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CHALLENGING PEOPLE TO SHAPE A BETTER FUTURE NOW



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Making Childbirth Safer

State studies value of using at-home doulas for newborns

By Helen Silvis
Of The Skanner News

Intensive campaigning by health advocates from Portland's communities of color scored one significant victory in Salem this session. The legislature passed a bill, sponsored by Rep. Tina Kotek, which directs the Oregon Health Authority to study the value of doulas in reducing infant mortality rates.

Next February, when the report is complete, advocates hope that legislators, state health administrators and hospitals will work together to find funds to pay for doulas to work with pregnant women, especially women of color, and women in underserved rural areas.

"We thank all the legislators who helped pass this bill," said Shafia Monroe, president and CEO of the nationally-recognized doula training nonprofit the International Center for Traditional Childbearing. "It's exciting that this bill passed when so many others didn't. Now comes the hard work of making sure we get a Yes in February 2012."

What's a doula? Doulas are community health workers, trained to help mothers through pregnancy, childbirth and in the weeks after birth. Usually doulas belong to the communities they serve, giving them the cultural knowledge necessary to win the trust of mothers.

"Doulas give emotional support to women during pregnancy and birth," says Monroe. "They are not clinicians; they don't deliver babies and they don't give medical advice. But a doula is not just your friend; she's a professional who has been trained to understand the emotions and the normal signs and discomforts of childbirth. And the research shows that doulas do make a difference."

Find out more about doulas and ICTC at the Afro-centric Pregnancy Fair "Birth Works for Black Women". The Fair, will run from 4 to 7 pm, Saturday June 25 at Fern

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TEEN JOB FAIR



PHOTO BY HELEN SILVIS

From left: More than 40 teens attended a teen job fair at Seeznin's Sports Bar and Grill on Saturday June 18. Shakeena Richmond, Sarina Simpson of Lifeworks, Quinice Jenkins and Marilyn Lindsay were among more than a dozen volunteers who made the teen job fair a success.

Water Rate Hike Triggers Backlash

Saltzman proposes 'impartial process' for utility rate changes

By Brian Stimson
Of The Skanner News

Seeing a significant amount of unhappiness with the recent water rate increase, Portland City Commissioner Dan Saltzman said he wants to make sure any future rate decisions are put through a more impartial process.

Last week, Saltzman proposed the creation of an independent utility commission that would take the work of rate changes, finances, budgets out of the

hands of the mayor's office and into the hands of a group of citizens.

Saltzman said the current process can let politics get involved and the proposal – which he stressed is not set in stone – would add a level of professionalism, accountability and impartiality to water and sewer utilities.

The city will be holding a work session to discuss the proposal at 9:30 a.m. on July 19 at City Hall. Saltzman is currently seeking public comment about

the proposal. Details about the commission and its role can be found on Saltzman's web site at www.portlandonline.com/saltzman.

If the current plan is approved, the commission, housed under the city auditor's office, would receive budgets from water and sewer bureaus, review those budgets with the help of a professional staff, hold public hearings, and set rates. The budget and rate proposals would then be submitted to the council at large, which would

then hold more public hearings and vote on their decision.

As to whether a public commission would mean a difference in the amount the average resident pays on their water bill, Saltzman said he wasn't sure.

"I can't guarantee anything," said Saltzman, but he hopes that an experienced five member commission, along with a professional staff split by the water and sewer utility bureaus will be able to do a more rigorous analysis of cost of service

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Disparity Study Strengthens Call for Equity

Williams Avenue illustrates institutionalized exclusion of minorities

Lisa Loving
Of The Skanner News

A near-million dollar report on racial disparities in Portland's construction contracting practices has been pulled apart and pieced together again – pushing documentation of discrimination and unfair practices to the forefront – in preparation for a City Commission policy

vote Wednesday afternoon.

Mayor Sam Adams and Commissioner Nick Fish are backing a resolution accepting the revamped study, which if passed, requires the Office of Management and Budget to bolster existing equity programs and to come up with suggestions for ways to expand them no later than 2012.

The study is key to city efforts to address fairness issues in construction contracting,

because court rulings around the nation have established the legal precedent that municipalities must have documented proof of inequality before they can create policies promoting diversity.

Fish's policy director, Jim Blackwood, Jr., says the commissioner's disparity advisory committee helped direct the city's response

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