

Follow the Reps' bouncing checks

Let's open a new bank. For starters, there will be no penalties for bounced checks. Interest-free loans, too. To cover overdrafts, money from other member accounts will be used.

Sounds good but totally unfeasible? Not if you're a member of the House of Representatives.

When the story broke last week that the House bank had covered more than 8,300 of lawmakers' bounced checks, the public met it with a cynical laugh. After all, when compared to Iran-Contra, Wedtech, payoffs and PACs, this latest bit of scandal is definitely a non-starter. But it is the kind of governmental gossip that garners headlines and sends congressmen fearful of their re-election chances scurrying for the want ads.

There was no deliberate attempt to bilk the public, as in other scandals. No bribes or slush funds; just a few money-unconscious lawmakers not keeping track of their checking accounts and using their positions for personal gain. Those caught with their rubber checks (134 so far) were, to a person, shocked and repeatedly claimed they had no idea that running up overdrafts in their bank accounts was bad.

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That more than anything should cause voters to knock those lawmakers off their pedestals and bring them back to the reality of civilian life. Apparently, the rarefied air of Congress has sapped their brains to the point that they can't even manage a checking account.

And these lawmakers control billions upon billions of taxpayer dollars? No wonder there's a federal deficit. It also explains \$70 Defense Department hammers.

House Speaker Tom Foley, D-Wash., has gone out of his way to defuse the scandal, saying no taxpayer money was involved and adding that bounced checks and overdrafts did not constitute a violation of ethical standards. Mighty big of him when you consider that in the past, 30 of Foley's account transactions crossed over the red line — including \$540 last December for stereo equipment.

Hope he enjoyed the sound system.

Seriously, though, the whole thing just erodes public confidence in lawmakers. Once again the public is presented with evidence that Congress has lost touch with the rest of the world. Overwhelming evidence shows that, as elected officials, our leaders have decided they don't have to adhere to the rules of society, let alone banking. The Capitol has become a place of elitists; a place of snobbish leaders.

But as far as punishing representatives for their latest bit of financial mischance, there is no need. The ethics committee will give each a slap on the wrist, and that will be that. Hopefully, when election '92 rolls around, voters will actually remember these discretions and act accordingly. Then the ousted lawmakers will get all the punishment they deserve: from their creditors and finance companies.

"Hello, former congressman? We have a small problem with your account..."



COMMENTARY

New hate crimes require proactive stance

By Jennifer Bills and JoSonja Watson

In the past few weeks there has been an increase of violence in the West Campus area. The number of racial and sexual harassment cases have skyrocketed, and many students have started to fear for their own safety.

These hate-based crimes are a problem that all students at the University are going to be faced with. Whether it be a friend, family member, house mate, spouse or domestic partner, we will all be faced with a situation that is potentially dangerous to the ones we care for and/or ourselves.

The time has come for students at the University to take an active stance against violence. We have the opportunity to speak up against crimes that make our campus and the campus neighborhood unsafe.

What we can do has many levels. First, we can take a proactive stance by speaking out against hate-based crimes and violence. We can educate ourselves on the merits of respecting others and being tolerant. Secondly, we can advocate

for sensible and responsible partying. Many of the acts of violence that occurred after the USC football game involved alcohol. It is our responsibility to make sure that we drink and celebrate in a way that does not infringe on the safety of others and ourselves. Our behavior in these situations can turn a fun party into a potential danger

doesn't matter if it's night or day.

Secondly, use services like Project Saferide and the Office of Public Safety. Also, if you are feeling threatened, get out of the situation. We don't need any martyrs for the cause. Finally, report any incidents of violence to the Eugene police department, the dean's office,

and O.P.S. They can provide emergency assistance as well as after-care information.

As a community, we have an obligation to care for the area that we live

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The final thing we can do is to watch out for our own safety and the safety of others. We do not enjoy having to advocate that students travel in groups, but the time has come that the practicality of safety overshadows the freedom of movement. Please, travel in groups or in pairs when you are going out. It

in. Stopping violence on the streets starts with stopping the violence in our homes. Educate yourselves and your friends on issues of women, people of color, disabled people, and lesbians and gay men. In this way, we can take a proactive stance on curbing the violence.

Jennifer Bills and JoSonja Watson are president and vice president of the ASUO.

COMMENTARY POLICY

Commentaries should be between 750 and 1,000 words, legible and signed, and the identification of the writer must be verified upon submission. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for grammar, style and length if necessary.

