



THE SKANNER

CHALLENGING PEOPLE TO SHAPE A BETTER FUTURE NOW



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Controversy Builds Over ODOT Contracts

Oregon Department of Transportation's 2009-2011 budget includes \$2.5 billion for state highways. Ideally the funding shouldn't just build roads and bridges; it should also build contracting opportunities and jobs in our local communities. So will it? That depends who you ask.

Cheryl Myers, Gov. Kitzhaber's newly appointed advocate for minority, women and emerging small business, said she's not ready yet to comment. Myers is learning about contracting and workforce diversity issues and will be developing policy soon.

"Right now I am on a listening blitz so I can really hear what everyone has to say. I have been talking to representatives from the minority contractors and I'll be meeting with people at the transportation department on Wednesday."

For state transportation projects too large to be split up under current rules, ODOT chooses the lowest qualifying bidders as prime contractors. Those large firms then hire subcontractors. Historically those prime contractors did not hire or subcontract with African American firms. That concerns state Rep. Lew Frederick.

"If the prime contractor doesn't hire minorities then there just won't be any on that project," Frederick said.

The Portland Democrat has introduced a bill that would provide support to schools, local governments and state agencies who decide to act as their own prime contractors, and subcontract out construction jobs to smaller firms.

"I see a real need to do two things," Frederick told The Skanner. "First, to develop a much broader contractor base, and second, to make sure that base is not controlled by a small number of people."

Perspectives Differ on the Disparity Problem

In 2007, a seven-year study showed that African American and Asian firms had been essentially locked out of state transportation contracts. An update to that study, carried out by Florida-based MGT of America, is due June 30.

Minority contractors voice frustration that highway contracts and dollars are still not

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SPEAKING OUT



Egyptian Demonstrators Gather in Seattle recently to show Solidarity for the more than a quarter-million people who flooded Cairo's main square in a stunning and jubilant array of young and old, urban poor and middle class professionals, mounting by far the largest protest yet in a week of unrelenting demands for President Hosni Mubarak to leave after nearly 30 years in power.

Teen is Taken from Psych Facility

The Multnomah County Sheriffs remain under investigation

A teenager hospitalized without explanation while in the custody of law enforcement last summer was this morning removed by Multnomah County Sheriffs deputies from a juvenile psychiatric facility and booked into the Multnomah County Detention Center.

Kyeron Fair, 17, whose family has still never been informed exactly how, when and by whom he was hospitalized in the

cardiac intensive care unit at Oregon Health and Sciences

The case is complicated by the fact that Fair had a severe psychiatric breakdown after he regained consciousness at OHSU

University last September, has unlawful use of a weapon – with

a combined bail set at \$3,055,000.

He is scheduled for arraignment Feb. 8 at 9:45 at the Multnomah County Courthouse.

Fair's family has retained attorneys Greg and Jason Kafoury, who filed a tort claim late last year against several local government agencies and have been conducting their investigation into the case.

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Ambassador Susan E. Rice to Speak

World Affairs Council welcomes the permanent ambassador to UN

The World Affairs Council of Oregon welcomes U.S. Ambassador Susan E. Rice to speak at 7 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 11 at the First Congregational United Church of Christ, 1126 SW Park Ave. in Portland. Pre-registration is required for this event, which is \$75 for reserved seating and reception; \$20 for general admission and \$10 for students.

Register online at www.worldoregon.org.

Rice is the U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations and is a member of President Obama's Cabinet and the National Security Council.

From the World Affairs Council:

"Prior to her appointment as U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations,

Ambassador Rice served as a Senior Advisor for National Security Affairs on the Obama for America Campaign. She later served on the Advisory Board of the Obama-Biden Transition and as co-chair of its policy working group on national security. From 2002-2009, she was a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution where she focused on U.S. foreign poli-

cy, transnational security threats, weak states, global poverty and development. From 1997 to 2001, Ambassador Rice was the U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. In 2000, Ambassador Rice was co-recipient of the White House's 2000 Samuel Nelson Drew Memorial Award for distinguished contributions to the for-

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