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Voice of the People, Jun. 17

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Transitioning off oil

advertisement

I, like many people, enjoy the freedom of driving my van. I live in the south suburbs and find it would be difficult to transport my young children around without it. However, I know that it is important for me to figure out some other methods for transportation, like walking when the weather is good and taking the Metra and buses when possible. Coming from a middle-class family, it is next to impossible for us to buy a hybrid car.

The oil spilling in the Gulf Coast is living proof that it's time for a change. Too many people's livelihoods have been damaged due to that spill, including my own. If we don't transition off of oil, the next disaster is just a matter of time. How many more people and animals need to be sacrificed?

— *Joy Heine, Homewood*

Cleaner energy

It's a 14-letter word that no one wants to hear: "responsibility." I am not for letting BP off the hook. I am, however, for being honest.

Then let's be honest: *We* demand that energy be provided. *We* demand that it be priced "reasonably" (whatever that means). Then *we* have to be aware of our energy sources. *We* have to support clean energy. In the end (big picture/long run), it doesn't cost more and we wouldn't kill ourselves and other life (Earth does not belong only to human beings) in the process.

— *Barbara Blough, Chicago*

Dealing with stuttering

I enjoyed Tribune columnist Clarence Page's "Conquering stuttering" (Commentary, June 9), about his past struggles with stuttering. Page mentioned some big names who stutter. I would like to inform Tribune readers that a comprehensive list of "Famous People Who Stutter" can be found on the Web site of the Stuttering Foundation (www.stutteringhelp.org). Also the site has "Celebrity Corner" articles, in-depth profiles of famous people and how they deal with their stuttering.

When I was growing up in the 1970s, I knew of no famous people who stuttered and had no role models as a result.

Aside from listing and profiling famous people, the Web site of this nonprofit organization offers many free resources for stuttering.

— *Carlo Peluso, Arlington Heights*

Help with stuttering

We applaud Clarence Page's excellent June 9 column and congratulate him on his leadership award and efforts to shed some light on stuttering, which affects more than 3 million Americans.

However, your readers should also know how to contact an excellent nonprofit source of help, the Stuttering Foundation. We provide information on the latest research, a worldwide resource list of speech pathologists who specialize in stuttering, and DVDs and books compiled by the leading authorities in the field. Our materials are also found in more than 8,500 public libraries.

For more information, offered free of charge, your readers may visit us at <http://www.stutteringhelp.org> or by calling 800-992-9392.

— *Jane Fraser, president, the Stuttering Foundation, Memphis, Tenn.*

Fewer funds

This recession is not all bad. It is a slap on the hand of politicians with their fingers in the cookie jar.

— *John Tuzson, Evanston*

Unemployment stress

The June 9 editorial "Benefits — and costs" was very one-sided. Did you bother to ask anyone who is unemployed whether he or she earns more from the state or by being employed?

My union electrician husband has been off for more than a year. He is getting a little less than half of his regular salary, and as of July 1, our health benefits will be gone. We will be able to continue those benefits through COBRA, but it will cost more a month than our mortgage costs. Do you think we get that through unemployment?

He would much rather be working so that he could support his family. The stress this extended unemployment has caused us is something else that should be discussed.

So please do not assume that we are all enjoying living off unemployment. We will do anything to find a job.

— *Carol Koch, Lockport*

A good investment

I was very disappointed with your editorial about unemployment benefits and cost. I have been unemployed for 18 months and yet I have an MBA and other technical skills that are too many to list. What you fail to understand is the fact that in most cases you can't accept a lesser job. Companies won't hire you because they feel you will leave when the job market expands. If you change your resume to decrease your skills, then you are lying on your resume and your references would have to lie also.

You imply that people won't put the same effort in a job search if they are getting the unemployment benefits. My benefits are being used to pay my health insurance, which is \$900 per month.

If America can spend billions in overseas wars, then spending money on its citizens is a good investment.

— *Harold Morrison, Skokie*

No jobs

The Tribune professes to have some "heart" for the long-term unemployed, but it calls upon Congress to vote down an extension of unemployment benefits anyway. We disagree.

Congress should approve the extension as soon as possible.

The Tribune blames lingering unemployment on the unemployed, accusing them of failing to look for or take jobs "on employers' terms."

But the main cause today is that there simply are no jobs. There are currently five workers for every job opening, according to a U.S. Department of Labor survey of employers. In normal times, this ratio is one to one. In the last recession, it was two to one. Employers are not waiting for workers to show up for vacant jobs. There is no relationship whatsoever between unemployment benefits and American productivity; indeed, even if an insured worker fails to take a job (which we do not concede), there are millions of uninsured and unemployed workers to snap them up.

In fact unemployment insurance allows laid-off workers the ability to preserve their retirement accounts and life-insurance policies, it helps them avoid foreclosures and bankruptcies, it maintains a minimally decent standard of living and it keeps them consuming goods and services. They buy things with the benefits at stores who employ people, who get paychecks and who make their own purchases. This "multiplier" effect has been estimated at \$1.61 of positive economic impact for each dollar of benefits.

Yes we can and should have a "heart" for these workers, but we should also know that unemployment insurance helps to fight the recession and maintain jobs. Its minimal cost is well worth it.

— *John Bouman, president, Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law*

— *Andrew Stettner, deputy director, National Employment Law Project*

— *Carrie Thomas, associate director, Chicago Jobs Council*

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