

VRA needs strong presidential support

What is Congress doing to the Voting Rights Act? This landmark 1965 civil rights law appears to be at the mercy of moderate and ultraright-wing revisionists. Bearing in mind the too-many-cooks axiom, the Voting Rights Act may emerge from the House and Senate kitchen a kettle of fish that looks all right, but smells bad.

The Voting Rights Act is the honored legacy of Pres. Lyndon Johnson. Johnson's expertise in manipulating legislation through Congress was the single most important factor in the Voting Rights Act becoming law. This law ensured the voting rights for minorities in 22 states.

Friday, Pres. Ronald Reagan endorsed a 10-year extension of the law, but noted he wanted changes to key provisions. This is a step back from an earlier position from which Reagan viewed the House version of the bill as "pretty extreme."

Strangely, since this initial statement, Reagan has shown little interest in the progress of the VRA.

Reagan's major objection is he wants the law revised to require minority groups to prove discrimination intentional when they challenge a state's election law. The House bill requires a minority group to show discrimination resulted, whether or not it was intentional.

Reagan's proposal would dilute the present voting rights law and confound its enforcement.

To prove intentional discrimination is virtually impossible. Intentional discrimination is easily covered-up by crooked election officials. In either case discrimination results, which is where the corrective measures of the law should step in. This is its point of strength and purpose — to end discrimination in voting laws, be that discrimination intentional or inadvertent.

It's possible that — if passed with the intentional discrimination qualification — discrimination in election laws would go unchecked. The Voting Rights Act was aimed primarily at southern states that were infamous for abuse of the electoral process for minority districts. To require proof of intentional discrimination by election officials, no mean feat in itself, tends to encourage corruption.

This intentional discrimination qualification looks more like a loophole. The Supreme Court's April 22, 1980 decision upholding section 5 of the VRA is the fragile veil that prevents abuse of the law. The Court said certain states must clear all electoral changes in advance with the justice department. By this the justice department can, theoretically, circumvent changes that may be discriminatory. But the justice department cannot oversee all instances of voting discrimination — especially if unreported.

Sen. Edward Kennedy, a strong supporter of

the VRA, criticized Reagan for being "a passive president on this fundamental issue."

Indeed, this accusation is true. Reagan is now saying he will endorse whatever the House and Senate come up with after having made his wishes known.

The 10-year extension of the VRA, an imperative law, must be vigorously guided through the House and Senate by an other than dilettante president. To adopt a careless attitude allows the extreme right-wing jackals to snap at the heels of minority voting rights.



Reagan's contention that individuals and corporations will rally to the aid of the arts is sheer nonsense. The corporations themselves have broadcast loud and clear that they are unable (even if they were willing) to do this. Reagan's real motive for hobbling the arts (and freedom of expression generally) is that of every oligarch: his fear of subversion, his fear of the power of the artist to expose and publicize injustice. I'm afraid we can anticipate a sort of dark age of repression in this country, with all manner of freedoms being subtly undermined, sexual freedom, freedom to unionize, freedom to protest. The cuts to the arts budget should be seen as a throwing down of the gauntlet, a challenge to those (especially those in universities, who presume to understand the relationship between art and civilization) to fight back.

John Witte
Editor, Northwest Review

A loyal Duck fan

I happen to be a sports fan — and yes, a University football fan. A joke? No, I'm one of those rare breed who still live by that strange word — loyalty. That might seem strange in this day and age but it's natural to me to throw myself behind my school in all its efforts and activities. After all, it's my fellow students who "put out" and if they can't get support from their peers things are pretty tough.

Yet the Emerald's sportswriter consistently puts the team down. I am totally in favor of objective and factual reporting but it seems pretty dismal when the home team is ridiculed by the "home" media. If this is an example of the kind of support the school newspaper gives its school representatives this paper could become pretty depressing and shabby reading.

The Emerald (Nov. 4) incited this letter with its article "send in a play." It was the paragraph below the drawing which irritated and disappointed me, i.e. "As the ball is snapped, the Ducks have the option of doing one of four things: A) fumble B) throw an interception C) both A and B D) surrender." How can you expect anyone to play for their school — and by play I mean put everything they have into it — when all they get is sarcastic and "expert" criticism from those who are supposed to inspire and back them. Those of us who stayed until the end of the UCLA game were on our feet at the end as we watched a team that was obviously disappointed by its display but a team who kept fighting and finally got that elusive touchdown. It didn't make much of a difference to the score but it got a standing ovation from a crowd that appreciated a damn good

effort and the fact that the team didn't "surrender" (or give up and go home), unlike many Duck "fans."

Mona Buckley
Journalism major

Save program

We are both exchange students from West Germany. The informations given in the Emerald about the plans to cut the international exchange program were very confusing. Therefore, Pres. Paul Olum, don't wonder when there is no protest. Meanwhile, we received additional informations about these plans and we are very concerned about them.

If the exchange program with Japan, Mexico, France and Germany will be reduced, that might look like: for example, there will only be five students from Germany able to come here instead of 40 now, the same in the other direction. The same will happen with the other countries. That would have bad consequences for both American and foreign students, and for the relations between our countries.

We are very happy to be in the exchange program now. This is the only way we can afford to come here (sorry, we do not have rich parents). We think, every student who goes to another country for one year can gain a lot of new experiences: cultural, personal, academic and political.

Last, but not least: there is increasing evidence of anti-American sentiment in Germany because of Pres. Ronald Reagan's policies. Such an exchange program can help to see human beings beyond these policies.

It must be possible to save money without reduction of the number of exchange students.

Gaby Polzer
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letters policy

The Emerald will accept and attempt to print all letters containing fair comment on issues, ideas and topics of interest to the University community.

The letters must be limited to 250 words, signed, and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is turned in to The Emerald offices, EMU 300.

The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length, style or content. Publication is dependent upon the space available.

letters

Arts grants fading

I am, of course, honored to be selected to receive a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. It's one of the very few grants around for an amount substantial enough to really make a difference, to make travel possible, for example, which is what I'm looking forward to. I hope to visit Guatemala and the Yucatan Peninsula to study the Mayan ruins there, and later to Europe.

I'd like to add that I feel double blessed, as this is probably the last year that these grants will be given, at least in this number, and for this amount. The National Endowment was near the top of Pres. Ronald Reagan's hit list for budgetary "austerity measures" and what will remain when the smoke clears is anyone's guess. The initial cuts proposed for the NEA were a staggering 40 percent, which would be crippling, if not fatal. So far, a few friends of culture in Congress have forestalled this, and cuts for this year look to be in the range of 15 percent. Of course, next year David Stockman will take another bite; Reagan's plan is to eventually cut the National Endowment by half. Our own Oregon Arts Commission has already taken one to the breadbasket, with the NEA's grant to them being slashed. So, I think of my grant as being Pres. Jimmy Carter money, part of the last allocation by the Democrats to the National Endowment, and the largest in the nation's history. What about all the young writers who deserve this great honor and privilege next year?

We should not exaggerate the amount of the NEA budget in its days of relative health. The United States trailed virtually every other Western democracy in the world in the per capita amount of its allocation to the arts and culture. In most cases our percentage for the arts was only a small fraction of that given by other countries. A revealing statistic here is that, in 1978, the Defense Department spent on military marching bands 4 times what the National Endowment spent on all the symphonies and philharmonics in the country combined. And that was before the budget cuts.