and our right to marry.

The political right has often used

gay marriage as a wedge to divide the electorate, which is why I suspect it is so prevalent in the platform of the Republican National Committee. But this tactic is losing its effectiveness as the values of relationships and equality serve to transform hearts and minds, bridging the divide.

If marriage equality wins at the polls this November, and there is every reason to believe it will, relationships will play a major role.

Rev. Michael Schuenemeyer is minister for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender concerns in the United Church of Christ.

The Portland Observer Established 1970

USPS 959-680
4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Portland, OR 97211

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PUBLISHER: Charles H. Washington

EDITOR: Michael Leighton

ASSISTANT TO PUBLISHER, PUBLIC RELATIONS: Mark Washington

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Paul Neufeldt

ASSISTANT TO PUBLISHER, OFFICE MANAGER/CLASSIFIEDS: Lucinda Baldwin

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER: Leonard Latin

ADVERTISING MANAGER, PUBLIC RELATIONS: Tony Washington

STAFF WRITER/PHOTOGRAPHER: Mindy Cooper

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Portland Observer,
PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208

CALL 503-288-0033 FAX 503-288-0015

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 2008 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED. The Portland Observer--Oregon's Oldest Multicultural Publication--is a member of the National Newspaper Association--Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc, New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association

news@portlandobserver.com
ads@portlandobserver.com
subscription@portlandobserver.com

BUDGET INSURANCE

"Your Budget is our Budget"

At Budget we work with many insurance companies to find the best fit for your needs and to fit your Budget.



DURAN BEASLEY

Call today for a free quote!

503 515 4377

Fax 503 445 4591 Office 503 445 4595
3202 SE 82nd Ave Portland, OR 97266

An independent agent serving Oregon & Washington

- AUTO
- HOME
- LIFE
- BUSINESS
- HEALTH
- SR 22