

Walters' re-election little more than fluke

An overpowering sense of self-importance is responsible for the Oregon Citizens Alliance and its bizarre politics. It's also the reason Springfield City Councilman Ralf Walters was re-elected Tuesday.

The odd thing is, it wasn't Walters' sense of self-importance that got him re-elected, but that of his opponents.

Walters had two challengers for his council seat, Chris Matson and Rick Gregg. Walters received only 38 percent of the vote. Matson and Gregg combined for 62 percent. The majority voted Walters out of office, yet he's still there.

Had either Matson or Gregg had the courage or wisdom to step aside, the people of Springfield would have been successful in removing one of the most entrenched special interest representatives on the council.

Springfield voters rejected conservative councilwoman Melody Carlson, replacing her with Stu Burge, and re-elected Mayor Bill Morrisette over ultra-conservative write-in candidate George Wojcik.

The rejection of OCA wannabes would have been complete if not for Matson's and Gregg's foolish notions of egoism. Had either of them been truly intent on seeing Walters defeated, one would have stepped aside and offered support to the other candidate.

Many Springfield residents would like the outside world to view the council elections as proof the city is not a jerk-water bastion of self-righteous fundamentalism. More than 18,500 ballots were cast Tuesday as compared to about 11,000 in the May primaries.

It was in May that Springfield adopted Measure 20-08, the city's anti-homosexual ordinance. If voter turnout had been greater, perhaps 20-08 would not have passed.

Perhaps this new council will bring some common sense to Springfield. Walters is outnumbered, the OCA has lost its stranglehold on the council, and the future holds promise for all residents. Most importantly, the council and mayor can get back to the business of managing the city rather than dodging OCA pitchforks.

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LETTERS POLICY

The *Oregon Daily Emerald* will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.

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OPINION

Election is over but process isn't



Whew! Go ahead, relax. Call up that friend you haven't spoken to since you saw that "Yes on 9" sign in his front yard. Take that Voter's Pamphlet off your coffee table and throw it away. In fact, lose all those political stickers, buttons, signs, bumper stickers and T-shirts.

The elections are over! And now life can go back to normal. Right?

You know as well as I do that the elections were only the beginning. While it's true we've finally decided how we feel about Perot, triple trailers, the OCA, etc., what we do with the people we've elected and the measures we've passed is the next and most important step in the whole process.

"Your Vote Counts!" says the billboard. On buttons and posters: "Rock the Vote." The new zeal for voting has made a difference this year. Voter registration levels astounded election officials. Everyone - especially the 18- to 24-year-olds wanted to be involved in this election.

Rock the Vote, a movement to increase young voter registration, has been largely responsible for the dramatic turnout at the polls. However, Jody Uttal, co-founder of the movement, has broader goals for Rock the Vote.

"The idea," she says, "is to raise the political consciousness of kids."

It's the responsibility of every American to vote. Young Amer-

icans are notorious for low voter turnout. In 1988, only 33.2 percent of U.S. 18- to 21-year-olds voted in the presidential election. You know that you've been beaten over the head with that fact until finally you gave in. "OK! I'll register! I'll even vote! I'll change the statistic!"

That's great - but wait! Your responsibility does not end there. Making yourself informed about political issues, even ones that you won't vote on right away, is just as important as voting.

There are at least two good reasons to keep up with current political issues. One is that, sooner or later, you will come up against someone who believes differently than you do about an issue and who is either more informed about the issue or is a better in-your-face debater. The later this happens, the better.

This happened to me recently. One week before the election, I became embroiled in a heated Measure 7 discussion with a friend. I discovered that although I knew how I was going to vote on the measure, I really didn't know very much about it. I wasn't sure why I believed the way I did. In fact, I was totally unaware of the position of the other side.

After doing some research on the measure, I decided to stick with my original decision to vote against the property tax increase. This time my decision was based on solid reasons.

The second, more practical reason is that as a voter, you have the right to protect your own interests. Voting is important, but reading up on the issues and candidates in the election and forming your own opinion before you vote is just as important. How many of us let our family and friends de-

cide how we will vote? Making decisions for yourself is the only way to make sure you're really representing your interests in the voting booth.

So how does one become involved in American politics?

The first step, of course, is voter registration. The next step in getting involved is voting. And now that we're past that stage, we have to take responsibility for our decisions.

Part of this responsibility includes reading the newspaper or watching the news. The average American citizen spends two minutes a day reading the paper. For college students, this rate is even lower.

Recognize that the University campus is very small. It's easy to accept the myth that the college experience is real life. For many, the college community is a fantasyland of idealism. Not everyone in the United States cares if the University Bookstore sells *Hustler*.

Instead of skipping over the international section of the paper in favor of human interest stories, read up on Somalia, Iraq, Syria and other countries in the news.

"It's as though someone has done a very successful 'Just Say No to Politics' campaign," said Sanford D. Horwitt, People for the American Way project director, on the apathy in young voters. Hopefully, Horwitt spoke too soon. With the renewed interest in voting this election year, we 18- to 24-year-olds are changing our image to that of young people who 'Just Say Yes' to political involvement. Even though the election's over, let's keep that image alive. Stay involved.

Stephanie Sisson is a monthly columnist for the Emerald.

LETTERS

Pro-murder

I must say I was astounded to see the full-page ad on the back of the Nov. 2 *Emerald*. I knew that people who are "pro-choice" often are because they want the right to follow their sexual desires and to legally commit an act which will cause a life which would otherwise existed to not exist (i.e. the right to commit murder) should a pregnancy result.

We now have proof. Is anybody listening?

Please note my choice of words above. I said "often." I believe some are really pro-

choice because they don't realize it means "pro-choice to murder." To those people, I say please reconsider. This is not a difficult problem to solve if you think clearly.

An action which prevents a person who would otherwise walk among us from doing so is always murder! A mother always has a choice - to love her child, or hate it without cause and kill it. Perhaps that child would be the one to find the cure for a major disease. Just an added thought.

**Bob Weigel
Eugene**

No government

I have a strong sense of moral values developed over the years through prayer and faith.

I don't want and don't need the government deciding what my moral values should be. I draw a distinction between a personal belief in what is right and wrong and having the government impose its heavy hand over people's lives.

As a conservative, I oppose state-sponsored restrictions on free decision-making.

**William Siegel
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