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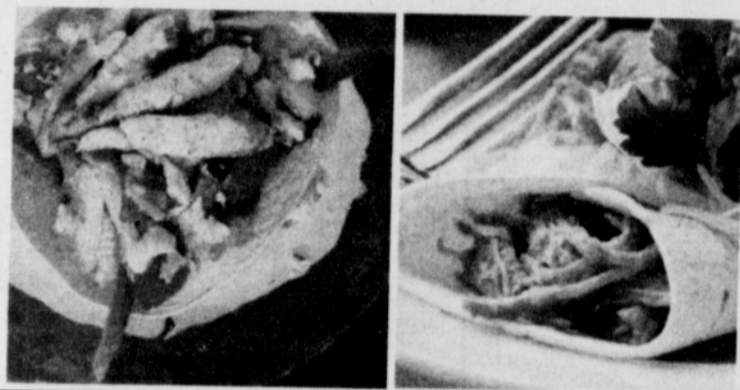
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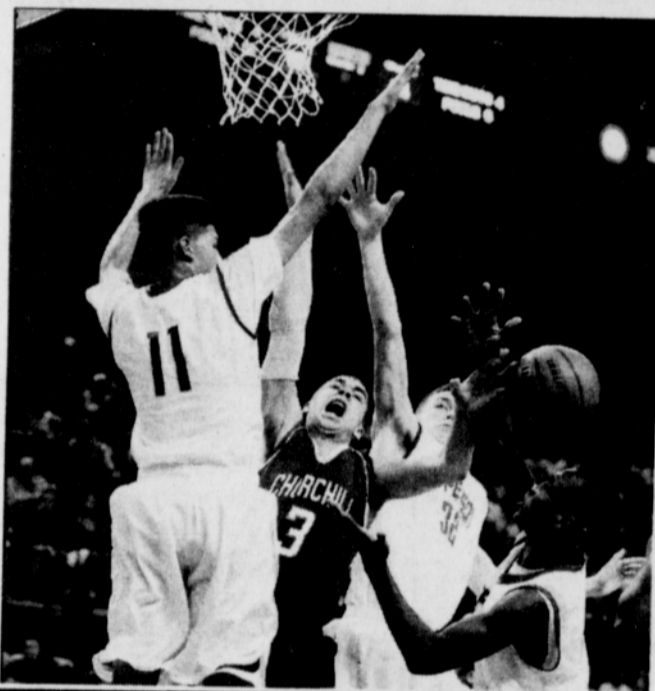
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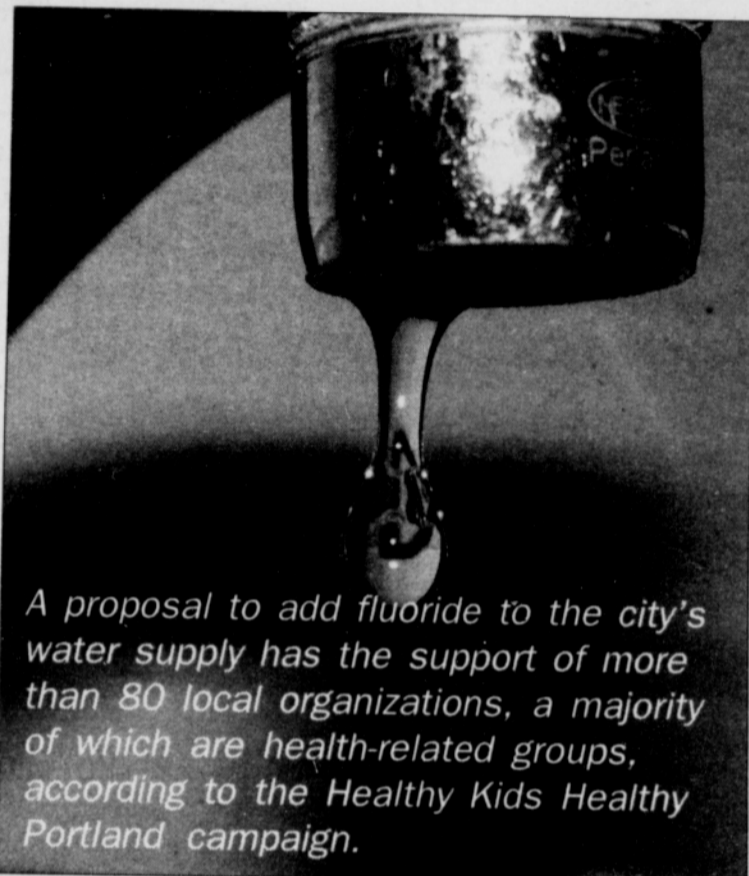
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What's on your list today?

LOCAL NEWS

To Fluoridate or Not?



A proposal to add fluoride to the city's water supply has the support of more than 80 local organizations, a majority of which are health-related groups, according to the Healthy Kids Healthy Portland campaign.

Community divisions bubble to the surface

BY CARI HACHMANN
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

As Portland voters get ready to decide whether to add fluoride to the city's drinking water, several organizations representing minority and disadvantaged residents have announced their support for the proposal.

Among those backing the plan include the Urban League of Portland, the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon, African American Health Coalition, Coalition of Communities of Color, and the Latino Network.

However, some individuals of color feel that their opinions are not being represented by these organizations. Portland's water supply serves approximately 900,000 people.

Sheila Warren, a community activist and the founder of Portland Parent Union, said the opinions of African Americans and other minorities are constantly left out of the conversation.

"It worries me that groups that are supposed to represent all in their communities really don't," said

Warren in a statement to the Portland Observer.

The response from Michael Alexander, president of Urban League of Portland, is that his organization is taking a position it believes is in the best interest of the community.

"It was very clear that this [water fluoridation] is a practice that would benefit all of Portland, but particularly children in underserved communities," Alexander said.

"We are not speaking in a manner that is meant to preclude anyone in the community from making their own decisions," he said. "I encourage everyone in the community to spend time and listen to the positions that are examined by both sides of this."

Former Sen. Avel Gordly, whose opinion is shaped by the 17 years she spent sitting through hearings in the Oregon Legislature, including health-related issues like water fluoridation, wrote an opinion article with Tricia Tillman outlining her support for water fluoridation.

Gordly said the organizations of color supporting the May ballot measure work hard to get educated on public policy issues.

"Their role is to educate, educate, educate and to share the information," she said. "These are organizations that would not misguide, misinform or otherwise harm our community."

"We are saying to the community, this is what we know. If you choose to follow, that's your choice and it's your vote."

Alexander said he has listened to both sides of the debate including Dr. Yolanda Whyte's discussion at Emmanuel Temple Church, a historically black congregation in north Portland. Whyte is an African American pediatrician from Georgia who was invited by Clean Water Portland to talk about why she is against putting fluoride in public drinking water.

Stating her arguments in an e-mail to the Portland Observer, Whyte said she grew up with fluoridated water in New York, yet had 13 cavities when she first

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TriMet Discreetly Gave Raises

TriMet came under fire Tuesday for giving raises to its top managers under a contingency fund that wasn't made fully public during last year's budget shortfall that resulted in major cuts to services and increased fares for passengers.

A list of non-union pay increases obtained by the Oregonian showed that TriMet spent \$910,000 from the fund to give raises to more than 50 employees making \$110,700 or more.

TriMet General Manager Neil McFarlane told the newspaper that the raises were needed to keep skilled managers from leaving the public transit agency for

other jobs.

He praised the sacrifice of other non-union workers who were in their fourth year of a pay freeze.

Last spring, riders' advocates asked about the \$20 million contingency fund, arguing that it was unusually large and called on the agency to use some of those reserves to restore service cuts or extend transfer times.

But the line item was called a "rainy day fund" by TriMet officials who said it should not be used for bus services. There was no public disclosure that almost half of the money would go to executive salaries.