

# Support campaign finance reform for Senate and House

By Andrew Christiansen

A Gallup poll taken last June indicated 11 percent of Americans rate Congress highly for ethics and honesty. This is lower than real estate agents, journalists, lawyers, bankers and nearly every other profession other than used car salespeople.

Voter dissatisfaction is caused by the public's opinion that its representatives are bought and sold on a free market. As of late, the easiest way to turn a politician's head is through the influence of money, which has caused public policy to be diverted from the public good.

People have expressed their concern through overwhelming voter turnout, which has put some new blood into the heart of America with the message of change for a better tomorrow.

A legislative bill is entering Congress soon to establish campaign finance reforms in hopes of leveling out the political playing field. Public support is desperately needed in order to insure that a sense of democracy will be restored in America.

Over the past 12 years, the influence of money has been one of the most powerful driving forces that controls how our public policy is formed. The cost of running an effective campaign has risen tremendously, with politicians running up bills close to \$60,000 (in Oregon).

Per voter spending for Senate seats in Oregon has jumped by 49 percent between 1986 and 1990, 62 percent for House seats. New records were set by Oregon politicians for campaign spending, with Senate spending costing \$2.17 per voter (nearly four times that of other states).

Fifty percent of the House gets 50 percent of its money from Political Action Committees. Candidates are also able to "bundle" money, in which rather than receiving a contribution from a single company, each individual from that company would donate a certain sum themselves at the same time.

This increases the money received by the hopeful office holder, while hiding the name of the company that donated the money.

Another way candidates may receive contributions is through donations to the



particular political party instead of directly to the individual.

These methods of contribution cause these candidates to worry more about financing than their policy developments, and they often lean toward special interest groups to insure they'll have money coming in. All this at the expense of the average citizen.

This gives people the perception that the system is stacked against them, causing many to lose faith in the system all together. This need for money has increased Congress' dependence on these special interest groups, overshadowing the needs of citizen constituent concerns.

Also, this money enables incumbents to consistently hold their seats in office, because they can simply outspend their opponents in election campaigns.

PACs donated \$3.3 for every \$1 contributed to challengers or incumbents, making up 90 percent of the total money donated to candidates. On average, House incumbents spent \$557,403 compared to the \$168,828 spent by their opponents, most of it coming from the PACs.

Even with the rise of anti-incumbent

attitudes, most incumbents were able to maintain their seats in office, due to the sole fact that they had more money than their challengers.

There is a simple solution to the whole monetary issue — limit the amount being spent.

Oregonians showed their thirst for change at the polls with the overwhelming passage of term limits. This will succeed in eventually removing the bad apples who are stalemating positive growth in the state.

Unfortunately, it also removes the good apples who are actually concerned over the public well-being. Greater limits on our politicians must be imposed because they make pertinent decisions in this country.

The legislative bill up for vote soon in Congress will accomplish the following goals:

First, it would limit the amount of money special interest groups give to candidates, and how much these candidates may accept from them.

Second, the bill would make resources

available to candidates to reduce their dependency on contributions, such as grants, matching funds, and free or reduced-cost television and mailings. Funding for this could be accomplished by repealing the tax deduction for lobbying, providing roughly \$100 million per year.

Third, it would limit how much candidates may spend on their individual campaigns, creating a level playing field for all candidates. By tying public funding to spending limits, this would create incentives for candidates to stick to the established amount.

Fourth, it would close the loophole that allows contributors to get around limits by giving to the particular political party rather than to the individual candidate.

Fifth, the bill would reform the Federal Election Commission to improve its effectiveness in monitoring and safeguarding federal elections and enforcing new legislation.

It is time to put the power back where it belongs — in the hands of the people. President Clinton has vowed to instill tougher campaign finance reform laws that were passed earlier by Congress yet vetoed by Bush.

He has made it a priority of his within the first 100 days in office, and it is up to you to ensure he doesn't go back on his word. The people have shown they want change by the turnout at the polls, and the overwhelming vote for term limits.

But that was just the beginning. It is time to put change in effect. Write to your congressmen and congresswomen and tell them how you feel about the issue, or get in touch with an organization that has its foot in the door of the political process, such as OSPIRG or a student political party.

These groups will be sure to point you in the right direction. Get involved. The time has come to restore America's faith in its own system of government, and ensure that nobody is getting out-voiced by special interest money. Government should be run on the basis of ideology and not go to the highest bidder.

Andrew Christiansen is a physics major at the University.

## LETTERS

### Middle East

Alon Tal's commentary (*ODE*, March 9) in response to my essay of March 5 on the policies of water in the Middle East does not offer any scholarly refutation. By hiding behind religion, Tal's ramblings search to legitimize the occupation of land lived on for centuries by Palestinians. "The last refuge of a scoundrel is either patriotism or religion," someone said long ago.

The 1993 Environmental Law Conference publicly circulated agenda did not reflect any pan-

el on the Middle East.

On the subject of water in the Middle East, the study in the University of Pennsylvania's Thomas Naff is a must. Also helpful is the research of the University of Michigan's professor of geography, John Kolars. Gerson's article, "Trustee-Occupant: The Legal Status of Israel's Presence in the West Bank," in the *Harvard Journal of International Law*, Vol. 14, should also prove beneficial.

Finally, people who defend Israel and its practices should at least show some honesty. God

and the prophets have never been in the real estate business. Israel was created in 1948 and is sustained through the might of force, billions of United States dollars, and a good public relations network.

For a better understanding of how Israel was created, read Alfred Lillienthal's *Zionist Connection*; Eveland's *Ropes of Sand*; John Snetsinger's *Truman, the Jewish Vote, and the Creation of Israel*; and the recently published *The Passionate Attachment* by former under-Secretary of State George

Ball and his son.

Tal's commentary paints a benign picture of an otherwise complex situation. Peace does not come through dishonesty.

M. Reza Behnam  
Eugene

And if the conference embraced the Middle East, what happened to the presence of the Iranians, Turks, Kurds, Saudis, Iraqis, Syrians, Jordanians, Lebanese, Yamanis and Libyans in the conference?

How many panels on the Middle East were scheduled during the four-day conference?

Something rotten went on. University officials, higher education board members and the *Emerald's* courageous reporters should investigate.

Wira Kurniawan  
Eugene

### Conference

The title of the *Emerald's* article of March 9, "Conference embraced Middle East," wasn't accurate. How could a conference embrace the Middle East if the organizers didn't even mention it in their schedule?

**LOUIE'S VILLAGE**  
The Finest Chinese and American Food  
Open for lunches and dinners until 10:30 p.m. Mon. - Thurs. and until midnight Fri. and Sat.  
Restaurant & Lounge  
947 Franklin Blvd.  
343-4480

GEN ADMISSION TH-SA \$5 -SU-WE \$4 -BU MAY \$3 -SRS \$3.50 -KIDS \$2.50 -OPF CERTIFICATE AVAILABLE!  
BARBAIN PASSES ON SALE NOW - 3 MOVIES FOR \$17.95 10 FOR \$20. GOOD SU - TH

Nightly 8:00 (8:15, 7:30, 9:40 Sun Mat 2:45)

NOMINATED FOR 6 ACADEMY AWARDS INCLUDING BEST PICTURE, BEST ACTOR AND BEST DIRECTOR!  
"AN ELEGANT NEW FILM!"  
Howard Cooper, THE NEW YORK TIMES

SEX, MURDER, BETRAYAL, NOTHING IS WHAT IT SEEMS TO BE.

THE CRYING GAME  
play it at your own risk

492 E 13th 686-2458

BIJOU LATE NITE - Late Nite Adm Th Sa \$3 - Su We \$2.50 - BIJOU LATE NITE - BIJOU LATE NITE

HELD OVER! Nightly 11:30

"ONE OF THE BEST FILMS OF THE DECADE."  
The lover

HELD OVER! Nightly 11:30

A Heartwarming Tale of Murder  
BROTHER'S KEEPER

**WHOLE BEAN COFFEE**

Distinctive coffees from around the world, by the pound. A wide variety to choose from including: organic, blended, and decaffeinated coffees. With each pound of coffee, get a free cup of our house coffee!

kinko's

860 East 13th Avenue  
344-7894

Across from U of O Bookstore

COFFEE • TEA • ESPRESSO