



CASCADE UPDATE

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Case for school choice

Primer gives the facts, debunks the myths

After decades of struggle the movement for school choice—the right, freedom and ability of parents to choose the best schools for their children—has hit the national scene. However even those who support choice and competition in education have many questions about the related reform proposals. Why does choice improve education? How are tuition tax credits different from vouchers? Can parents and private schools rise to the school choice challenge?

In the Cascade report, *The case for choice in schooling: Restoring parental control of education*, author Matthew J. Brouillette puts the current debate in context with a brief history of education in America and an overview of the failed reform attempts of recent decades. Further, he details the spectrum of school choice alternatives,

assessing the benefits and drawbacks of each. This easy-to-read document also features a section addressing frequently asked questions about school choice, and a useful glossary of related terms.

“Removing the financial and political barriers that prevent families from choosing the safest and best schools will unleash the creative power of educators to improve education for all students.”

– Matthew J. Brouillette

“The first step in understanding the state of education today is to review how government came to be the dominant force behind schooling in the United States,” writes Brouillette, director of education policy at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy and a former teacher.

Cascade education policy analyst Nick Weller concurs, “The historical perspective is essential. It tells us that an educational system can succeed with minimal government involvement. It also shows where we went wrong. The history of government schooling in America fundamentally reflects a marginalization of parental control. To restore educational quality we must bring parents back into the equation.”

Private schools meet religious, cultural intolerance

In his report Brouillette describes the educational system prior to government involvement. “From the outset of the first settlements in the New World, Americans founded and successfully maintained a decentralized network of schools through the 1850s,” says Brouillette. He notes that in 1817 a study by the “Boston School Committee” determined that fully 96 percent of the city’s children attended school, despite the lack of compulsory attendance

laws, and the fact that these schools were private.

Not only was private education in demand during these early years in American history, it was quite successful.

Brouillette states, “Literacy in the North rose from 75 percent to between 91 and 97 percent between 1800 and 1840, the years prior to compulsory schooling and governmental provision and operation of education.”

“The history of government schooling in America fundamentally reflects a marginalization of parental control. To restore educational quality we must bring parents back into the equation.”

– Nick Weller

The “common school” movement did not arise in response to any failure of private schools to educate. Rather it was the desire to establish religious and social control—especially in response to increased Catholic immigration—which led government to enter and eventually dominate the education market.

Widespread prejudice and an attendant mistrust of parents continued to inspire attacks on private schooling well into the next century. In 1922 Oregon voters passed the Compulsory Education Act, strongly supported by the Ku Klux Klan, which



Matthew J. Brouillette

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“Essential liberty” must survive terrorist attacks

Just days after the horrific attacks on America, citizens across the country are justifiably outraged and searching for answers. No sense can be made of the atrocities that took the lives of thousands of innocents, robbed so many of their loved ones, and left America and the world in a state of shock. There is no justification. We are heartbroken.

The nation’s leaders must focus their energies on finding those responsible for such unspeakable acts and bringing them to justice. Americans stand united in this resolve. Exacting justice will not be easy, however.

As this message is penned on September 14—a national day of prayer and remembrance—we can only guess what actions might have been taken by the time Cascade’s newsletter reaches you. We can only imagine what subsequent retaliation threatens U.S. citizens in the weeks and months to come.

In the face of the unknown, Americans are

reaffirming their love of country. So too, we must strengthen commitment to the freedom that has made ours the most shining example of liberty and prosperity ever known to the world.

On this point, *Washington Post* columnist E. J. Dionne wrote, “Terror is designed to paralyze. It succeeds when a country loses confidence in itself—when it gives up what it values most...[O]ur central resolve must be to go on being Americans, to remain a people who cherish our liberties and never allow a small, mad group to push us into questioning the value of freedom.”

Dionne’s words are especially important to remember now, as voices are raised across the country expressing a willingness to curb our civil liberties in order to tighten security. We’re already seeing a flurry of proposals—calls for body searches at airports, stricter control of flight schools, and expansion of police investigative powers only scratch the

surface. Americans never would have accepted such restrictive and invasive policies prior to September 11.

On the home front, we must resist the temptation to, in the words of Benjamin Franklin, “give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety.”

Our long-term actions abroad are open to more questions. Cato Institute’s director of defense policy studies, Ivan Eland, has written extensively on how to gain more security by altering our foreign policy. His related commentary, written three years ago in 1998, is on page 7. It holds important points for consideration as we enter this War on Terrorism, and set foreign policy in the years to come.

Steve Buckstein, President

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Cascade hosts debate workshop

Cascade is pleased to announce that it is partnering with the [Foundation for Economic Education \(FEE\)](#) to launch a new student outreach program on September 29: the [Oregon high school debate workshop](#). The program combines Cascade’s successful history of youth activities, including the Independence Essay Competition for high school students and the college research internship program, with FEE’s more than 50 years of experience as a resource for high school debate students.

The workshop features expert speakers and useful materials presenting free-market approaches to the annual debate topic. This year’s topic is tragically timely: “Resolved: That the United States federal government should establish a foreign policy significantly limiting the use of weapons of mass destruction.” See page 7 for a related commentary.

Spearheading the Institute’s foray into the debate arena is Cascade education policy analyst Nick Weller. Weller is a former champion debater in both high school and college and also coached at the collegiate level. “High school debaters are usually inquisitive and tend to look for a competitive advantage in debate,” said Weller. “By offering economic information and policy perspectives that are often ignored by the major media, Cascade and FEE can provide a valuable education and help students win debate rounds.”

Focusing on debate students is not a coincidence. Many go on to jobs where they

influence politics or public policy. Past studies indicate that a high percentage of legislators participated in high school or college debate.

“Many students get their first exposure to market principles through debate,” said Greg Rehmke, director of speech and debate at FEE. “This self-education in economics often leads to more students understanding and using market-oriented arguments.”

Workshop attendees have the opportunity to learn from both Rehmke and Rich Edwards, associate professor of communications at Baylor University. Edwards has 25 years of involvement in high school speech and debate and is widely regarded as one of the foremost experts on policy debate.



Nick Weller represents Cascade at the National Debate Tournament in Oklahoma City in June.

Klamath Basin solutions proposed

Compensating farmers, clarifying water rights, and reducing the federal government's role in land management are the top solutions proposed in the new Cascade study, "The Klamath Basin crisis: A need for property rights." Environmental policy director John A. Charles examines the history leading up to this summer's water crisis, which left 1,400 farmers and four National Wildlife Refuges without water, and recommends short- and long-term steps to take for resolution.

"Fundamentally this is a conflict caused by unclear property rights and inappropriate government involvement in the economy."

— John A. Charles

The immediate crisis began on April 5 when the federal government declared that water stored in Klamath Project reservoirs would be withheld from most agricultural uses to provide habitat for the endangered shortnose sucker fish. Though the media has

understandably portrayed a conflict of farmers versus fish, the underlying problems run much deeper. Charles writes, "Fundamentally this is a conflict caused by unclear property rights and inappropriate government involvement in the economy."

Irrigation of the Klamath Basin began privately in 1882, and by 1903 roughly 13,000 acres were being commercially farmed. "Had irrigation remained a private endeavor it's likely that farming would have continued to expand incrementally," Charles notes, "but probably not to the scope seen today due to the difficulty in obtaining market-rate financing for the vast network of dams and canals that eventually became the Klamath Project." However the federal government did get involved, drastically changing the Klamath landscape to enable agricultural expansion. By the late 1990s the Project was providing irrigation for 235,667 acres of lands.

The demand on Klamath water is exacerbated by the lack of clear property rights in the region. Charles explains, "The federal government has a paternalistic relationship with irrigators, wildlife refuge managers, and various Indian tribes (who have treaty claims to customary fishing

"Once property rights are established and available for trade, resources such as water, wetlands and fish will be firmly under the management of private parties who place high value on them, and their long-term survival will be ensured."

— John A. Charles

practices), which means that their access to water is not based on real property rights, but on political compromises that can be changed at any time."

In the short-term, Charles recommends compensating farmers for their losses of water. The Land and Water Conservation Fund—which currently has an unappropriated balance of \$13.2 billion—is specifically referred to in Section 5 (b) of the Endangered

Turn to Klamath, page 7

Privatization seminar draws protestors

On July 31 and August 1 Cascade hosted seminars in Salem and Medford on "Privatizing local services...and living to tell about it!" Sixty local officials, public employees, and members of the business community spent a half-day learning how contracting out can be a tool to improve services, reduce costs, and empower and motivate employees.

The featured speaker at both seminars was Robin A. Johnson, an alderman of Monmouth, Illinois. Johnson, who grew up in an active "Democratic union household,"—his father was a union president—is also director of the

Privatization Center at the Reason Public Policy Institute. He was joined by Marsha Clark, director, Polk County Human Services. Clark reviewed how her department was able to improve delivery by contracting out counseling services, and discussed a public/private transit venture in Yamhill, Polk, and Marion counties.

"[Privatization] might be a tool to create more efficiency.... It's amazing that people would spend time and energy protesting those discussions."

— Mike McLaran, Salem Area Chamber of Commerce

Protestors lined the sidewalk by 7:30 am on July 31, greeting seminar attendees as they arrived at the Salem Area Chamber of Commerce building. This marked the first time Cascade was the target of such activity. Mike McLaran, executive director of the Chamber, which co-sponsored the event, expressed a common sentiment in a quote to

the *Statesman Journal*: "[Privatization] might be a tool to create more efficiency.... It's amazing that people would spend time and energy protesting those discussions."

Johnson told seminar participants how his town of Monmouth, population 10,000, contracted out its entire public works department, "which saved money, improved service quality, and, believe it or not, won the endorsement of our union employees."

Johnson's presentations emphasized the importance of involving public employees in the privatization process. "These people had families, health insurance, vacation and retirement issues. You have to put yourself in their position. If some company is taking over and they're going to hire you, you'd have a lot of questions too."

After months of dialogue Johnson and his colleagues began winning over Monmouth employees. He recounted, "Their union rep was going to Hawaii for a vacation and she told the union members not to meet or talk with any city officials until she got back. They called a meeting without her and voted to endorse [the privatization plan] 20 to 4. They're the real heroes in all of this...because

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Robin A. Johnson speaks with Brookings City Councilor Rick Dentino.

Initiative under assault

By Eric Winters, J.D.

Oregon is commonly regarded as the birthplace of the Initiative, and we can be proud of that heritage. A century after adoption, Oregon's Initiative system routinely attracts national attention by placing political hot potatoes in the hands of the first branch of government: the People.

A recent line of cases, however, suggests Oregon's dynamic laboratory of democracy has been emasculated. In 1998, the Oregon Supreme Court overturned Measure 40 in *Armatta v. Kitzhaber*. Measure 40 (a.k.a. the Crime Victims Bill of Rights) was a constitutional amendment containing a number of criminal procedure provisions. It ruffled many feathers in the Judiciary.

“Oregon’s Initiative system routinely attracts national attention by placing political hot potatoes in the hands of the first branch of government: the People. A recent line of cases, however, suggests this dynamic laboratory of democracy has been emasculated.”

Relying upon an obscure provision in the Oregon Constitution that had been undefined for 92 years, the Court discovered a new check upon the Initiative power. Determining that Measure 40 made multiple changes to the Constitution that were “substantive” and not “closely related,” the Court threw the

amendment out under a newly recognized “Separate Vote” test. This case shifted enormous political power from the People to the Judicial Branch.

The Separate Vote test under *Armatta* had vague parameters, providing lower courts with little guidance as to which measures might pass or fail. The *Armatta* Court used a subjective analysis in determining whether separate amendments were “closely related.” This brought about the specter of a court invalidating only politically disfavored amendments (like Measure 40). The Court of Appeals soon remedied this concern by employing an objective analysis that no amendment could pass.

The Court of Appeals held that substantive changes are not “closely related” if one proposed change is not “necessarily implied” by another proposed change. Judges must then peer into the minds of hypothetical voters to determine what sorts of changes “necessarily imply” each other. The result so far seems to be none. The Court of Appeals has applied their “necessarily implies” analysis three times, and in each case amendments were found lacking.

Now the circuit courts are using the hair-splitting analysis employed by the Court of Appeals. The first victim was last year's Measure 7, an amendment requiring compensation to landowners when regulations lower property values. It was immediately overturned, and now hangs in limbo on appeal. The judge speculated whether certain exceptions to the amendment (the measure exempts casinos and adult bookstores) should have been considered separately by voters. Was it “necessarily implied” that a voter favoring casino exemptions would also favor adult bookstore exemptions (or vice-versa)? Under such an exacting analysis it was doomed.

Legislators recognized this new method for overturning constitutional amendments might come in handy in their struggle to avoid term limits. Oregonians approved term limits in 1992 by a two-to-one margin. Not wanting to bring the issue back before the voters (apparently term limits are still quite popular), emboldened legislators passed legislation aiding a Separate Vote challenge to term limits.

Oregon's term limits apply to all elected state policy makers. The challenge argued that the term limits for each type of elected official should

have been considered separately by the voters.

In July, term limits were thrown out—nine years after their passage. The judge found no applicable statute of limitations protecting old ballot measures from Separate Vote challenges brought years later.

“Enormous political pressure was exerted to scuttle Measure 7 and to overturn term limits. However, doing so leaves the rest of the Constitution covered in question marks while effectively eliminating the power of future Oregon voters to bring meaningful changes to their Constitution.”

This ruling opens a whole new can of legal worms. Dozens of old amendments are suddenly vulnerable to the Separate Vote test, some so fundamental that abolishing them would upset the entire structure of government. Challenges to the lottery, legislative redistricting, legislator qualifications and the authority of the Court of Appeals are already filed. These suits are no joke, as evidenced by Oregon's inability to find buyers for our lottery-backed bonds (nearly prompting a special legislative session). Challenges to urban renewal projects, prison work requirements, the state Emergency Board and property tax limits cannot be far away.

The Supreme Court faces high stakes. Enormous political pressure was exerted to scuttle Measure 7 and to overturn term limits. However, doing so leaves the rest of the Constitution covered in question marks while effectively eliminating the power of future Oregon voters to bring meaningful changes to their Constitution. Even those who hate term limits or fear Measure 7 should give pause before encouraging a result that so clearly undermines the role of Oregonians in shaping their government.

Eric Winters, J.D., is an attorney in private practice in Portland and an adjunct scholar to Cascade. He recently filed two suits challenging previously adopted constitutional amendments on “Separate Vote” grounds to illustrate the problem with the *Armatta* analysis. For more on this topic see his [Policy Perspective](#) by the same title at www.cascadepolicy.org.



Cascade's Kurt T. Weber speaks with Dr. David C. MacDonald, vice president of American Association of Patients and Providers (www.aapp.net). Weber and MacDonald spoke at Oregon Health Forum's seminar in June .

Forbes publisher predicts a bright tech future

On July 19 Cascade hosted a luncheon with *Forbes* magazine publisher Rich Karlgaard, whose talk, "Internet Boom: Act II," addressed what's next on the Internet horizon and why he's optimistic about the future of the tech economy. The forward-thinking topic drew 330 attendees—Cascade's biggest luncheon audience yet.

Karlgaard began with the assertion that "the capital drought affecting net stocks most resembles the bust in PC stocks following its first boom from 1977 to 1983." Based on that comparison, Karlgaard thinks the downturn won't last long. Act II of the Internet, he says, will occur when a catalyst technology changes everything, just as the 386 chip did in 1986, which enabled graphical user interfaces and transformed the PC.

"People aren't going to invest in broadband if they're not going to have the chance to make a huge profit. I think it's the prospect of monopoly rents that encourages entrepreneurs and venture capitalists, so in broadband you've got to let people pursue monopolies."

— Rich Karlgaard, *Forbes*

What might the catalyst be to set the Internet on the high road again? First and foremost, Karlgaard predicts it will be "last-mile broadband that's really cheap, easy to use and install, and always on. With DSL and cable modems, I don't think we have anything

close to that right now."

"Here's why I'm an optimist," Karlgaard ventured, "and why I think the relevant comparison for the Internet is the PC industry, and not railroads or automobiles or radio or television, or any of these other industries that had their boom and bust, and though they became pervasive industries, never got back to their rate of growth and wealth creation that they had in their first era: None of those industries were evolving at the pace that the Internet technologies are."

He continued, "The three fundamental technologies to keep your eye on, that underlie everything, that made possible personal computers, software, and the Internet itself, are these three: semiconductors, storage devices and communications. You have to process bits, you have to store bits, and you have to move bits."

"Semiconductor technology, as Moore's Law on silicon tells us, gets twice as good every 18 months at the same price point.... And here's what's really interesting: Semiconductors are actually evolving the slowest of the big three. Storage is doubling about every 12 months, and communication is moving the fastest of all. Fiber is doubling about every six months in its capacity to carry bits."

Karlgaard pointed out, "Moore's Law has been in operation since 1959 and it's still chugging along. Nothing in human history has ever improved at an exponential rate for 42 years. And it's still got another 10 years to go at least."

When asked by one audience member what role he saw for government in facilitating his vision of the future, Karlgaard responded, "This is where I get kind of pessimistic. The future for the whole digital world is communications, but when you get into communications you get into industries that have historically been regulated and so things are moving at a little slower pace.

The 1996 Telecom Act was one of those things that looked good on paper, but hasn't worked out so well."

"Capital taxes are the most stimulative tax cut that's ever been invented."

— Rich Karlgaard, *Forbes*

"People aren't going to invest in broadband if they're not going to have the chance to make a huge profit," he continued. "I think it's the prospect of monopoly rents that encourages entrepreneurs and venture capitalists, so in broadband you've got to let people pursue monopolies. And because you have Moore's Law and its equivalent in storage in broadband, I don't think the monopolies will last that long."

Beyond telecom deregulation, Karlgaard suggested that government could help facilitate growth in the tech economy by cutting the capital gains tax rate. When asked what rate he preferred Karlgaard responded, "That's easy: zero.... Capital taxes are the most stimulative tax cut that's ever been invented."



Forbes publisher Rich Karlgaard is interviewed by KOIN TV's Joel Iwanaga following the Cascade luncheon.

Privatization . . .

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they had the guts to stand up to their rep and say this is in our interest."

The privatization proposal was also in the interests of Monmouth residents and taxpayers. The city was running an operating

Cascade wishes to thank the Association of Oregon Counties, Chamber of Medford/Jackson County, and Salem Area Chamber of Commerce, for their co-sponsorships and assistance in promoting the privatization seminars.

deficit; it faced rising costs and shrinking revenues; and deferred maintenance and capital replacement issues existed. With the new contract the city saved \$300,000, and still benefited from needed service improvements.

Following the seminars Brookings City Councilor Rick Dentino wrote, "Thanks for the informative session yesterday. You folks pack lots of info in a short morning meeting. Glad I took the time to attend... Cascade Policy has certainly whetted my appetite for slicker rural government."

Oregon media took note of the events as

well. Articles covering the seminars appeared in the *Portland Business Journal*, *Salem Statesman Journal* and *Medford Mail Tribune*, and Johnson was interviewed on KPDQ and KKGTV radio.

For more on this topic, refer to the Cascade Commentary, "Small towns benefit through privatization," by Johnson at cascadepolicy.org. CDs of Johnson's presentations are available from Cascade for \$5, which includes shipping and handling. Call (503) 242-0900 to place an order.

required all children ages 8 to 16 to attend government—and only government—schools. Seventeen other states considered similar legislation at the time. Before the law was enacted in Oregon, however, it was overturned, a decision upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.

“From the outset of the first settlements in the New World, Americans founded and successfully maintained a decentralized network of schools through the 1850s.”

— Matthew J. Brouillette.

Private education continued, but it retained a much smaller market share. Brouillette notes that today, 90 percent of students nationwide, and 93 percent of students in Oregon, attend government schools.

Educational disarmament

The record of public schools has been of grave concern over the last decades. In April 1983 the National Commission on Excellence in Education produced its landmark report on government education, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*. “If an unfriendly power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war,” the commission warned. “We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament.”

The desire to establish religious and social control—especially in response to increased Catholic immigration—led government to enter and eventually dominate the education market.

Unfortunately many of the reforms that have been tried since the publication of *A Nation at Risk* have failed, or even exacerbated the problem. For example, the school system has undergone greater

centralization of control through consolidation of school districts—a move that further dilutes parental influence in education.

Additional resources have not helped. Brouillette points out, “Between 1970 and 1997...total revenues for public schools increased from \$44.5 billion to \$305 billion, yet scores on the SAT have dropped by 27 points at the same time.” Rules-based reforms, such as extending instructional time, adjusting teacher certification requirements, or imposing national or state testing, have likewise “failed to turn around a large-scale decline in education,” says Brouillette.

Restoring educational freedom

“Education reformers are increasingly prescribing incentive-based reforms where rules and resource efforts have failed,” Brouillette notes. “Removing the financial and political barriers that prevent families from choosing the safest and best schools will unleash the creative power of educators to improve education for all students.”

“If an unfriendly power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war...We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament.”

— National Commission on Excellence in Education, *A Nation at Risk*, 1983

Brouillette discusses numerous choice options, from *limited educational choice*—such as magnet and charter schools, and open enrollment across school districts—to *full educational choice*. The reforms in this latter category alleviate the problem of requiring parents to pay for both tuition and school taxes, through vouchers, private scholarship funds and tuition tax credits, each of which comes in many forms.

For example, voucher proposals vary dramatically. At the most basic level they are direct payments from the government to individuals for the purchase of goods and services on the open market. However vouchers may or may not include regulations on private schools, or limitations

on who can participate, such as only low-income children, or only students in failing public schools.

“Education reformers are increasingly prescribing incentive-based reforms where rules and resource efforts have failed.”

— Matthew J. Brouillette

Alternatively, tuition tax credits provide parents with tax relief linked to educational expenses, allowing families to retain enough personal income to afford safer and better schools for their children. Says Brouillette, “Many proponents of educational tax credits prefer them to vouchers on the grounds that they entail less government regulation of private schools and less risk of entanglement between church and state because of their indirect nature.”

The *universal* tuition tax credit includes a special provision to ensure that low-income families without sufficient tax liability can also benefit. These credits allow any taxpayer—individual or corporate—to contribute to the education of any elementary or secondary student and receive a dollar-for-dollar credit against taxes owed. Because they can be claimed by any taxpayer—not just parents—and used by any student, these tax credits are termed “universal.” In 1998 Cascade published the *Oregon Parental Choice Tax Credit*, a report that adapted this idea specifically for Oregon.

Finally, private scholarship programs can provide tuition assistance to low-income families. The Children’s Scholarship Fund—Portland, which Cascade facilitates, is one example; it is part of a national program that Brouillette calls “one of the largest private investments ever made on behalf of American school children.”

Given the wide variety of school choice proposals currently being discussed, Brouillette warns, “School choice supporters must remain vigilant in their efforts to prevent poorly designed legislation.” His report, *The case for choice in schooling*, will help Oregonians learn about the background of private and public education, navigate the maze of school reforms, and develop informed conclusions.

The case for choice in schooling is available online at www.cascadepolicy.org or by calling (503) 242-0900.

Reducing the threat of terrorism

by Ivan Eland

The following commentary was written in 1998, three years prior to our recent national tragedy. This abridged version addresses one area of focus at Cascade's September 29 high school debate workshop. The current debate topic is, "Resolved: That the United States federal government should establish a foreign policy significantly limiting the use of weapons of mass destruction." For a message from Cascade president Steve Buckstein specifically addressing the September 11 attacks on America please turn to page 2.

The U.S. government recently warned American citizens worldwide that they are potential targets of terrorist attacks financed by Osama bin Laden. First, the FBI alerted the U.S. business community overseas that bin Laden had offered bounties worth thousands of dollars for killing Americans. Later, the State Department issued a warning that "Americans should maintain a low profile, vary routes and times for all required travel and treat mail from unfamiliar sources with suspicion."

Such warnings illustrate the difficulty the world's only remaining superpower faces in protecting its citizens against lowly terrorist groups.

Most people—no matter where they fall on the American political spectrum—would agree that one of the most important functions of any government is to protect citizens and their property. In fact, that should be the first goal of any nation's security policy and should not be sacrificed for lesser goals. Yet U.S. security policy violates that fundamental principle.

One of three terrorist attacks worldwide is directed against a U.S. target. And that's not because the United States is a rich capitalist nation. There are plenty of countries that fit that description. It's not because the United States exports its "decadent" culture overseas. Other nations export Western culture, and some of their exports are as "decadent" as or more "decadent" than those of the United States. No, terrorists attack the United States primarily for what it does, not what it is.

Even after the Cold War, the United States continues to intervene willy-nilly in the affairs of other nations. It seems especially inclined to meddle in internecine ethnic disputes abroad, most recently in Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo. Ethnic conflicts, which often arouse great passions, spawn groups that commit acts of terror to retaliate for U.S. intervention. Terrorists, such as bin Laden, also object to U.S. support of regimes they

regard as unsavory.

During the Cold War, the perceived benefits of such intervention in the Third World—forestalling the influence of a communist superpower—were greater than the perceived consequences, terrorist attacks that were regarded by great powers as pinpricks. That logic was always dubious, but the calculus has now changed dramatically.

With the demise of the Soviet Union, the need for such intervention—particularly in regions that have never been particularly strategic to the United States—is highly questionable. The United States appears to be interfering in such places because it can, not because it must. In sum, the benefits of such intervention—modest even during the Cold War—have declined.

At the same time, the potential costs of an interventionist foreign policy have escalated dramatically. Today, terrorist groups seeking revenge for U.S. interference seem more willing than their predecessors to kill on a horrifying scale. The Egyptian fundamentalist who headed the group that tried to bring down the World Trade Center in New York [in 1993] said that he was trying to kill 250,000 people. The proliferation of chemical, biological and nuclear materials and technology (used in making weapons of mass destruction) around the world makes it much easier for terrorists to achieve this gruesome goal at a U.S. installation overseas or even right here at home.

According to FBI director Louis Freeh, "The trend toward more large-scale incidents designed for maximum destruction, terror, and media impact actually places an increasing proportion of our population at risk." He concluded, "These weapons of mass destruction represent perhaps the most serious

potential threat facing the United States today."

If Freeh is correct—and mere logic indicates that he is—this threat overwhelms any threat (real or imagined) from instability in far-away places such as Bosnia or Kosovo. The strategic environment has changed dramatically. Even comparatively weak terrorist groups can now inflict massive damage on a superpower. Unfortunately, while the Clinton administration acknowledges the problem, it shies away from the only viable way to significantly reduce the chances of a catastrophic attack. Because terrorist attacks using weapons of mass destruction are extremely difficult to prevent or mitigate, the administration needs to concentrate its efforts on minimizing the motivation for such attacks in the first place. The United States should resist the temptation to intervene overseas in situations that are not critical to its vital interests. This temptation will be especially great when humanitarian arguments are offered for intervention. But even when it is not a cover for other motives, intervention for humanitarian purposes is usually not perceived as neutral by all parties to a conflict. Some of those parties may eventually seek revenge for U.S. intervention they resent.

In short, U.S. policymakers should get back to basics and remember that a nation's security policy should first protect its own citizens, both overseas and at home.

Ivan Eland is director of defense policy studies at the [Cato Institute](#). He wrote the above commentary September 25, 1998.

Klamath . . .

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Species Act as a means for "acquiring lands, waters, or interests therein" needed for the implementation of the Act.

Looking ahead, the federal government's involvement in Oregon agriculture and wildlife management should be drastically reduced. "The mission of the Bureau of Reclamation should be re-examined with an eye towards...dismantling of the agency itself," suggests Charles, and the Endangered Species Act should be "completely repealed." "The value of wildlife for non-consumptive purposes...has never been higher," he notes. "When natural assets have such high value, the best way to enhance that value is through

market mechanisms."

Charles states, "The primary job for the government is to sort out and clarify the competing property rights claimed by Tribal interests, farmers, refuge managers, and special interests such as environmental policy groups. Once those property rights are established and available for trade, resources such as water, wetlands and fish will be firmly under the management of private parties who place high value on them, and their long-term survival will be ensured."

[The Klamath Basin crisis](#) is online at www.cascadepolicy.org.

Events

September 29 – Cascade hosts the Oregon high school debate workshop at Glencoe High School in Hillsboro.

October 20 – John A. Charles discusses environmental protection and economic growth at the Society of Environmental Journalists' National Conference in Portland.

October 25 – Cascade hosts school choice advocate and Newark, NJ City Councilor Cory Booker in Portland.

October 25 – John A. Charles speaks at the Federalist Society's Environmental Law Symposium at Lewis & Clark's Northwestern School of Law.

November 17 – Cato Institute senior fellow Doug Bandow and author James Bovard speak at Freedom Seminar's conference in Portland.

Kudos to John Charles

Cascade's John A. Charles is the proud recipient of a 2001 Better Newspaper Contest award from the [Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association](#). His *Sandy Profile* commentary, "Celebrating the irrelevancy of politics," earned third place in the Best Local Column category.

Charles' August 24, 2000 column applauded Americans for paying so little attention to the Republican and Democratic national conventions. Where many see apathy, Charles writes, "I view it as a healthy recognition by average citizens that most professional politicians are irrelevant."

Charles makes his case by illustrating the benefit of a civil society, in which power is dispersed among individuals, over a political society, in which power is centralized in government. "In a political world, the government takes large portions of your wealth through taxes and regulations, dumps the money in various pots, and redistributes it based on the preferences of the political class," he writes. "This is a world of coercion.

You either behave as directed, or go to jail."

In contrast, he explains, "In a civil society, most interactions are based on mutual consent. ...People participate in Little League, Kiwanis, United Way, Girl Scouts, Mountain Rescue, or any of the millions of other organizations where people work together for common goals, acting on the basis of mutual respect, not fear and coercion."

Charles notes that rising affluence has shown millions of Americans that much of government is simply irrelevant. "Free trade," he writes, "is the engine that creates wealth, not political pork-barreling."

For the multitude of Americans that missed the major parties' national conventions Charles says not to worry: "Whatever else you were doing was probably a lot more useful to the development of a civil society."

"Celebrating the irrelevancy of politics" is online at www.cascadepolicy.org/commentary.asp.

Publications

The Klamath Basin crisis: A need for property rights, John A. Charles, Policy Insight No. 119, August.

Initiative under assault: A power struggle between branches, Eric Winters, J.D., Policy Perspective No. 1018, August.

Will work for school, Nick Weller, Cascade Commentary 2001-27, August.

Workers deserve choice in representation, William B. Conerly, Ph.D., CC 2001-26, August.

Finding solutions in the Klamath Basin, John A. Charles, CC 2001-25, August.

The case for choice in schooling: Restoring parental control in education, Matthew J. Brouillette, Policy Insight No. 118, July.

A tribute to brewing, a lesson on government, Kurt T. Weber, CC 2001-24, July.

Small towns benefit through privatization, Robin A. Johnson, CC 2001-23, July.

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

Now hiring!

Cascade Policy Institute is now hiring for the position of Director of Operations. This professional position has a variety of responsibilities and challenges. Duties include IT support, publication development and management, bookkeeping, website maintenance and other responsibilities as needed. For a full job description visit www.cascadepolicy.org. To apply contact Ms. Tamar Hare at (503) 242-0900 or email your resume to jobs@cascadepolicy.org.



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