



No excuses for education gap

by **Abigail Thernstrom, Ph.D.**

The racial gap in academic achievement between whites and Asians, on the one hand, blacks and Hispanics, on the other hand, is an educational crisis. But it is also the nation's most important civil rights issue. It is an American tragedy and a national emergency for which there are no good excuses. Hence the title of my book: *No Excuses*.

The Portland picture is no different than the national one; there is a marked racial gap in learning. Sixteen percent of Portland's students are African American and eight percent are Hispanic. The nation's problems are Portland's problems—and vice versa.

Unequal skills and knowledge are today's main source of racial inequality and racial inequality is America's great, unfinished business, the wound that remains unhealed. In America today, students with equal skills and knowledge—whatever their color—will have



Abigail Thernstrom, Ph.D. speaks to members of the Portland School Board, The Urban League of Portland and other public and private education-related organizations at a Cascade luncheon on February 27.

roughly equal earnings. Schooling has become the key to racial equality.

In writing *No Excuses*, my coauthor and

I wanted to create an overdue sense of outrage, and we have a vision of what needs to be done. We describe fabulous schools that get great results with children normally, tragically disconnected from the world of academic learning. But our first aim was to paint a picture of the limited usefulness of such conventional explanations for the racial gap as racial isolation, inadequate funding, class size, non-credentialed teachers and so forth. We strove to illustrate the dismaying failure of programs like Head Start and Title I to level the educational playing field.

This is not, in our view, an IQ story. It's a story of kids who need to acquire skills and knowledge but who have been tragically and needlessly left behind. Here are some numbers:

- On the nation's most reliable tests—the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP)—the typical black or

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In honor of F. A. Hayek

by **James M. Voytko**

F.A. Hayek's seminal book *The Road to Serfdom*, published sixty years ago, still rings true. Hayek lived amidst the rise of modern totalitarianism: Communism, National Socialism and National Fascism. The immense evil that these ideologies wrought when harnessed to the coercive engines of government drove intellectuals from many disciplines to try to answer the question: Why? Why Stalinism? Why Hitlerism? These questions may seem from a distant time, but to Hayek and many others in 1944,

“Hayek’s most lasting contribution to economics was the understanding that free markets and free prices are a means to convey and exploit information.”

when *The Road to Serfdom* was first published, it was a fresh and painful concern.

Hayek saw more than evil men assuming power, he saw a pattern, a process, a connection between the collective ambitions of Communism and National Socialism and the inescapable need to harness collective power—that is government power—over individual liberty to achieve these ambitions. This pattern, process and connection transcended his era and his own particular observations.

Hayek's most lasting contribution to economics was the understanding that free markets and free prices are a means to convey and exploit information. In any society, the central

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Open budgets, core functions and a better Oregon

“Voters trounce Measure 30,” trumpeted the *Oregonian* on February 4, the morning after Oregonians rejected the legislature’s billion dollar tax package 59 to 41 percent. Voters statewide sent a clear message for the second time in a year, and the margin of victory was bigger than before.

Now, a movement is afoot to set a spending limit for Oregon state government. Further, an initiative was just filed to recall Multnomah County’s “temporary” three-year income tax. The point is: People are tired of tax increases; government has a spending problem.

To help resolve this problem, Oregonians need easy-to-read, detailed government budgets. With such information, citizens could more easily identify redundancy and propose its elimination. Moreover, we would have a good starting point for discussion about what government should—and should *not*—do.

For example, there are countless private em-

ployment services. My local Yellow Pages contains 15 pages of them. Likewise, a quick Internet search turns up hundreds of private options beyond Monster.com. Why, then, do we need the Oregon Employment Department to offer Pre-paid Recruitment Services?

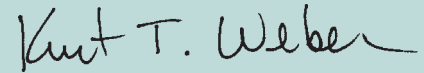
The department notes, in regard to its service, “We can be like an extension of your own business.” As with any redundancy within a private organization, it should be eliminated.

Redundancy aside, providing employment services is not a core government function, nor is providing entertainment or amusement parks. So, let’s look at the State Fair. To call it a core function is a stretch of the imagination. Moreover, it’s hard to justify millions of dollars in taxpayer subsidies to keep the year-after-year money-losing event afloat, especially with recent (unnecessary) talk of cuts to police services. Cascade research intern Joseph Coon suggested a private organization run the fair, or

the fairgrounds be sold outright, in his August 2003 commentary, “*Fair thee well!*”

A former graduate school professor of mine at the University of Virginia, Whittle Johnston, was fond of extolling, “Give me my liberty and my property and I’ll pursue my own damn happiness!” In short, a court system and police—to protect liberty and property and enforce contracts—qualify as core government functions.

Citizens can effectively help resolve the government-spending problem with understandable, detailed and standardized budgets. Elected officials should require agencies, departments and the like to provide them. Steps taken down that path will foster a stronger consensus about core functions and the proper role of government in a free society.



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Better alternatives to Smart Growth

“When it comes to Smart Growth,” Cascade environmental policy director John A. Charles states, “there is good, unfortunate and great news.”

The great news? More effective, less expensive solutions are available to improve our quality of life. Unfortunately, Oregon planners don’t advocate them.

As for the good news, the American Dream Coalition offers two alternatives for people to delve deeper into these solutions: a three day Conference on Preserving the American Dream, April 16-18; and a one-day workshop on April 15.

Both programs will take place at the Airport Shilo Inn. Both will feature solutions to the growing problems in Smart Growth paradise: some of the fastest-growing congestion in the nation, unaffordable housing, high unemployment and an increasing tax burden to subsidize rail transit and high-density development.

Several panels at the Conference will feature speakers from Cascade.

John A. Charles will take part in a panel discussion about Oregon’s livability planning along side U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer and Alternatives to Growth Oregon founder Andy Kerr.

Charles will present, “The Myth of Transit-Oriented Development,” to highlight research he and Institute academic advisor Michael L. Barton, Ph.D. have completed over the past two years.

Gerard C.S. Mildner, author of *Scarcity*

by Design: The Legacy of New York City’s Housing Policies and Cascade academic advisor, will discuss, “Land-Use Planning and Housing Affordability.”

Additionally, more than 30 expert speakers will make Conference presentations. A partial list includes:

- Stephen Town of the West Yorkshire Police, United Kingdom, “New urbanism and crime”
- S. Carolina St. Rep. Joe Neal, “Smart growth versus minorities”
- Reason Foundation founder Robert Poole, “HOT lanes to reduce congestion”
- Kathleen Calonge, “Traffic calming reform”

Workshops will be conducted on helping low-income people buy their first homes, and property rights-based alternatives to zoning and mobility.

The Second Annual Conference on Preserving the American Dream is organized by the American Dream Coalition.

To learn more, and to register, refer to www.americandreamcoalition.org, email rot@ti.org, or call (541) 297-6798.

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Hispanic student at age 17 scores below at least 80 percent of his or her white classmates. These non-Asian minority students are on average four years behind those who are white and Asian. The employer or college that chooses the typical black high school graduate gains a youngster with an eighth grade education.

- In five of seven subjects tested by NAEP, a majority of black students perform in the lowest category: Below Basic. Hispanics score only a tad better.
- The news is no happier when we look at students at the top. In math, only 0.2 percent of black students fall into NAEP's Advanced category; the figure for whites is 11 times higher and for Asians 37 times higher. Hispanic students are only slightly ahead of blacks.

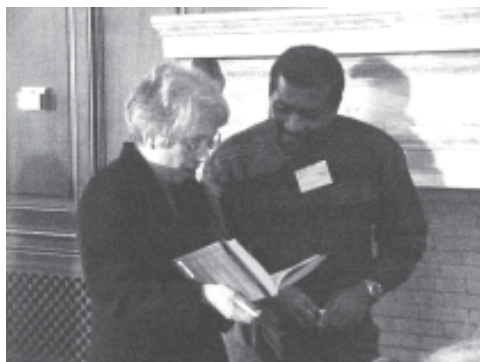
With so few blacks and Hispanics with superb academic skills by the end of high school, the pool of those ready for highly selective colleges and likely to become part of the American professional and business elite is inevitably very small.

“Unequal skills and knowledge are today’s main source of racial inequality and racial inequality is America’s great, unfinished business...”

Black students were even farther behind three decades ago when NAEP data first became available, but the modest progress that occurred through much of the 1980s has largely come to an end and there are indications that the racial gap is widening. Current trends offer no grounds for complacency.

A couple of years ago, a distinguished educator said to me, “Why talk about race when social class is the real issue?” We wish that were true. Parental education, income and place of residence all make a difference in school achievement but only account for about a third of the gap. In part, we argue, group cultural differences explain the remaining two-thirds.

Some group cultures are more academically advantageous than others—a point everyone knows and few want to discuss. Asian parents typically expect their children to work extraordinarily hard in school and the children do so.



Dr. Thernstrom discusses her book, *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Education*, with Portland Public School Board member Derry Jackson.

As a result, on some math tests, the white-Asian gap is larger than the black-white gap. Yet hard work is obviously a culturally transferable skill and schools can play an invaluable part in shaping values, habits and skills.

The first signs of underachievement appear very early in the life of African American children. Although scholars have not been able to pinpoint the precise reasons, they can identify some of the risk factors that seem to limit intellectual growth—among them: low-birth weight, single-parent households and birth to a very young mother. Black children not only arrive in school less academically prepared, they also tend to be less ready to conform to behavioral demands.

“Some group cultures are more academically advantageous than others—a point everyone knows and few want to discuss.”

Terrific schools provide a road map to academic success. These schools have greatly extended instructional time. They have principals with the authority to manage their budgets, set salaries, staff the school with fabulous teachers and get rid of those who don't work out. These schools focus relentlessly on core academic subjects, insisting that their students learn the times tables, basic historical facts, spelling, punctuation, the rules of grammar and the meaning of often unfamiliar words. They provide safe, orderly environments. But they also aim to transform the culture of their students as that culture affects academic achievement.

So, how to get there on a massive scale? That is the question to which no one has a good answer—given the structure of public

education with its built-in obstacles to the sort of fundamental reform that is needed.

Will the mandatory testing and other aspects of No Child Left Behind help? We believe they will but they won't be sufficient as the disappointing record of state-level reforms in Texas and elsewhere suggest.

“... students with equal skills and knowledge ... will have roughly equal earnings.”

The mind-numbing data on the racial gap in academic achievement should make all Americans furious—and it should radicalize the debate over educational reform. Racial progress on many fronts has been enormously heartening. In a society committed to equal opportunity, we still have a racially identifiable group of educational have-nots: Young African Americans and Latinos whose opportunities in life will almost inevitably be limited by their inadequate education.



Abigail Thernstrom Ph.D. listens to a call-in question about closing the racial achievement gap in education on the Victoria Taft Show at KPAM.

The alternative to a radical overhaul of American education is too many black and Hispanic youngsters continuing to leave high school without the skills and knowledge to do well in life. Doors closed to too many non-Asian minorities. The perpetuation of ancient inequalities. Is that acceptable? No decent American will say, yes.

Abigail Thernstrom, Ph.D. is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute in New York and serves on the Massachusetts State School Board of Education and US Civil Rights Commission. She is coauthor of *No Excuses: Closing the Racial Gap in Education*.

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economic challenge is the same: how best to organize production and employ available resources to satisfy the needs and desires of millions of different people.

“To know where resources should be directed, the central planner needs to know both what goods and services people want to buy and how to produce them at a low cost.”

Many of Hayek’s contemporaries believed the best way forward was through central government planning. They sought to direct resources to government-determined socially useful areas and avoid the chronic instability of capitalism. Hayek knew differently. Centralized systems may look attractive on paper, he argued, but they suffer from a basic and incurable ailment: the *division of knowledge* problem.

To know where resources should be directed, the central planner needs to know both what goods and services people want to buy and how to produce them at a low cost. But this knowledge is held in the minds of individual consumers and businessmen, not in the filing cabinets (or, later, computers) of a government-planning agency. The only practical way for customers and firms to share knowledge, Hayek advanced, is through a system of freely de-

termined prices. For that reason, and many others, we celebrate his book that above all spelled out the inescapable connection between the impulse to use the power of government and the inevitable erosion of individual liberty and personal choice.

Noble ends were and are generally extolled by those who embrace government power. However, when government power is exercised to achieve those noble ends, at the expense of individual liberty, the promised gains are undermined.

We have too often confused the goals of the good intentions crusades with their actual outcomes: the dreaded unintended consequences of government action. Thus, we have confused the moral value of taking individual action to do “good” with urging government to compel others to do “good.” There is yet more confusion when it comes to the good intentions crusades: specifically, the denigration of the value produced by private action.

In our minds, hearts and cultural values, we have allowed the enormous value coming from millions of personal choices and private actions taken in the world of private commerce to be marginalized, denigrated—even vilified. How often do we celebrate and honor the work of ordinary businessmen and women who labor to build successful businesses—the very organizations with profitable operations that allow us the opportunity to pay our mortgages, make our car payments, feed our families and, above all of course, pay our taxes?

Oregon may be for dreamers, as the current slogan goes, but the economic health of its citizens, as with the citizens of all societies, will always be in the hands of the

doers. Yet does the prevailing culture any longer hold doers, the achievers in the world of private initiative in very high regard?

Sixty years ago, Hayek warned of “the deliberate disparagement of all activities involving economic risk and the moral opprobrium cast on the gains which make the risks worth taking but which only a few can win.” Such an attitude over time inevitably leads to a cultural and political envi-

ronment that permits the crusaders, who seek to supplant private choice with government prescriptions, to categorically dismiss the contribution that private initiative makes to us all. Further, the crusaders demonize those of achievement in the world of private enterprise and free markets—and do so unchallenged and with a straight face on the evening news!

“Oregon may be for dreamers, as the current slogan goes, but the economic health of its citizens, as with the citizens of all societies, will always be in the hands of the doers.”

If our society and its cultural scribes (the authors, journalists and moviemakers) were neutral, or at least ambivalent toward those who succeed in the world of private initiative, wouldn’t one expect to see as many books, articles and movies extolling their attributes and achievements and their value to society as those that vilify them? How many movies have you seen lately that depict a successful businessperson in a positive light, whose achievements cast benefits well beyond their own pocketbook?

Hayek said it well when he wrote in *The Road to Serfdom*, “The younger generation of today has grown up in a world in which in school and press the spirit of commercial enterprise has been represented as disreputable and the making of profit as immoral, where to *employ* a hundred people is represented as exploitation but to *command* the same number as honorable.” Hayek wrote these words over 60 years ago. Yet, to you and me, to Phil Knight and Michael Powell and Bill Gates, to the businessmen and women of today, to their managers and to their employees who believe they do honorable work, Hayek’s words sound quite fresh don’t they?

James M. Voytko is the former executive director of the Oregon Public Employees Retirement System. The above essay is adapted from his March 12 Cascade evening presentation, “The Good Intentions Crusades and Their Consequences.” This address commemorated the 60th publishing anniversary of *The Road to Serfdom* by Nobel Prize-winning economist Friedrich A. Hayek.



Dinner attendees gather around James M. Voytko after his March 12 commemorative presentation, “The Good Intentions Crusades and Their Consequences,” hosted by Cascade.

Reduce unemployment through auto ownership

by John A. Charles

In December 2003, Oregon had an unemployment rate of seven percent, third-highest in the country. What can be done to improve this dismal ranking? One new idea is to get transit-dependent job-seekers into a set of private wheels.

Automobiles have become critical for commuters because most jobs are not in downtown centers. As economists at Metro noted recently, "The trend in employment growth shows that more and more jobs are located in adjacent or neighboring counties as compared to the region's central county. Between 1970 and 1997, Multnomah County's share of regional jobs fell from 67% to 47%."

Job dispersal trends are not a problem for many households that can and do choose to move away from central cities. The vast majority of suburbanites own cars. For the poor, however, job dispersal poses a major employment barrier. Nationally, three-fourths of welfare recipients live in central cities or rural areas, while two-thirds of new jobs are located in the suburbs. Those jobs may not be far away in terms of geography (frequently five to fifteen miles), but they are so inaccessible by public transit that they may as well be on the moon.

"Car ownership improved the likelihood of being employed by 80 percent. The effect on average weekly wages was approximately \$275 ..."

— Kerry Sullivan

This problem has gained the interest of scholars and a number of studies now show a stunning relationship between car ownership and employment. Kerri Sullivan of Portland State University recently examined the effects of car ownership on employment and wages for adults without a high school diploma in Portland. Ms. Sullivan found, "Car ownership improved the likelihood of being employed by 80 percent. The effect on average weekly wages was approximately \$275, and the effect on weeks worked was



Although studies conclude that car ownership plays a significant factor in being employed, area public officials push to spend billions of dollars on fixed rail transit—a system largely irrelevant to urban poor who seek work outside the central city.

approximately 8.5 weeks."

Her work showed that auto ownership was much more important than education. In fact, the study found that a high school diploma/GED played no significant role in explaining differences in employment rates.

Steve Raphael of University of California-Berkeley looked at how car ownership might lower the unemployment rate gap between whites and minorities. He concluded, "Raising minority car-ownership rates to the white car-ownership rate would eliminate 45 percent of the black-white employment rate differential and 17 percent of the comparable Latino-white differential."

One would think, in light of these and other similar studies, Oregon policy-makers would begin developing strategies to promote auto ownership. Yet public officials have spent the better part of the past decade waging a cultural war on cars. Portland officials in particular have attacked motorists with a vengeance. The city's anti-mobility policies have included parking surcharges to pay for the Portland streetcar, parking restrictions at new high-density projects, prohibitions on parking lots near light rail stations and downsizing of Portland roads in order to create bike lanes.

At the same time, the region has squandered billions of dollars on fixed rail transit, which is irrelevant to the urban poor seeking work outside the central city. Rail is primarily used by affluent commuters who already own a car. This creates something of a reverse Robin Hood effect, in which poor people are taxed to supply train rides for the rich.

A better solution has been initiated by Metropolitan Family Services (MFS) through a new program called *Ways to Work*.

This program provides car loans for low-income parents at risk of losing their jobs due to unexpected expenses related to transportation. Most of the applicants will be single, working mothers with dependent children. MFS is partnering with Albina Community Bank, which will provide in-kind services for loan processing. Initial grant funds have come from the US Department of Transportation (\$250,000 over two years), Meyer Memorial Trust (\$120,000 three-year grant) and The Oregon Community Foundation (\$30,000).

These are impressive numbers for a non-profit but they are dwarfed by public expenditures for light rail. TriMet budgeted about \$350 million to build the North Interstate light rail line, which will serve no purpose other than replacing existing heavily-used bus service. For less than the cost of one mile of train track (\$58 million), we could have purchased serviceable used cars for 10,000 transit-dependent residents and still had \$8 million left over to help with insurance and operating costs. For poor families, this would probably have been the single most empowering thing anyone could have done for them.

"[Metropolitan Family Services' program] provides loans for low-income parents at risk of losing their jobs due to unexpected expenses related to transportation."

Oregon's apparent transit goal is to provide expensive public transit to virtually everyone who needs it. That goal should be changed. We should try to get as many people as possible to become car owners and make transit an amenity, not a necessity. This would dramatically lower the cost of transit while improving the quality of life for Oregon's poorest families.

John A. Charles is a senior policy analyst at Cascade Policy Institute.

A simple solution to the gay-marriage debate

by **David Boaz**

In the debate over whether to legalize gay marriage, both sides are missing the point. Why should the government be in the business of decreeing who can and cannot be married? Proponents of gay marriage see it as a civil-rights issue. Opponents see it as another example of minority “rights” being imposed on the majority culture. But why should anyone have—or need to have—state sanction for a private relationship? As governments around the world contemplate the privatization of everything from electricity to Social Security, why not privatize that most personal and intimate of institutions, marriage?

“As governments around the world contemplate the privatization of everything from electricity to Social Security, why not privatize that most personal and intimate of institutions, marriage?”

“Privatizing” marriage can mean two slightly different things. One is to take the state completely out of it. If couples want to cement their relationship with a ceremony or ritual, they are free to do so. Religious institutions are free to sanction such relationships under any rules they choose. A second meaning of privatizing marriage is to treat it like any other contract: The state may be called upon to enforce it but the parties define the terms. When children or large sums of money are involved, an enforceable contract spelling out the parties’ respective rights and obligations is probably advisable. But the existence and details of such an agreement should be up to the parties.

And privatizing marriage would, incidentally, solve the gay-marriage problem. It would put gay relationships on the same footing as straight ones without implying official government sanction. No one’s private life would have official government sanction—which is how it should be.

Andrew Sullivan, one of the leading advocates of gay marriage, writes, “Mar-

riage is a formal, public institution that only the government can grant.” But the history of marriage and the state is more complicated than modern debaters imagine, as one of its scholars, Lawrence Stone, writes, “In the early Middle Ages all that marriage implied in the eyes of the laity seems to have been a private contract between two families. For those without property, it was a private contract between two individuals, enforced by the community sense of what was right.” By the 16th century the formally witnessed contract, called the “spousals,” was usually followed by the proclamation of the banns three times in church, but the spousals itself was a legally binding contract.

Only with the Earl of Hardwicke’s Marriage Act of 1754 did marriage in England come to be regulated by law. In the New England colonies, marriages were performed by justices of the peace or other magistrates from the beginning. But even then common-law unions were valid.

In the 20th century, however, government has intruded upon the marriage contract, among many others. Each state has tended to promulgate a standard, one-size-fits-all formula. Then, in the past generation, legislatures and courts have started unilaterally changing the terms of the marriage contract. Between 1969 and 1985 all the states provided for no-fault divorce. The new arrangements applied not just to couples embarking on matrimony but also to couples who had married under an earlier set of rules. Many people felt a sense of liberation; the changes allowed them to get out of unpleasant marriages without the often contrived allegations of fault previously required for divorce. But some people were hurt by the new rules, especially women who had understood marriage as a partnership in which one partner would earn money and the other would forsake a career in order to specialize in homemaking.

Privatization of religion—better known as the separation of church and state—was our founders’ prescription for avoiding Europe’s religious wars. Americans may think each other headed for hell, but we keep our religious views at the level of private proselytizing and don’t fight to impose one religion by force of law. Other social conflicts can likewise be depoliticized and somewhat defused if we keep them out of the realm of government. If all arts funding were private, for instance, we



Clandestine decisions regarding same sex marriage by four Multnomah County Commissioners propelled Oregon into the national limelight in March 2004.

wouldn’t have members of Congress debating Robert Mapplethorpe’s photographs or the film *The Watermelon Woman*.

“Privatization of religion—better known as the separation of church and state—was our founders’ prescription for avoiding Europe’s religious wars.”

So why not privatize marriage? Make it a private contract between two individuals. If they wanted to contract for a traditional breadwinner/homemaker setup, with specified rules for property and alimony in the event of divorce, they could do so. Less traditional couples could keep their assets separate and agree to share specified expenses. Those with assets to protect could sign prenuptial agreements that courts would respect. Marriage contracts could be as individually tailored as other contracts are in our diverse capitalist world. For those who wanted a standard one-size-fits-all contract, that would still be easy to obtain. Wal-Mart could sell books of marriage forms next to the standard rental forms. Couples would then be spared the surprise discovery that outsiders had changed their contract without warning. Individual churches, synagogues and temples could make their own rules about which marriages they would bless.

And what of gay marriage? Privatization of the institution would al-

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low gay people to marry the way other people do: individually, privately, contractually, with whatever ceremony they might choose in the presence of family, friends or God. Gay people are already holding such ceremonies, of course, but their contracts are not always recognized by the courts and do not qualify them for the 1049 federal laws that the General Accounting Office says recognize marital status. Under a privatized system of marriage, courts and government agencies would recognize any couple's contract—or, better yet, eliminate whatever government-created distinction turned on whether a person was married or not.

Marriage is an important institution. The modern mistake is to think that important things must be planned, sponsored, reviewed or licensed by the government. The two sides in the debate over gay marriage share an assumption that is essentially collectivist. Instead of accepting either view, let's get the government out of marriage and allow individuals to make their own marriage contracts, as befits a secular, individualist republic at the dawn of the information age.

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David Boaz is executive vice president at the [Cato Institute](#).

Kristian Foden-Vencil, Oregon Public Broadcasting (right), interviews John A. Charles about trolley and light rail for Public Radio International's series on transportation issues along the I-5 corridor.



Fred Granum, Republican Nominee for Secretary of State (middle) talks with John A. Charles before John's March 3 talk on Hunger at the Executive Club Meeting.

Geoffrey F. Segal of Reason Public Policy Institute (right), spoke with Karen Minnis, Oregon State Speaker of the House (left), about solutions to the state budget shortfall without additional taxation.



QuickPoint! highlight

After Measure 30: A first step toward fiscal responsibility

by **Steve Buckstein**

Voters did more than reject a big tax package on Tuesday [Feb. 3], they gave their elected officials an opportunity to do the right thing and put core functions first.

Measure 30's defeat will trigger automatic cuts in a number of state government services, some of which should not happen. While restraint is necessary, the automatic cuts are not. Elected officials must acknowledge that government's primary purpose is to protect our lives, liberty and property.

With that purpose in mind, the first cut that should be reversed is the \$3.9 million aimed at the Oregon State Police forensics

division. Laying off a total of 60 experts in DNA testing, alcohol-breath testing, fingerprint examination, forensic firearms examination and crime-scene analysis is not a responsible decision.

Legislators can find the \$3.9 million to save those essential positions in their own back yard, at the State Fairgrounds. Last year, the legislature subsidized the Oregon State Fair with \$3.9 million from lottery revenue, plus a smaller amount from the General Fund.

The State Fair is not a core function of government. Legislators and the Governor should transfer that money from the State Fair to the State Police forensics division, thus saving essential jobs.

Looking ahead, lawmakers should not just stop these subsidies, they should sell the 185-acre fairgrounds and Expo Center. The Marion County Assessor's Office estimates the property's real market value to be \$51.3 million. Private owners should have the opportunity to either run the state fair at a

profit, or use the property for other purposes.

Even without selling the fairgrounds, legislators cannot justify subsidizing the fair when it means laying off almost 60 percent of State Police forensics experts.

Reducing the size of government need not jeopardize core functions. Police services are as core as core functions get.

Steve Buckstein is president of Cascade Policy Institute.

Each Tuesday, Cascade sends a short email about current Oregon issues. These comments are also broadcast on The Money Station KBNP, AM 1410 and posted to the Cascade website.

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- 1) Go to www.cascadepolicy.org
 - 2) Click on "sign up for our mailing list"
 - 3) Enter your email address and click on QuickPoint
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Events

Apr 16-18 – John A. Charles will discuss Metro's 2040 Plan at the second annual Preserving the American Dream conference in Portland, Oregon.

Apr 30 – John A. Charles will sit on a panel at the American Bar Association's conference on, "Privatization of Federal, State and Local Government Services."

May 1 – Entry deadline for Cascade Policy Institute's 2004 Independence Essay Competition. All Oregon high school students are eligible to enter.

May 5 – Steve Buckstein will sit on a panel at the 2004 Oregon Economic & Business Forum, "Business Talks Back to Government."

May 27 – Cato Institute hosts a conference in Washington D.C. titled "Looking Worldwide: What Americans Can Learn from School Choice in Other Countries."

Publications

• **I'll take free choice**, Sheldon Richman, Cascade Commentary 2004-09, March.

• **No excuses for Oregon's achievement gap**, Abigail Thernstrom, Ph.D., CC 2004-08, February.

• **How to stabilize Oregon tax revenue**, Michael L. Barton, Ph.D., CC 2004-06, February.

• **Build community, not dependence**, Kathryn Hickok and Kurt T. Weber, CC 2004-04, February.

• **Keep Oregon's quality of life without new taxes**, Geoffrey F. Segal, CC 2004-03, January.

• **Freedom in Middle-earth: A Hobbit's eye view**, Lauren Hickok, CC 2004-02, January.

• **Keep politics away from money**, Sheldon Richman, CC 2004-01, January.

• **The Wright lesson**, Lawrence W. Reed, CC 2003-34, December.

Publications and event details are online at www.cascadepolicy.org, or call (503) 242-0900.

Students, write for liberty & awards!

Cascade celebrates a decade of encouraging Oregon high school students to expound on liberty with its 10th annual Independence Essay Competition. Participants compete for up to \$5,000 by writing essays on liberty and the proper role of government in a free society.

The entry deadline for the Independence Essay Competition is May 1, 2004. It is open to all Oregon high school students, freshman through senior. Public, private and home-schooled students are invited to participate.

This year, students choose one of the four following quotes and write an essay to support it:

"It has long been a generally accepted maxim that the world is governed too much, and surely it may be truthfully said that more people give expression to a complaint that there are too many laws than to the contrary." - Theodore Thurston Geer, Oregon Governor, 1899-1903

"For nothing is more destructive of respect for government and the law of the land than passing laws which cannot be enforced." - Albert Einstein

"All men recognize the right of revolution; that is, the right to refuse allegiance to and to resist the government, when its tyranny or its inefficiency are great and unendurable." - Henry David Thoreau

"The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant."
- John Stuart Mill

"These quotes were selected to encourage deeper thought about the constitutional limitations our Founding Fathers sought to wrap around government," says Kurt T. Weber, vice president of Cascade. "This they did so we would have maximum liberty to pursue our personal dreams."

An independent panel of judges will select the winners, who will receive up to \$1,000 each. The judges are: Ayse Y. Evrensel, Ph.D., Department of Economics, Portland State University; Leslie Spencer, former associate editor, *Forbes*; Zenon X. Zygmunt, Ph.D., Division of Business and Economics, Western Oregon University.

Cascade welcomes suggestions on how to inform more students, parents and educators about the Independent Essay Competition. For competition guidelines or to share your thoughts, please contact Cascade at (503) 242-0900 or visit www.cascadepolicy.org/essayguide.asp.

Sponsors of the 2004 Independence Essay Competition include the Bonavia Family Charitable Trust, Centerpoint Graphics, Inc., and the Friesen Foundation.



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