

# COMMENTARY

## Deciding budget not foot race

Associate editor David Reinhard seems to think it's a foot race, with a prize for getting our policymakers out of Salem (Legislators could head home via Hill, April 11). The premise, attributed to Senate President Brady Adams, is that we will spend less taxpayer money on our state's needs if we spend less time working out the details.

Figuring out how to best fund education, healthcare and other pressing social needs has always been complex. Now, growing expectations for using the anticipated tobacco settlement monies (around \$2 billion over 25 years) make the complexity of the challenge even more daunting.

Children First for Oregon, a statewide nonprofit advocacy organization, commissioned a study of the effects of investing all the payments year after year without ever touching the principal. With just 25 percent of the interest that would accumulate, we could afford health insurance through the state/federal Children's Health Insurance Program or the purchase of alternative services for all of the roughly 28,000 children now eligible (11,000 are enrolled now.) We can do this by 2002!

Policy making is not a foot race to be won by the first to the finish line, and it's not a contest to see who's got the stomach for real pain. It's an arena for statesmen to take the needs of its citizenry seriously.

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**IN MY  
OPINION**

*Gary  
Dombroff*