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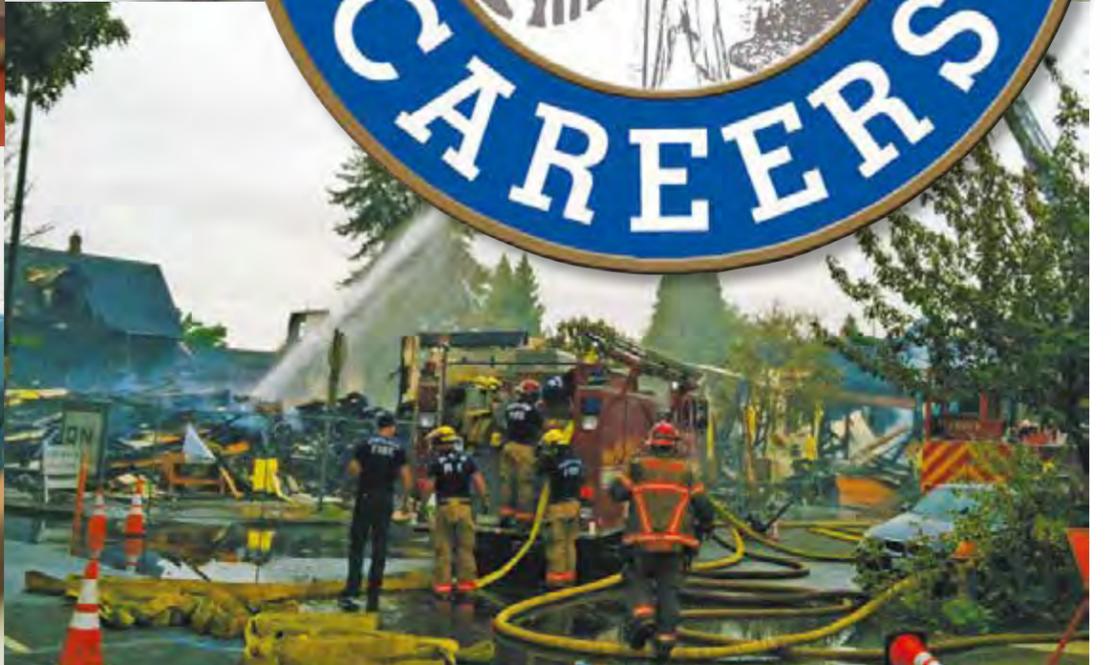
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## Civil Service Jobs: The Test is Back

Dreaming of a government career? Start preparing now for the big exam

**Lisa Loving**  
*Of The Skanner News*

The federal government is putting the exam back in the civil service.

The Washington Post reported this month that the federal government is turning the clock back in an attempt to update its hiring systems by reforming the way it tests people for new positions and promotions.

In generations past, civil service tests, including an essay, were required in government hiring — and not just for positions that required extra training and certification, such as being a firefighter or a communications dispatcher.

Criticism that the tests were biased and screened out applicants of color triggered lawsuits in the late 60s and early 70s. Eventually most civil service tests were thrown out, mak-

Criticism that Civil Service tests were biased and screened out applicants of color triggered lawsuits in the late 60s and early 70s

ing a civil service job the same as any government job.

A few years ago President Barack Obama moved to “reform” the way government job applicants were tested, quietly developing and implementing a battery of online exams.

Now, those’re being required by some three dozen agencies, The Washington Post reports, because overwhelmed bureaus are seeking ways to cut down on the number of applicants and improve the quality of hires, according to officials.

The Times reports that now up to 10 percent of civilian government hires are based on these tests, using a software program called USA Hire which is administered through the United States Office of Personnel Management web-

## Law Careers



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site.

Traditionally, civil service job categories range from diplomats to air traffic controllers, postal workers, transportation security administration agents and translators of all kinds.

Civil service jobs exist in all levels of government — many are federal jobs that are actually performed at the local level.

Many are also union jobs, which generally pay better, and also offer more workplace rights of supports and other jobs.

Not all these positions require a four year college degree; but some of the most interesting—including those in the emerging field of emergency preparedness —require some sort of specialized training.

As “ban the box” campaigns take hold across the country — prohibiting government employers from asking about an applicant’s arrest record at the early stages of the job interview process — more applicants might be eligible for civil service jobs previously out of their reach.

Here are a few places where you might look for more information on careers in civil service.

The U.S. Department of State Domestic/Civil Service careers page offers basic information on how to apply, what the benefits are and what kinds of positions are available.

The US Office of Personnel Management website has all the information about the USA Hire software, how it works and is a great stop even though it is not designed for applicants. Anyone with testing anxiety who wants to succeed on the civil service exam should check out this page.

There are several websites offering help in preparing for a civil service exam. Some include test questions, including and . Try to avoid paying any site for access to test questions.

The City of Seattle Civil Service Commission has the power to help adjudicate in

**See TESTS on page 10**

## Homeland Security Simulator in Portland

**By Arashi Young**  
*Of the Skanner News*

A wind storm has knocked over an old oak tree on a desolate country road. Power lines are entangled with branches, trapping a small car with passengers. A fire breaks out in a nearby house — what do you do?

This is the question being asked at the Homeland Security Simulator at Concordia University, a state-of-the-art facility that can create thousands of different training scenarios. This simulator serves as a teaching instrument for Homeland Security students at Concordia and is available for disaster training for other businesses and public agencies.

The simulator features a 43 foot by 10 foot semi-circular display that provides a fully immersive experience as if the incident commander was actually at the scene of an emergency.

This involvement is key in learning to make decisions, according to Jason Nairn, the director of the Homeland Security Simulation Lab.

Nairn said the students like the simulator, but it also stresses them out

“The simulator has a number of functions, but one of the things it does well is put leaders in the position to have to make critical thinking judgments and ethical decisions,” Nairn said.

Attached to the large display are six video monitor stations which also interact within the simulation. These stations support other active participants like emergency medical personnel who treat injured people.

In a nearby room there is the Emergency Operations Center that also shows the simulation. This room offers training for executives like the chief of police, the fire chief, or the mayor — people who wouldn’t be on the scene, but would still be responsible for decisions and resources.

There is even a broadcast studio on site for the instructors to create newscasts to deliver disaster information.

The system is designed to train all levels of emergency responders simultaneously and allow for different emergency teams such as police, fire and rescue and hazardous materials crews to work within the same scenario.

Concordia spent \$1 million for simulator software and the building modifications. According to Nairn, the FBI and the NYPD also use the same simulator software, called

**See SIMULATOR on page 11**

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# Black Unemployment Dips Below 10 Percent

By Freddie Allen  
NNPA Senior Washington  
Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) – The Black unemployment rate fell to single digits (9.6 percent) in April, for the first time since President Barack Obama was elected in 2008.

Despite the improvement, the Black jobless rate is still double the unemployment rate of White workers, which has remained flat since February at 4.7 percent.

Valerie Wilson, the director of the Program on Race, Ethnicity, and the Economy at the Economic Policy Institute, a progressive think tank focused on low- and middle-income families, said that said that the gradual decline in the Black unemployment rate is the result of strong job growth over the past year.

As the economic recovery in the United States continued its slow, uneven climb in April there were still clear disparities, even among adult Black workers.

Wilson said that, since December, Black men have enjoyed most of the larger employment gains compared to Black women.

The unemployment rate for Black men over 20 years old was 11 percent in December 2014 and 9.2 percent in April 2015,

while the unemployment rate for Black women increased 0.6 percent over the same period.

Since last April, the labor force participation rate, which is the share of the population that is either employed or looking for work, increased from 66.5 percent to 68.7 percent in April 2015 among Black men. The labor force rate for Black women only increased 0.7 percent since April 2014.

Wilson said that a renewed focus on targeted jobs programs and infrastructure investments would enable the economy to get closer to full employment, but cuts to public sector employment, especially at the state and local levels, may prolong the sluggish recovery.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a nonpartisan research and policy group that designs policies aimed at reducing poverty and inequality, the economy has shed nearly 570,000 government jobs, more

than 360,000 jobs in local government alone, since February 2010.

“The other part of that is that wage growth isn’t anything to cheer about,” said Wilson, adding that wage growth is still below any indication that the economy has really heated up.

According to the Labor Department, average hourly earnings have only increased 2.2 percent since April 2014.



Valerie Wilson, the director of the Program on Race, Ethnicity, and the Economy at the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) speaks jobs and the economy in the Black community during an event at EPI.

## Oregon Jobs Report April another strong month

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — State officials say growth in services for the elderly, in high tech design and manufacturing, and in food and restaurant businesses helped push Oregon job numbers higher in April and the unemployment rate lower.

The state Employment Department said Tuesday that the state added 7,600 jobs in the month, on track with the rapid job growth the state recorded since September.

The unemployment rate fell again, by two-tenths of a percentage point, to 5.2 percent.

The numbers are reminiscent of those from the boom years before the Great Recession.

Among the job sectors showing strong growth is social assistance, which includes people working in nursing homes and related facilities. Their numbers have nearly doubled in the last decade.

During recoveries in the past, falling unemployment rates meant that companies were forced to raise wages to compete for available workers

This recovery is different, Wilson said, in part because there’s still a decent amount of slack in the labor market.

**See UNEMPLOYMENT on page 4**



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# Health: Income More Important than Race?

Urban Institute report shows that even within racial groups, resources make a difference

By Freddie Allen  
NNPA Senior  
Washington  
Correspondent

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — Being poor can have a bigger impact on your health than your race, according to a recent report by the Urban Institute.

“Income is a driving force behind the striking health disparities that many minorities experience,” stated a recent report by the Urban Institute, a research group originally founded in 1968 to study the programs associated with the War on Poverty.

And even though Blacks have higher rates of disease than Whites, “these differences are dwarfed by the disparities identified between high- and low-income populations within each racial/ethnic group,” the report said.

“Poor adults are almost five times as likely to report being in fair or poor health as adults with family incomes at or above 400 percent of the federal poverty level, or FPL, (in 2014, the FPL was \$23,850 for a family of four) and they are more than three times as likely to have activity limitations due to chronic illness,” stated the report.

In 2010, Whites “had twice the income of Blacks and Hispanics, but six times the wealth,” the report said.

“In 2011, almost one-quarter (23.3 percent) of



adults with family incomes under \$35,000 per year had no usual place of medical care, compared with 6.0 percent of those with

low-income families are often inescapable.

“Public transportation is often inadequate to enable residents to commute to

industrial factories.

Poor families often lack access to fresh produce and live in communities saturated by fast food

to report sadness ‘all or most of the time,’” compared to families that made more than \$100,000.

Children who live in low-income households are at greater risk for childhood obesity and experience higher rates of asthma than middle- and high-income families.

According to a 2010 American Lung Association report, the prevalence of asthma is 35 percent higher among African Americans compared to Whites. In 2012, the Center for American Progress said that asthma costs the country about \$14 billion annually because of lost wages and missed schooldays.

And instead of saving employers money, low-income workers often cost their employers more, the report said, because of higher health care expenses and diminished productivity, as a result of missing more days at work and coming to work sick.

Adults who have suffered adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which can include oral, physical or sexual abuse or family dysfunction, are twice as likely to have heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes and four times as likely to have chronic lung disease, the report said.

“Policies that reduce adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) or that promote improved educational outcomes can

translate into improved economic well-being, better health outcomes, and lower health care costs,” the report explained. “Similarly, the effects of unemployment on health may be buffered by unemployment assistance and other resources (e.g., savings, family resources, and social or business contacts).”

The report also recommended making stronger investments in early childhood education and expanding community-based programs and improving service provider networks.

Citing a British study, the Urban Institute researchers noted that adults (60 to 64 years-old) who had grown up in the wealthiest households often “had 7 to 20 percent better cognitive performance” than adults who had grown up in the poorest households.

“People and interest groups working to solve these problems are doing more than improving income and wealth: they are ultimately benefiting population health for all age groups,” said the report. “Improving the economic conditions of Americans at many income levels—from those who are poor to those in the middle class—could improve health and help control the rising costs of health care. Jobs, education, and other drivers of economic prosperity matter to public health.”

‘Poor adults are almost five times as likely to report being in fair or poor health as adults with family incomes at or above 400 percent of the federal poverty level’

incomes of \$100,000 or higher,” stated the report. “Similarly, 22.6 percent reported not having seen a dentist in more than five years, compared with 4.3 percent of adults with family incomes over \$100,000.”

The effects of poverty on

employment, to find a better job, or to reach a supermarket, a reliable childcare provider, or health care services,” stated the report. Poor families also live in neighborhoods plagued by environmental pollution and live near busy highways and

restaurants, carry-outs and liquor stores. Safe places for children to play can be scarce.

Families with yearly incomes below \$35,000 were “four times more likely to report being nervous and five times more likely

to report being nervous and five times more likely

## Unemployment

continued from page 3

In a state-by-state analysis of the unemployment rates, Wilson found that the African American unemployment rate was “lowest in Virginia (7.4 percent) and highest in the District of Columbia (15.8 percent) in the first quarter of 2015, surpassing Michigan, which had the highest black unemployment rate in the fourth quarter of 2014.”

Wilson also noted that, “although 7.4 percent is the lowest Black unemployment rate in the country, it is still over 1 percentage point above the highest White unemployment rate (Tennessee). Virginia was one of only eight states where the African American unemployment rate was below 10 percent in the first quarter of 2015.”

Wilson’s research also revealed that the Black unemployment rate, “is at or below its pre-recession level in six states: Connecticut, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Ohio, and Tennessee. But this numerical recovery must be put in proper context because each of these states also had Black unemployment rates that were among the highest in the nation before the recession.”

The national unemployment rate was 5.4 percent in April down from 5.5 percent in March and the economy added 223,000 jobs in April for a three-month average of 191,000 jobs per month.

In a recent blog post for EPI, Josh Bivens, the research and policy director at EPI, wrote that returning the labor market to pre-Great Recession levels is too unambitious a goal.

“After all, 2007 could hardly be described as a year with the kind of high-pressure labor market that would boost wages across the board,” said Bivens.

Bivens continued: “Instead, we need to target the kind of high-pressure labor market that we haven’t seen since the late 1990s. Anything less than this will leave the majority of American workers frozen out of sharing in economic growth through wage gains.”



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# For Low-Income Workers, Calling in Sick is a Luxury

Anne D'innocenzio  
AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For Shannon Henderson, getting a cold or flu could be the difference between putting food on the table and going hungry.

As a part-time customer service representative at a Wal-Mart in Sacramento,

ing companies for wage hikes are steering the conversation toward paid sick leave. The debate has caught the attention of governments and companies alike.

President Barack Obama is calling for federal legislation that would require companies to guarantee workers paid sick days. And

for Family Values @ Work, a network of coalitions fighting to pass paid sick days and family leave policies. “When you don’t have sick pay, you get docked.”

The new focus comes amid wide disparities between the benefits received by the top and bottom rungs of the corporate ladder. Sixty-one percent of



AP PHOTO/RICH PEDRONCELLI

In this Friday, May 15, 2015 photo, Shannon Henderson poses outside the Wal-Mart store where she works as a part-time customer service representative, in Sacramento, Calif. Henderson is one of an estimated 40 million American workers for who calling in sick is a luxury. If they don't work, they don't get paid.

Some of the same workers' rights groups that grabbed headlines recently by pushing companies for wage hikes are steering the conversation toward paid sick leave

California, Henderson is one of an estimated 40 million American workers for who calling in sick is a luxury. If they don't work, they don't get paid.

“I'm super afraid of getting sick,” said Henderson, 29, who slathers on hand sanitizer at work in hopes of fending off illness.

Paid sick leave is the next frontier in the fight for the country's lowest earners. Some of the same workers' rights groups that grabbed headlines recently by push-

ing since San Francisco started requiring that in 2007, nearly 20 cities and three states — Connecticut, Massachusetts and California — have passed similar measures. New York, Maryland and other states are considering laws too. And McDonald's Corp. and Wal-Mart Stores Inc., which have announced wage hikes recently, are making changes to their paid sick leave policies.

“Paid sick days are a job issue,” said Ellen Bravo, executive director

U.S. workers get at least one paid sick day, according to a national compensation survey of employee benefits conducted last year by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

But only 20 percent of workers whose wages are at the bottom 10 percent get paid sick leave, compared with 87 percent in the top 10 percent. There's also a difference when comparing part-time and full-time employees: Seventy-four percent of full-time workers get paid sick leave, while 24

percent of part-time workers do, according to BLS.

Despite the disparities, some industry groups are fighting against laws requiring sick leave pay. Lisa Horn, director of congressional affairs at Society for

Human Resource Management, a human resource management trade group, says many companies are leaning toward policies that lump sick, personal and vacation days together. But she says laws force compa-

nies to scale back on those benefits to keep down the costs associated with people taking sick days off.

“These mandates have a chilling effect on employ-

See SICK on page 8

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6-3-14

# Demilitarizing the Cops: States Retool Police Training

deck

**GENE JOHNSON,**  
Associated Press

BURIEN, Wash. (AP) — When prosecutor Dan Satterberg used to visit Washington state’s police academy, the seas would snap to attention, backs to the walls, and allow him to pass.

Now, they greet him and start a conversation.

“It takes a lot longer to walk down the halls,” said Satterberg, the elected prosecutor in Seattle’s King County.

The friendlier attitude reflects a campaign underway here and elsewhere around the U.S. to “demilitarize” the police and produce officers who think of themselves as guardians of their communities, not members of an occupying force.

Calls for demilitarizing law enforcement began a few years ago but gained urgency after the violent protests over the shooting of unarmed 18-year-old Michael Brown in Fergu-

son, Missouri, last summer.

The philosophy was endorsed this week by President Barack Obama’s 21st Century Policing task force. As part of that change in thinking, Obama curtailed the government’s practice of supplying armored vehicles, heavy weapons and other military-style equipment to police departments.

But it isn’t just about the gear.

While some critics say that good officers already consider themselves protectors and that police need the best equipment to defend themselves and the public, many law enforcement leaders see a need for a broader change in police training and culture.

That includes getting cops to use their wits rather than their weapons whenever possible, as well as instilling a strong moral compass. Supporters say the approach could reduce cynicism, corruption and maybe even suicides among officers.

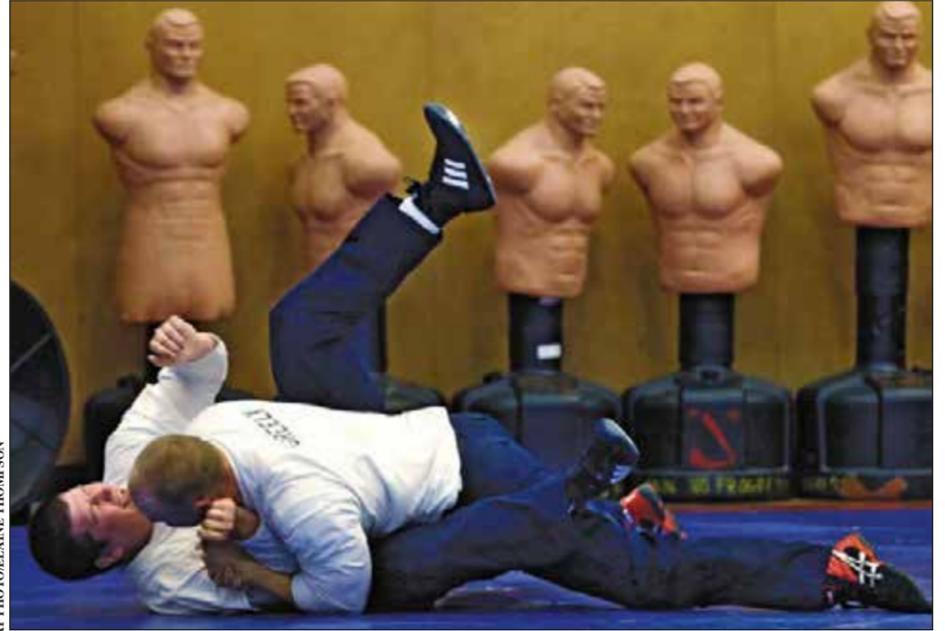
“We are at this moment where we have to re-engineer how we recruit, how

we train and how we supervise,” said Chuck Wexler, president of the Washington, D.C.-based Police Executive Research Forum.

“De-escalation, crisis intervention, better communication skills — all of these things are what the 21st century police officer needs to have in any situation, whether it’s talking to a citizen you may have stopped or trying to defuse a situation where a mentally ill person has picked up a rock or a weapon.”

For the past few years, the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission, which trains the state’s local police and sheriff’s deputies, has emphasized such skills.

The state academy relies heavily on a curriculum called “Blue Courage,” developed by a former Aurora, Illinois, police commander with support from the U.S. Justice Department. It was first used in 2013 at Arizona’s largest police academy, after local chiefs listened to a presentation.



In this photo taken May 6, 2015, a pair of recruits wrestle during training in fighting at the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission in Burien, Wash. While some critics say that good officers already consider themselves protectors and that police need the best equipment to defend themselves and the public, many law enforcement leaders see a need for a broader change in police training and culture.

“It struck a chord,” said Lyle Mann, executive director of the Arizona Peace Officer Standards and Training Board. “There was this feeling that the militarization, the focus on officer safety, this whole confrontational kind of thing was morphing in a way that didn’t feel good to those progressive chiefs.”

The Justice Department

classes. Recruits can fail a training exercise if they use force when it may have been avoidable. Where recruits were once berated by instructors and indoctrinated with stories about police killed in the line of duty, they are now offered lessons from neuroscience about how the brain reacts to respect or disrespect.

Washington’s training commission and a member of Obama’s task force.

Rahr, a former sheriff, took over the commission three years ago, and among her first priorities was dropping the requirement that recruits salute staff members. Instead, they are required to politely begin a conversation, just as officers might be expected to do with citizens on the street.

## Many law enforcement leaders see a need for a broader change in police training and culture

has spent \$1.5 million so far on Blue Courage, and it has been introduced at the New York City and Baltimore County police departments, as well as academies in Nebraska and Arizona.

Washington state’s academy has boosted the training hours devoted to handling people with drug or mental problems, and Blue Courage principles have been incorporated into firearms and defensive tac-

They are taught that police can’t do their jobs unless citizens see their authority as legitimate — something that is eroded with every questionable use of force, rude interaction or corrupt cop.

They are given copies of the Constitution and challenged to think about it. “In my career, my only training in the Constitution was how to get around it,” said Sue Rahr, executive director of

“The traditional thinking is you’ve got to scare the crap out of them so they’re ready and they don’t get hurt,” Rahr said. “I completely understand that. But you can take it too far, to the point where you make them into a soldier and they’re viewing everyone as an enemy and a potential threat.”

She stressed that Washington’s academy remains as physically demanding as ever.

During a recent mock scene, Patrick Barnes, a recruit from the Clark County Sheriff’s Office in the Vancouver area, entered

**See POLICE on page 11**



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# New Jersey Hits Brakes on Pump-Your-Own Gas

**MICHAEL CATALINI**  
Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — New Jersey drivers won't have to pump their own gas any time soon.

Senate President Steve Sweeney said on Tuesday that recently introduced measures to roll back the law requiring gas station attendants to pump gas will not pass as long as he's in charge.

"There's nothing wrong right now with our system," Sweeney said. "There's not a problem."

Republican Assemblyman Declan O'Scanlon and Sen. Gerald Cardinale, as well as Democratic state Sen. Paul Sarlo, want to end the prohibition that dates to the 1949 law. O'Scanlon said his legislation calls for a three-year



AP PHOTO/DON RYAN

Attendant James Lewis pumps gas at a station in Portland, Ore., Wednesday, May 6, 2015. Oregon is one of just two states where motorists aren't allowed to pump their own gas. The other is New Jersey. Now the Oregon Legislature appears ready to at least let people driving through rural Oregon pump their own.

Gas station operators said self-service would allow them to stay open overnight and could result in fewer closed pumps due to lack of manpower.

period where merchants can offer self-service gas but must also provide full service. He called the current law unnecessary.

"I've always known the Senate president was opposed to it and my thoughts on it weren't to have it move, it's to stir debate, and it worked," Sarlo said.

Some defenders of the 1949 Retail Gasoline Dispensing Safety Act specifically cite potential hazards. Meanwhile, critics point out that 48 other states operate without much trouble. Sweeney said it's a matter of convenience, not safety.

When it's snowing, how many people are clamoring to pump their own gas, Sweeney asked.

The trade group representing gas stations, which had opposed self-service previously, now supports the idea.

Sal Risalvato, executive director of the New Jersey Gasoline, Convenience Store, Automotive Association, said that 30 years ago, big oil companies owned and operated many

retail stations and had a financial advantage over smaller operators, making it easier for them to transition to self-service and resulting in the group's opposition.

That's changed now, Risalvato added. Gas station operators said self-service would allow them to stay open

See GAS on page 10

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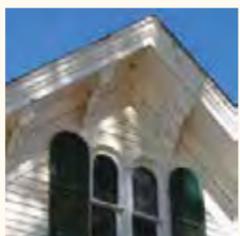
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# Many Students Fail to Profit from For-Profit Colleges

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, about 1.7 million people will receive their bachelor's degrees, and another nearly 750,000 will receive associate's degrees this May and June. The numbers have been rising over the past 10 years, with 22 percent more receiving bachelor's degrees (the growth in women's degrees is faster than that of men), and 12 percent more associate's degrees (again, with the degrees awarded to women growing faster than those awarded to men).

Too many of these students will graduate with heavy debt. While the data suggest that the average student graduates with about \$30,000 of debt, the fact that some students have no debt at all makes the number even higher. African American students are nearly twice as likely to graduate with debt as Caucasian students. And it is often much harder for African American students to find jobs than it is for others. Still, a college degree makes a difference in life chances and lifetime earn-



**BENNETT COLLEGE**

Julianne Malveaux

ings, which is one of the reasons that public policy has focused on postsecondary education.

Students who have attended for-profit colleges go to school with the same hopes and dreams as those who attend traditional not-for-

been sold a bill of goods.

Corinthian Colleges, Inc. had more than 77,000 students at its peak, although those numbers have dropped since then. Their students, in 2012-2013 were mostly adults who worked full time, mostly minority (51.8 percent), and mostly low-income enough to qualify for Pell Grants (72.9 percent). According to one source, these students borrowed more than \$7,600 each year to pay for their

them to get bank loans with higher interest rates. They tell students that these loans are worth it because it will help them get better jobs later.

The federal government has been scrutinizing Corinthian and other for-profit colleges for years, especially because they have found that these colleges often exaggerate their success in placing students in better jobs. Now, Corinthian Colleges have shut down, leaving more than 16,000 students stranded. These students have used up semesters of their Pell grant eligibility (which is capped at 12 semesters), and have thousands of dollars of debt. If they are mid-degree, they face the challenge of trying to transfer credits to another college. While there may be some relief for these students who owe money, others will either be forced to repay debt or imperil their credit standing.

Is Corinthian the exception, or is it the rule in the world of for-profit colleges? We know that these colleges target adult learners, and market to minority popula-

tions. More than half of the students at Corinthian were students of color, and at many of the other for-profit colleges the enrollment of minority students exceeded 30 percent. We know that these colleges rely on tuitions for their profit, which means that when they find students who qualify for Pell grants, it boosts their bottom line.

According to the California Association of Private Postsecondary Schools (CAPPS), at least 60 percent of the students enrolled in the top six for-profit colleges received Pell grants. Corinthian topped the group with nearly 73 percent of their students receiving Pell grants, but ITT Technical Institutes was not far behind with a 71.8 of their students receiving Pell grants. In comparison, 39 percent of the students at public colleges, and 34 percent at private nonprofit colleges have Pell grants.

Some for-profit colleges do a better job than Corinthian, and many have not run into trouble with the federal government. Still, because taxpayer dollars are being used to finance these

colleges, they must be more carefully scrutinized both by the federal government and by accrediting associations. Furthermore, the Corinthian debacle is a warning to students who might get a lower cost and better education by going to a public university or to a community college. Before enrolling in one of these colleges, students need to consider other options, and also check on the placement records these schools like to brag about.

Students of color are especially vulnerable to the hype these colleges offer. They say they provide opportunities and jobs, but too often they don't. They market to those at the periphery; those who believe their lives would be significantly improved with education. Their lives can improve with more learning, but the students must beware of for-profit colleges that often promise more than they can give, and push students into debt. The closing of the Corinthian Colleges, Inc. is a cautionary tale for those who choose for-profit colleges as the gateway for their hopes and dreams.

African American students are nearly twice as likely to graduate with debt as Caucasian students

profit-universities. They attend schools such as Kaplan, DeVry and Corinthian because they want to improve their education and find better jobs. They go into debt, and seek grants because they believe the investment is worth it. And too many of them have

education. Corinthian is among the for-profit schools that depend on the federal government for their income stream. They direct them to apply for Pell grants, push them to seek federal student loans that have subsidized interest rates, and encourage

## Sick

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ers' ability to innovate and be creative with their leave options," she said.

Eileen Appelbaum, senior economist at Center for Economic and Policy Research, says mandated sick pay has not had a negative impact on some companies that have been surveyed. According to a survey the

An employee working an average of 20 hours a week will be eligible to accrue about 20 hours of paid time off a year. If employees don't take the earned time off, they will be paid for the value of it. The benefits apply to only McDonald's company-owned restaurants, which represent

'We've listened to our employees and learned that paid personal leave would make a real difference in their careers and lives'

McDonald's President and CEO Steve Easterbrook

group did of businesses in Connecticut, which has required paid sick leave since 2012, one-third of workers took no paid sick leave. "They treat them as insurance," she said.

Big companies with operations nationwide are changing their paid sick leave policies ahead of legislation.

In February, Wal-Mart, the largest U.S. private employer, said within about a year it would end the one-day wait for sick pay for all full-time U.S. workers. That's a change from the current system that requires Wal-Mart workers in the U.S. to wait a day to use sick days, which means they have to use personal days on the first day out sick. (Full-time workers can earn up to two personal days and about six days of sick leave pay a year.)

Randy Hargrove, a Wal-Mart spokesman, said the company also is reviewing its sick policy for part-time workers, who account for half of its 1.3 million-person workforce in the U.S. Currently, if part-time workers are ill, they have to use personal days.

McDonald's is taking a different approach by lumping personal and sick days together. Starting July 1, full-time and part-time workers at company-owned restaurants will begin to accrue personal paid time off after one year of service that can be used for sick leave.

about 10 percent of its more than 14,300 restaurants nationwide.

"We've listened to our employees and learned that — in addition to increased wages — paid personal leave ... would make a real difference in their careers and lives," McDonald's President and CEO Steve Easterbrook said in a statement.

Workplace experts expect other companies to follow Wal-Mart and McDonald's. "More employers are voluntarily adopting paid sick leave programs," says Mark Girouard, an employment attorney at Nilan Johnson Lewis who represents national retailers.

That is welcome news to workers who struggle to make ends meet when they take a sick day.

Henderson, the customer service rep, works under the 34 hours per week average that would make her a Wal-Mart full-time employee, so the company's policy change doesn't affect her. She said she's looking forward to California's sick leave mandate, which goes into effect in July and allows workers one hour of paid sick leave for every 30 hours worked.

The single mother of an infant makes \$10 an hour — an annual paycheck of a little over \$16,000. Henderson, who says she can't afford to take time off, has gone to work with a runny nose and no voice. But

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Bianca Crew Trainer

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# Blackonomics: The Case for Student Loan Debt Forgiveness

By the time you read this article, millions of college students will have graduated and be looking for jobs, many will be going on to grad school and millions will suddenly be faced with paying off college loans or contemplating obtaining a loan for graduate studies. Neither option is attractive.

Even if students are fortunate enough to have a job when they graduate, if they are laden with tens of thousands of dollars in debt, it will be very difficult to save money for their future, pay living expenses and costs associated with the job they accept, and make \$300-\$600 in monthly payments for college loans.

For those moving on to grad school, unless they have a fellowship or some other kind of grant, they will have a tough decision to make when the loan officer at their school or the bank says, "No problem, here's a \$30,000 check to pay for your degree." I hate to think what it costs for a medical degree these days.

At more than \$1 trillion, having surpassed credit card debt, college loan debt is an albatross around the necks of students, some of whom had no idea of what they were getting into and some who did know but refused to do anything about it until now, when it's too late.

With the job market the way it is and has been for Black people for decades, some graduates will have an overpriced college degree without a commensurate job prospect. They will be faced with the



## ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

James Clingman

we want—and that goes for both parties.

The banks and other financial entities got their \$780 billion bailout. Where is ours? Why not bail the students out, and why not bail the homeowners out rather than merely "adjusting" their loans? The bankers were given billions that they used to make even more money from the taxpayers (That be us, y'all) who paid their bills. Contrary to what we were told, lending was curtailed rather than expanded, and hundreds of thousands of folks are still homeless because there was no real bailout program for them.

The so-called American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, as of January 1, 2014, had paid out \$816.3 billion in tax benefits, grants, contracts, loans; and entitlements. Who got that money? In my neck of the woods, the folks who got the most were those who worked on the roads and expressways; of those contractors and workers, few if any were Black.

Georgia recently embarked on a \$1 billion-plus road improvement project, and

They will be faced with the challenge of paying back their loans while looking for a job that does not exist

challenge of paying back their loans while looking for a job that does not exist. Or, they will have to accept the prospect of joining the ranks of the "underemployed."

This is indeed a sad state of affairs for our best and brightest, the grandchildren of the baby boomers. It is said that "millennials," as they are called, are the first generation that will be worse off than their parents. Most parents want their children to do better than they did, and most parents participate in that aspiration by putting a little money aside to help their children get off to a reasonable start in life. However, in today's economic climate, there is very little of that kind of help available from parents who are struggling just to pay the rent and keep the lights on.

### What can we do?

High on our agenda should be a demand made, to Congress and whoever is running for president, for student loan debt forgiveness. A strong, independent bloc of voters must go to candidates in both parties and make this demand. Keep in mind, however, as I have said before, a demand without power backing it up is just rhetoric. I think we have heard enough and had enough of empty words by some of our leaders to know that it will take more than just asking for what we want. We must be willing to withhold our votes in order to get what

even with 3.2 million Black folks in that state, the fourth highest in the nation, Black contractors and workers will not benefit as much as they should. Department of Transportation inclusion rules are based on Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Programs, in which White female businesses get a significant share of the contracts, and "front" companies rule the day.

So with all of the barriers facing our 2015 graduates, and the bleak outlook for improvement of their lot, the least we could do is bail them out of their student loans. Politicians said the banks were "too big to fail," and I guess the bankers were "too big to jail." They caught a huge break from George W. Bush and Obama. It's time for a break for Black and poor people now. Hey politicians, forgive student loans.

*Jim Clingman, founder of the Greater Cincinnati African American Chamber of Commerce, is the nation's most prolific writer on economic empowerment for Black people. He can be reached through his website, blackonomics.com. He is the author of Black Dollars Matter: Teach Your Dollars How to Make More Sense, which is available through his website; professionalpublishinghouse.com and Amazon Kindle eBooks.*

# Kansas Legislators Opt to Trim Civil Service Jobs

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Kansas is likely to reduce the number of state workers in its civil service system after Republican Gov. Sam Brownback signed legislation allowing his administration to do it.



AP PHOTO/JOHN HANNA

More than 30 agencies will be allowed to convert vacant positions to non-civil service jobs

Brownback signed the measure Thursday, and the new law will take effect July 1. It embodies a proposal from the Department of Administration.

Newly hired state workers won't be covered by the civil service system and current employees will be allowed to voluntarily move into non-civil service jobs. More than 30 agencies will be allowed to convert

Kansas Gov. Sam Brownback answers questions from reporters about pension issues during a news conference, Thursday, April 2, 2015, at the Statehouse in Topeka, Kan. Brownback is expected to sign a bill authorizing \$1 billion in bonds to bolster the short-term financial health of the state pension system for teachers and government workers.

vacant positions to non-civil service jobs. Supporters say the changes will put state agencies more in line with private industry and make it easier to tailor jobs to staffing needs.

Critics say many of the state's 13,000 civil service employees will lose job protections.

SOMETIMES THE BEST IDEA IS RIGHT IN FRONT OF YOU.

#thinkPCCfirst

Portland Community College

# Tests

continued from page 1



Portland Fire & Rescue Battalion Chief Sara Boone, promoted last year, is the first African American chief officer at PF&R. She is based at Station 24, covering the Overlook/Swan Island neighborhoods.

government employee grievances as well as any effort by the City to interfere in an employee's hiring. Their meetings are public. Next Commission Meeting, Wednesday, June 17, 9:30 a.m. at the

The City of Portland Civil Service Board does not investigate appeals of hiring decisions but "serves as the decision maker and does not act as a lawyer or advocate for any of the parties." The current Board members are Presiding Officer Keith Pitt, Commissioner Beverly Wilkinson, and Commissioner Richard H. Schwarz. Find out more about them at

If you are a war veteran, it's possible that you may benefit from Federal programs established to integrate the thousands of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan back into the civilian workforce. Some states actually have rules requiring civil service job interviews be offered to qualifying veterans. Make the extra effort to check out opportunities tailored for you every time you connect with employers or attend job fairs. Companies like [www.hireahero.com](http://www.hireahero.com) might have the Resources of interest to you. Check with your state department of Veterans Affairs for more on your rights.

# Book Review

**Reach: 40 Black Men Speak on Living, Leading, and Succeeding**  
 Edited by Ben Jealous and Traban Shorters, Foreword by Russell Simmons

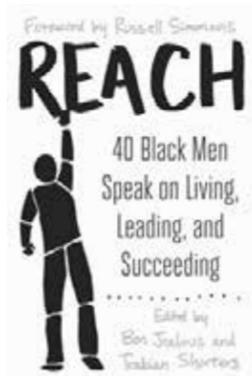
By Kam Williams Special to *The Skanner News*

"I'm aware that, for black men today, racism is still an obstacle that causes tremendous anger and suffering... Whether it's the kind of racially charged violence that led to the deaths of Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown, Jordan Davis, and countless other black, unarmed young men; or the predatory mortgages that invaded our neighborhoods; or the continuation of America's obsession with warehousing millions of us in prisons and jails across the country—our people have been hit hard..."

No matter how great the challenge is, you must breathe deep and keep pushing through. That is what the great men in this book have done during the course of their lifetimes." —Excerpted from the Foreword by Russell Simmons (pages xvi-xvii)

Many successful African-Americans seem to forget where they came from after they enjoy a measure of success and make it out of the ghetto. However, there are also those who remember their roots and maintain a lifelong connection to the black community.

These role models serve a critical function since, as editor Ben Jealous puts it in the Introduction to the inspirational



book *Reach*, "We cannot imitate that which we have never seen, heard, or read about." Jealous, the former President of the N A A C P, asked 40 black males, some famous,

some lesser-known, but each an everyday hero, to share his personal story of triumph in the face of adversity.

The contributors to this timely tome include rapper Talib Kweli Greene, actors Lou Gossett, Jr. and Lamman Rucker, choreographer Bill T. Jones, civil rights activists Al Sharpton and Reverend Joseph Lowery, NBA Hall of Famer Isiah Thomas, and former Obama Administration green energy czar Van Jones, to name a few. Each one's essay opens with his portrait, age, title and a description of what community he continues to serve.

For example, singer/philanthropist John Legend reflects upon growing up in his hometown of Springfield, Ohio, where he and his siblings were homeschooled by their mom because his folks couldn't afford the tuition for a Christian academy. He goes on to describe how he was profoundly affected by the death of his maternal grandmother when he was 10,

See BOOK on page 11

## We honor the many accomplishments of African Americans.

It is our primary goal as a labor union to better the lives of all people working in the building trades through advocacy, civil demonstration, and the long-held belief that workers deserve a "family wage" - fair pay for an honest day's work.



A family wage, and the benefits that go with it, not only strengthens families, but also allows our communities to become stronger, more cohesive, and more responsive to their citizens' needs.

Our family wage agenda reflects our commitment to people working in the building trades, and to workers everywhere. In this small way, we are doing our part to help people achieve the American Dream. This dream that workers can hold dear regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, creed, or religious beliefs.

### The Pacific Northwest Regional Council of Carpenters

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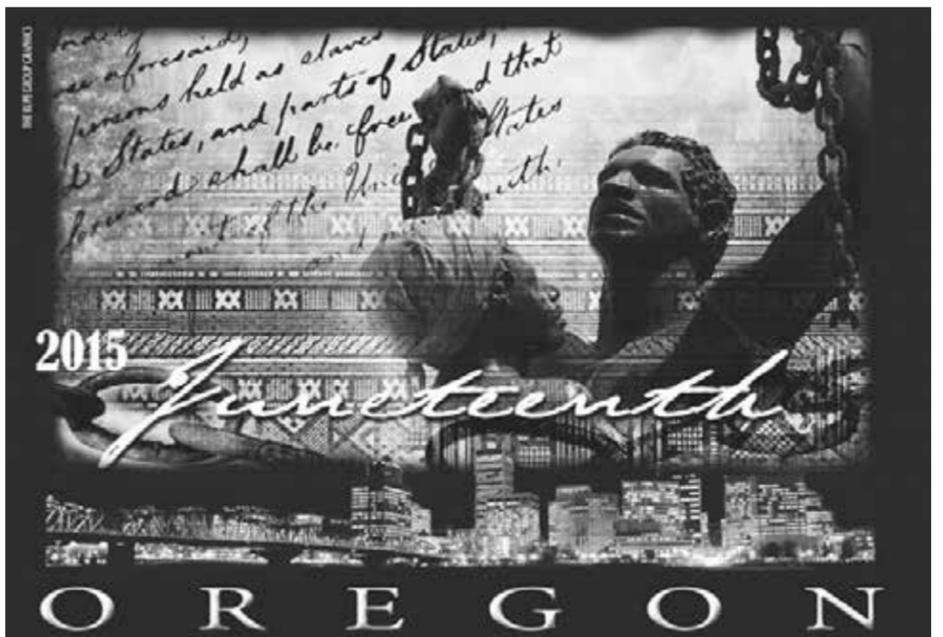
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## Book

continued from page 10

and how he was further traumatized by his parents' divorce just a year later, especially since his father took full custody of all the kids.

Nevertheless, John managed to make it to the heights of the music industry, and now generously gives back out of a sense of gratitude. He concedes that, "There was nothing more important to the outcome of my life than the early support I had from family and mentors outside of my home, the access to a piano to practice on, and forums like the church and the community choir in which to hone my craft."

An enlightening collection of uplifting narratives by ordinary brothers of extraordinary achievement.

## Gas

continued from page 7

overnight and could result in fewer closed pumps due to lack of manpower.

"How many times have you driven into a gas station and seen pumps blocked off by orange cones?" Risalvato said, adding that's a sign that stations do not have enough workers on duty.

Sarlo said that gas stations should be allowed to let people pump their own gas at stations when there aren't enough attendants to handle demand.

"Open them up and if someone wants to pump their own gas, let them," Sarlo said.

Critics of self-service say the proposal could result in job losses across the state, but Risalvato said there would be "no real impact on employment, since the self-serve option would be at pumps which had previously been coned off."

Gov. Jon Corzine tried to

end the self-service ban nearly a decade ago and got serious blowback from some residents in a state where bumper stickers declare "Jersey Girls Don't Pump Gas."

Nearly every state had a ban on self-serve in the 1960s, said Jeff Lenard, a vice president of the National Association of Convenience Stores, but technological changes that allowed clerks inside to reset pumps remotely and especially the oil crises of the 1970s made self-serve popular.

He said that most stations now see bans on pumping your own gas as an impediment to sales. He said that a rudimentary calculation shows having an attendant adds at least a nickel to the price of a gallon of gas.

New Jersey and Oregon are the only two states that bar motorists from pumping their own gas.

## Police

continued from page 6

a room decorated like a tavern. An intoxicated man, played by a martial artist in a padded suit, was refusing to leave.

Barnes amiably tried to persuade the man to exit, chatting with him about his T-shirt, but the man slapped him. Barnes took him down and cuffed him in a fierce wrestling match.

Afterward, instructor Russ Hicks praised Barnes for trying to avoid using force, but using it decisively when necessary. Another instructor, Tim Fasnacht, reflected on how the scene had changed in recent years: "It used to be more of a beat-down fest. I've seen it where the officers would come in without even talking."

Barnes, the 27-year-old son of a police officer, said he has always known the importance of treating citizens with respect. The Blue Courage classes have crystallized those con-

cepts, he said.

"It is a noble profession, and we should be keeping it that way," he said.

Seattle University researchers began a five-year study last fall to follow new graduates of the academy to measure the effect on their attitudes and how they do their jobs.

Richland Police Sgt. Wayne Dubois, president of the Washington State Tactical Officers Association, said it is fine to stress the noble aspects of policing as long as officers are still getting the hard training that will prepare them for a life-or-death fight.

"At the end of the day, what they're describing is what any police officer worth his or her salt would do," the SWAT officer said. "I've been in multiple situations where legally and by policy I could have shot someone. You know why I didn't? Because it wasn't the right thing to do."

## Simulator

continued from page 1

the Advanced Disaster Management Simulator (ADMS), but only in discrete stand-alone units.

"There is no other set up like this in the country, with EOC (Emergency Operations Center), the emergent theater, the classrooms and everything together," Nairn said, adding that the ADMS software manufacturer, ETC Simulation, calls Concordia's configuration the most advanced and largest.

"This is definitely unique in the country, and on the West Coast there is really nothing like it," Nairn said.

In addition to the rural scene, there are downtown scenes, shopping malls, seaports, airports, industrial plants and college campus environments. The software is customizable so the instructors can add active elements to the situations such as a debris fire, a multi-vehicle accident; even terrorist attacks.

Nairn said the simulator is adept at training for acts of terrorism like the Charlie Hebdo shooting and the siege on the Lindt Café in Sydney, Australia. These malls, cafés, and office buildings are considered undefended "soft targets."

"Soft target attacks are a concern for Homeland Security professionals and the simulator has many, many soft target scenarios that can be operated in a variety of environments," Nairn said.

A physics engine drives the elements within the scenario; an unattended fire will grow and spread, smoke will change direction according to the wind and injured people will become more critical without medical attention.

The simulator will injure up to 75 people at a time and each of those people will have a unique set of injuries determined by the computer algorithm. In a simulation of the Boston Marathon bombing, some runners will have less critical wounds while others need immediate attention. Instructors can manually change the intensity of these variables as well.

Nairn said the students like the simulator, but it also stresses them out. "All the things you learn in theory are a lot different in practice."

The scenarios create a safe to fail environment where students can learn from their mistakes without risking actual lives or costing public money.

"A lot of people gain experience in work by actually being involved in incidents that ... resulted in a failure," Nairn said. "In the public safety industry, failure is not something that we can afford to do when



The software includes downtown scenes, shopping malls, airports and college campus environments. The instructors can add active elements to the situations such as a debris fire, a multi-vehicle accident, and more.

lives are on the line."

Construction was recently finished on the Homeland Security Simulator and the simulation lab is now reaching out to the community to provide training opportunities. In the aftermath of the Reynolds High School shooting, both Multnomah Education Service District and Portland Public Schools have visited the lab.

The unique nature of the set up has global implications as well. According to Nairn, the lab is working with the software manufacturer to become a regional center to train people in other countries to run the software for themselves back home.

Whether it is for the classroom, the local businesses, or global training, the end

goal is to improve safety.

"We would hope that businesses and public agencies would have improved resiliency because they are able to train in a safe-fail environment," Nairn said. "If you can fail safely, you can learn."

Learn more about the simulator by visiting [www.homelandsecuritysimulator.com](http://www.homelandsecuritysimulator.com)

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