

Extend voter registration deadline through Election Day

By Paul Prenskey

As we say nowadays, there's something I'd like to share with you all: the experience that capped and summed up my involvement with the ASUO voter registration drive, which culminated Tuesday, Oct. 13.

That rally was superbly organized and succeeded on two levels. First, more than 1,000 students chose to register. And second, the stars, especially Charles Dutton, exhorted them to become involved — both before and after the election — in the polls and in the larger community. He also challenged students to recreate the spirit (not the excesses) of the late 1960s and early 1970s today when we need it most.

The enthusiastic response to Dutton's heartfelt plea was the most hopeful moment in all of my extensive involvement in 1992 politics. Students are the ones who can bring what's lacking to the democratic political process. More power to you.

The experience I referred to does have long-term implications, which arise out of the limits the ASUO drive faced. My friend Mac, who also worked extensively with the registration effort, came up with an idea the previous Sunday: to hold a funeral for the unregistered voter (which could also be understood to be a wake for the premature closing of the voter rolls 20 full days before Election Day).

He built a pint-sized coffin, painted it black and put pallbearer handles on it. He brought it to the vice presidential debate-watching party on Tuesday, Oct. 13. We invited those attending to come to the funeral/wake for the unregistered voter and the untimely end to registration.

Six people, plus Mac and I, showed up at the Election

The vast federal bureaucracy could be mobilized to safeguard against potential voting fraud.

Bureau at 5:30 p.m. We each deposited an un(ful)filled voter registration card into a slot on the coffin and then Mac delivered a eulogy evoking "the good old days" before 1986 when folks could register right up to Election Day itself.

Then a car drove up. Two women got out and knocked on the locked door of the Election Bureau. They were hospital workers and had been let out of work late (circumstances beyond their control). A woman came out to the door and opened it but refused to take their cards (it was 5:45 pm). This angered the spurned potential voters, and one of them ripped the two cards into little pieces.

We started a conversation with them. They said they felt victimized — cheated out of their right to vote. We commiserated and told them how the law used to be. Before they left, they'd decided to call their state representative and state senator and urge them to help change the law, and to call the *Register-Guard* and the TV stations to complain publicly about this suppression of their desire to participate in the political process.

That was and is my point. The dismal state of our political processes can be positively changed only by the participation of more and more "we-the-people" attitudes. The last should facilitate that participation, not impede it.

Oregon does have a motor/voter system that allows a person to register to vote while getting a driver's license

or state ID. George Bush vetoed federal legislation that would have mandated this nationally on the spurious basis that fraud could occur. The same argument is used by those in our state Legislature who have thwarted attempts to restore the up-to-and-including-Election Day registration law we used to have.

Beyond that, there's the concept of universal registration; we could automatically issue a voter registration card on your 18th birthday based on your Social Security number. The logistics of name and address changes could easily be worked out, as could legal safeguards against potential voting fraud. The vast federal bureaucracy could be mobilized to do this.

Now is a good time to focus on all this. We have candidates running for state representative, state senator, secretary of state, congressional representative and U.S. senator who care about these issues of our participation. Your involvement in their campaigns may make a difference in whether political reform is on the agenda of the next Legislature and the next Congress.

So think about it — about the issues you can help decide and the candidates you can support or oppose. Think about your participation rights in general. We can change these political laws via the Legislature or the initiative process if necessary. I'll remember those two women who walked away hurt and angry, and I'll remember the hundreds of people I did register, who I hope will join me in taking back the political processes and institutions that influence the quality of our lives.

Paul Prenskey is editor of the Lane County Oregon for Brown Grassroots Newsletter.

LETTERS

Nightmare

As a nurse, I am interested in what I can do to improve the quality of people's lives.

After reviewing the arguments to keep Trojan open, I was struck with the fact that a very important point was not discussed: the existing 400 tons of high-level radioactive waste sitting near the banks of the Columbia River, plus 220 tons more if it remains open until 1996. Approximately 5,000 pounds of that waste is plutonium. It is so toxic that one ounce can cause lung cancer in 100,000 people. That kind of disaster is beyond the capability of our medical world.

We have a lot of problems in the world and here at home:

poverty, hunger, jobs, crime, and discrimination, to name a few. None of them will matter if we no longer have a place to live and breathe, a place to call home — our only home — planet earth.

We are the only creatures that foul their own nest. In the Native American tradition, their actions were guided by a philosophy of how their decisions would effect the seventh generation. The ozone is being destroyed, the oceans are dying, and our air, water and soil are polluted. I wonder if we will have a seventh generation.

If there is an earthquake or nuclear accident at Trojan, the medical world cannot deal with such a nightmare. Trojan's safety record is the worst in the his-

tory of nuclear power plants.

Earthquakes, Three Mile Island, Chernobyl. Could it never happen here?

Ruth Heyes
Eugene

Passion tree

I must say, I've never considered a homosexual lifestyle before, but after Scott Lively's comments about sex and trees during Tuesday night's debate, I was beginning to find his wood podium very attractive indeed. I'm even considering taking out an ad in the personals:

"SWM, non-smoker, seeks cedar, preferably old growth, for an intimate relationship. I'm into chainsaws, spiking and

very rough bark. I have no kids, but I'm very interested in raising some squirrels and perhaps a few swallows."

Mr. Lively can then waste his time and the taxpayers' money on a campaign to discriminate against "abnormal trees." He better be careful though, lest an unfriendly chair leave a splinter in his butt.

Mark Radermacher
English

Measure 9B

I propose Ballot Measure 9B. You see, I'm not a Christian, and though the great majority of Christians are decent, compassionate citizens, there is a

small minority who are pushing their militant agenda on the rest of us.

So to prevent this terrible attack on my values, I say we brand every single Christian perverse and abhorrent, and insist the state actively discourage Christianity as a lifestyle choice.

And of course the Koran brands Christians infidels. That certainly must take precedence over any civil laws we may have, inane things that prevent us from dictating our unsullied morality on anyone who has the unmitigated gall to believe something different.

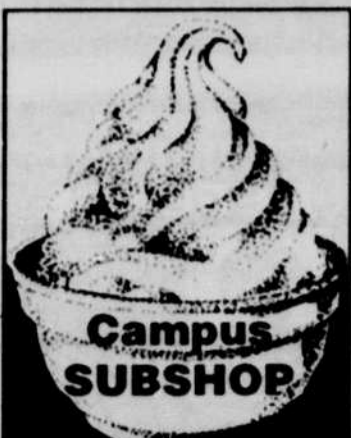
Sound familiar? No on 9.

Jamie Bakum
Kappa Sigma

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Who really supports higher education?




Think twice about who you vote for Nov. 3rd in House District 41. Marie Bell has supported:

- Higher Education Budget
- Faculty Retention Bill
- Funds for Industrialized Housing Project at the UO
- Coaches' Retirement Plan
- Sports Action Lottery Bill

Marie Bell
For State Representative

Authorized by friends of Marie Bell, 1574 Coburg Rd, #282, Eugene, Oregon 97401



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by Peter Shaffer
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