



Please send
your letters to:

**Association of
Washington Business**

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Or e-mail them to:

RonD@awb.org

My idea is to put a 10 percent tax on imports and have all the money go to Social Security. Does this make sense?

Jim Mickelson
Northwest Embroidery, Milton

Amen to Bill Gates

Editor's Note: Carey Doyle is a math and science teacher at Shalala Middle School in Vancouver. She sent the following letter after reading Bill Gates Feb. 26 speech on high schools to the National Governor's Association in Washington, D.C. Gates called for a restructuring of high schools, something Doyle and her fellow teachers have started to implement.

Amen! Great speech, Bill.

That is why our middle school is on block schedules so we have a smaller number of students during the day and we can collaborate with each other as teaching professionals.

We have about 300 7th grade students in our school and divide the staff into a number of three-teacher teams. In my team, I see 75 students a day in three math classes. My two colleagues teach science and social studies and writing and reading blocks.

We have 80 to 85 minutes with each group. Our team conducts parent conferences together. We support one another and do a lot of cross-curriculum integration, so as students move from subject to subject we are building upon what they are learning. A key to our success is using a common language so everyone is on the same page.

We are excited about teaching and subsequently have a very low number of failing students.

All I can say is Bill Gates hit the nail on the head. Way to go, Bill.

Carey Doyle
Shalala Middle School, Vancouver

Alternative to Government-Mandated Family Leave

State-paid family leave initiatives mean well, but there is a better way. Business, government, advocacy groups and workers alike recognize a need for balancing work and family life—the issues are approach, responsibility, and cost.

California enacted the United States' first paid family leave program. Several other states have paid family leave legislation pending. California's program is funded by employees, while others, such as Washington's, would be funded by workers and employers.

In reality, the debate is not about whether something should be done to help workers balance work and family, but how should the issues be approached, who should be responsible, and who will pay.

Changing demographic factors in the last two generations have made juggling our work lives and the needs of our families difficult. Recognizing this, Congress passed the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. But FMLA only protects government workers and those who work for companies with 50 or more employees. Additionally, FMLA does not make provisions for pay during the protected leave.

Employers have responded by changing or adding workers' benefits. Examples include allowing sick leave to be used when caring for an ill family member, or changing leave time from a designated purpose—such as for vacation, holiday or sickness—to personal time that may be used for any purpose.

But with all of the laws and employer-provided benefits, most workers in the United States still worry whether they could they afford to miss work to care for their family.

Today there are insurance policies available for health, life, disability and maternity, but no insurance is available to protect against financial hardship if people must take significant time from work to care for loved ones. Based on the results of the 1995 and 2000 FMLA surveys, each year as many as 17 million U.S. workers have to choose between earning income and caring for a seriously ill family member.

The answer is low-cost, commercially available insurance. Unfortunately, no insurance company offers such insurance.

Research shows a policy that covers care of a seriously ill family member and care of newborns and newly adopted or fostered children, can cost as little \$3 per month for a minimum-wage employee or \$8 per month for someone earning \$13 per hour, to receive an income of 60 percent of their regular pay. These are truly affordable rates for any worker. And, unlike Washington's proposal, this insurance will cover up to the full 12 weeks afforded by FMLA.

Jesse Rothschild, President and CEO
Rothschild-Landry Holding, Inc., St. Francisville, La.

Hard to Compete

Maybe our politicians should check the margins to see just how their legislation affects people. There is no more perfect example of "margins" as there is in Clarkston, which of course is right on the Washington-Idaho border. On the Washington side, there is a \$7.35 minimum wage, there is a horrendous B&O tax, there is a sales tax of 7 percent, there are no minimum wage credits, there is a tax on labor etc., etc., etc.

On the Idaho side, just across the river, minimum wage is \$5.15, there is no B&O tax, there is a sales tax of 6 percent, there is a wage tax credit, and no tax on labor etc., etc., etc. In my humble opinion, we will watch Clarkston slowly deteriorate, just like water wears rock...and then to add even more legislation...just boggles my mind. Good intentions are going to be death of us.

We're already fighting a huge uphill battle; please don't make it even worse.

John Fazzari
Fazzari's Finest, Clarkston

Eye-Opening Cost Comparisons

Just a note to give you a talking point for costs comparisons. I pay the state of Washington 49.77 cents per hour to Labor and Industry for an embroidery machine operator (industrial insurance portion). That doesn't include added taxes for Social Security or unemployment, nor the base salary and other employee benefits.

In China, I pay 60 cents per hour for an embroidery machine operator which includes everything. That includes base salary and taxes. It is getting scary.