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## OPINION

To Build A Better World, Start In Your Own Community

## EDITORIAL

Microwave  
belongs  
back in  
test kitchen

Good news this week for all of those Americans who are worried about the nation's perception abroad: The secretary of the Air Force hears your concerns.

Secretary Michael Wynne said last week that the Air Force has new, nonlethal technology to handle crowds that get out of control. That technology includes microwave beams that "weaken people when they are hit," according to a report by The Associated Press.

Problem is, the Air Force has cut funding to the program until some bugs get worked out. Seems there are a lot of "injury issues" that need to be resolved by the medical community.

Thus, Wynne's idea is to test out that technology on American crowds, lest foreigners think we're out to hurt them indiscriminately. He said he is worried how the United States would be perceived in the world press.

Here's what he said: "If we're not willing to use it here against our fellow citizens, then we should not be willing to use it in a wartime situation."

Except we are not in a wartime situation with any domestic groups.

Instead of other methods that have been used for decades to disperse unruly crowds — even some as simple as proactive police work — some in the government seem willing to risk large-scale injuries to the American population.

That would, of course, limit the amount of criticism the military would receive in the world press.

But how in the world does Wynne think Americans and the American press would react?

This project needs to get back into the lab, where it came from, before some overzealous general starts wanting to play test dummy with the American public.

Views from the  
Nation's Press

## Burden shouldn't be shifted

Another bankrupt airline is on a flight path to terminate an employee pension plan. Delta Air Lines Inc. was given permission last week by a federal bankruptcy judge to end the pilots' pension plan. ...

A new pension law passed by Congress is intended to mitigate the pressure on (Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp.) by raising the fees it charges companies that operate defined-benefit pensions. ...

What the law didn't do, but should have done, was make the PBGC a creditor of standing when bankrupt companies terminate pensions. Allowing bankrupt companies to shift the burden of paying pensions they promised to pay on to the backs of responsible companies sends the wrong incentive, both to firms that maintain fully funded pension plans and to those that don't. ...

— The Patriot-News, Harrisburg, Pa.



## Border reform's price tag

By Robert Greenstein  
and James Horney

Special to The Washington Post

Would offering undocumented immigrants a path to legalization bust the federal budget? Critics of the Senate immigration bill, which seeks to crack down on illegal immigration while giving many currently undocumented workers a chance to work legally in this country, tout a Congressional Budget Office study that they say shows the bill would cost a whopping \$126 billion over 10 years. A fair reading of that study, however, suggests that the bill's actual impact on the deficit would be close to zero and that it could even be beneficial.

Critics add up the bill's increased tax-credit and entitlement costs while ignoring the increased tax revenue it would produce. They also substantially inflate the increased discretionary government spending that would result and overlook the bill's expected positive effects on the economy.

Let's start with revenue. The CBO found that the Senate bill would boost tax revenue by \$44 billion over 10 years by increasing the size of the work force and the number of immigrants working "above ground" and paying taxes. This would roughly offset the \$48 billion in increased entitlement costs that the CBO projects under the bill. Indeed, it estimated that after the first few years, new tax collections actually would exceed new entitlement spending.

The CBO also predicts that this increase in the size of the work force would produce benefits for the economy. Both the Congressional Budget Office and the Office of Management and Budget expect a slowdown in economic growth in coming decades as the population ages and growth in the supply of workers grinds nearly to a halt. The CBO estimates the Senate bill — because it would expand the work

Critics are  
overstating cost  
of Senate bill

force — would boost the economy, possibly by enough to produce an additional \$100 billion or more in revenue over 10 years.

This means that the Senate bill would probably reduce long-term deficits, not enlarge them. Similarly, the Social Security actuaries have found that the Senate bill would reduce the Social Security trust fund's long-term deficit and extend the program's solvency by two years.

So how did critics of the Senate bill arrive at the sensational \$126 billion figure, which appears nowhere in the CBO report? First, they counted all of the bill's spending increases while ignoring all of its increases in revenue. For example, they counted the increased costs of Social Security and Medicare benefits for those additional immigrants who would qualify for them, while ignoring the increased Social Security and Medicare payroll taxes the immigrants would pay to qualify for those benefits.

They also incorrectly assumed that the Senate bill requires \$78 billion in added discretionary spending. To be sure, the bill would authorize future appropriations of roughly that amount over 10 years. But none of these funds would actually be spent unless Congress provided them in future appropriations bills. The federal budget contains hundreds of programs that Congress funds below — often far below — the authorized amounts.

In addition, each year Congress must fit appropriations within an overall appropriations limit, as set in the congressional budget resolution. Funding increases for one set

of programs often must be offset by reductions in other programs. Consequently, any increase in discretionary spending arising from the Senate bill is likely to be offset, at least in part, by cuts in other areas. For each of the past four years, Congress has made across-the-board cuts in discretionary programs while remaining within the prescribed limits. The CBO itself did not include the \$78 billion figure in its estimate of how much new spending the Senate bill actually provides.

Finally, whatever portion of the \$78 billion ultimately shows up in future appropriations will probably be provided whether Congress passes the Senate bill or not. That is because more than 90 percent of the authorized discretionary spending would go toward the kind of enforcement measures the bill's critics strongly support, such as expanded border security and stronger measures to identify immigrants illegally seeking employment. Republican congressional leaders have made clear their intention to increase funding for enforcement activities by billions of dollars in appropriation bills that they will consider this month. Indeed, Rep. Harold Rogers, a key Appropriations subcommittee chairman, declared last week that the leadership will provide "tons of money" for this.

Because this is a subject that stirs strong emotions, debates over immigration policy demand fact and solid analysis. As Congress searches for agreement on immigration legislation, mistaken claims that the Senate bill would bust the budget only make this already difficult job harder.

Robert Greenstein is executive director of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. James Horney is a senior fellow at the center and former chief of the budget projections unit at the Congressional Budget Office.

## Water projects back on table

By Dan Walters

Sacramento Bee

Elvis Presley was a young man when bureaucrats and politicians began talking about two large projects to control and use the water that seasonal rainstorms and snowstorms dump on Northern California.

Building a high dam on the American River near Auburn, water engineers reasoned, would hold more of the seasonal flows for later use while protecting the Sacramento area from flooding.

A "Peripheral Canal," meanwhile, was touted to divert water from the Sacramento River around the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta for delivery to San Joaquin Valley farmers and Southern California homes and industries.

Construction actually began on both. Site clearance and foundation work for the Auburn Dam began in 1967, while the chunks of the 42-mile Peripheral Canal route were dug out in the 1970s to supply materials for constructing Interstate 5 south of Sacramento.

Both projects, however, fell victim to the rapidly expanding power of environmentalism in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Jimmy Carter administration halted work on the Auburn Dam, ostensibly to study its ability to withstand an earthquake, and while the Peripheral Canal project was pushed through the Legislature by then-Gov. Jerry Brown, a referendum sponsored by an odd-bedfellows alliance of environmentalists and San Joaquin Valley farmers led to voter rejection in 1982.

Ever since, intertwined flood-control and water-supply debates have proceeded on the assumption that the Auburn Dam and the Peripheral Canal were as dead as a certain former rock 'n' roll star. But just as there are occasional aspersions, albeit unsubstantiated, that Elvis is alive, neither the Auburn Dam nor the Peripheral Canal ever completely faded away — and both, in fact, are showing signs of revival in an era when global warming, Hurricane Katrina's devastation of New Orleans and other factors have changed assumptions about water.

John Doolittle, the Republican congressman who represents the Auburn area, never gave up on the dam, and as he rose in the GOP House hierarchy, he continued to push appropriations for renewing planning the project, even as local officials settled on levee improvements and altering the Folsom Dam to elevate flood protection for those near the American River.

Those projects supposedly would raise the protection level to the 200-year level, but given what happened in New Orleans, local flood-control officials are now talking about going beyond that, perhaps to a 500-year level, and that could be achieved, most likely, only by construction of another dam upstream from Folsom — such as the one at Auburn.

It's not going to happen anytime soon, perhaps never, but neither is the Auburn Dam as impossible as it appeared only a year or two ago.

The same overarching considerations also are reviving discussion about the Peripheral Canal.

What Bill  
Clinton  
knew about  
bin Laden

By Tom Fitton

Judicial Watch

In the days leading up to the anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, while most Americans were remembering those murdered that day, Bill Clinton was busy launching a pressure campaign to prevent ABC from airing the docudrama "The Path to 9/11." The Clinton attack machine was back in action again. Clinton reportedly "went ballistic" when he learned the ABC program cast his administration in an unfavorable light regarding its lackadaisical response to the threat posed by Osama bin Laden.

The truth hurts, doesn't it?

Whenever any Clinton official is criticized about that administration's impotent response to terrorism, we hear the same tired excuses: "The world was different before Sept. 11." "Hindsight is 20/20." "We didn't know the full extent of the bin Laden threat."

No one would contest the point that the world changed on 9/11. Yet there is no doubt bin Laden was a looming menace long before his 19 hijackers boarded airplanes on that day destined for the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. And Clinton knew it.

But why trust a television show when you can examine the Clinton administration's own records?

Last summer, Judicial Watch efforts led to the declassification of a "top secret" Clinton State Department intelligence report titled "Terrorism/Usama bin Ladin: Who's Chasing Whom?" The document, dated July 18, 1996, analyzes bin Laden and his network after the terrorist leader was "expelled" from Sudan and sent to Afghanistan. (The Sudanese had offered to turn bin Laden over to the United States, but the offer was rebuffed by the Clinton administration. "The FBI did not believe we had enough evidence to indict bin Laden at that time," former Clinton National Security Adviser Sandy Berger told The Washington Post.)

Here are a few excerpts from the Clinton State Department document:

■ "Bin Laden's willingness to issue recent public anti-Western threats hardly fits the image of a man running scared."

■ "(Bin Laden's) interest in supporting radical Islamists extends well beyond the Middle East."

■ "(Bin Laden's) interest in Afghanistan ... could prove more dangerous to U.S. interests in the long run than his three-year liaison with Khartoum (Sudan)."

■ "Even a bin Laden on the move can retain the capability to support individuals and groups who have the motive and wherewithal to attack U.S. interests almost worldwide."

With all of the intelligence failures that contributed to 9/11, this is one piece of good intelligence that was simply ignored. Just as the State Department report essentially predicted, bin Laden attacked the United States on two more occasions during the Clinton years. The 1998 bombing of two U.S. embassies in Africa and the 2000 bombing of the U.S.S. Cole in Yemen resulted in the murder of 300 people. Then came 9/11.

The truth — whether Clinton wants to acknowledge it or not — is that his administration was warned about the threat posed by bin Laden. The administration chose not to address the threat seriously, which is one reason why Americans were forced to commemorate a heartbreaking anniversary last week.

Tom Fitton is president of the Washington, D.C.-based Judicial Watch, a 501(c)(3) educational foundation dedicated to fighting government corruption and judicial abuse. For more information, visit www.judicialwatch.org.

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