

It's your duty to vote

More than two centuries ago, our forefathers endowed on the citizens of this country the right to vote, and with it they entrusted the fate and destiny of our fledgling democracy to the hands of the people.

OK, so it wasn't to *all* of the people, but these guys weren't brilliant about *everything*. (After all, they did voluntarily choose to wear powdered wigs. In public.)

Far be it for the *Emerald* to call it your patriotic duty to get yourself to the polls and vote today, but ... well, here we are. The issue at hand, the sales tax Ballot Measure 1, may not be as exciting as some of the issues of other recent elections, but the debate over the sales tax has still taken some interesting turns along the way. Such as:

- When was the last time the opponents of a major ballot measure used the word "goofy" in describing the measure's faults? The sales tax's opponents did so in a widely seen television commercial that was one of the first to hit the airwaves. Would someone have described last year's failed Measure 9 as "goofy"? We didn't think so.

We're sure there were some other fascinating points about the sales tax discussion which made the subject utterly enthralling, but we forgot them. So back to the dull stuff.

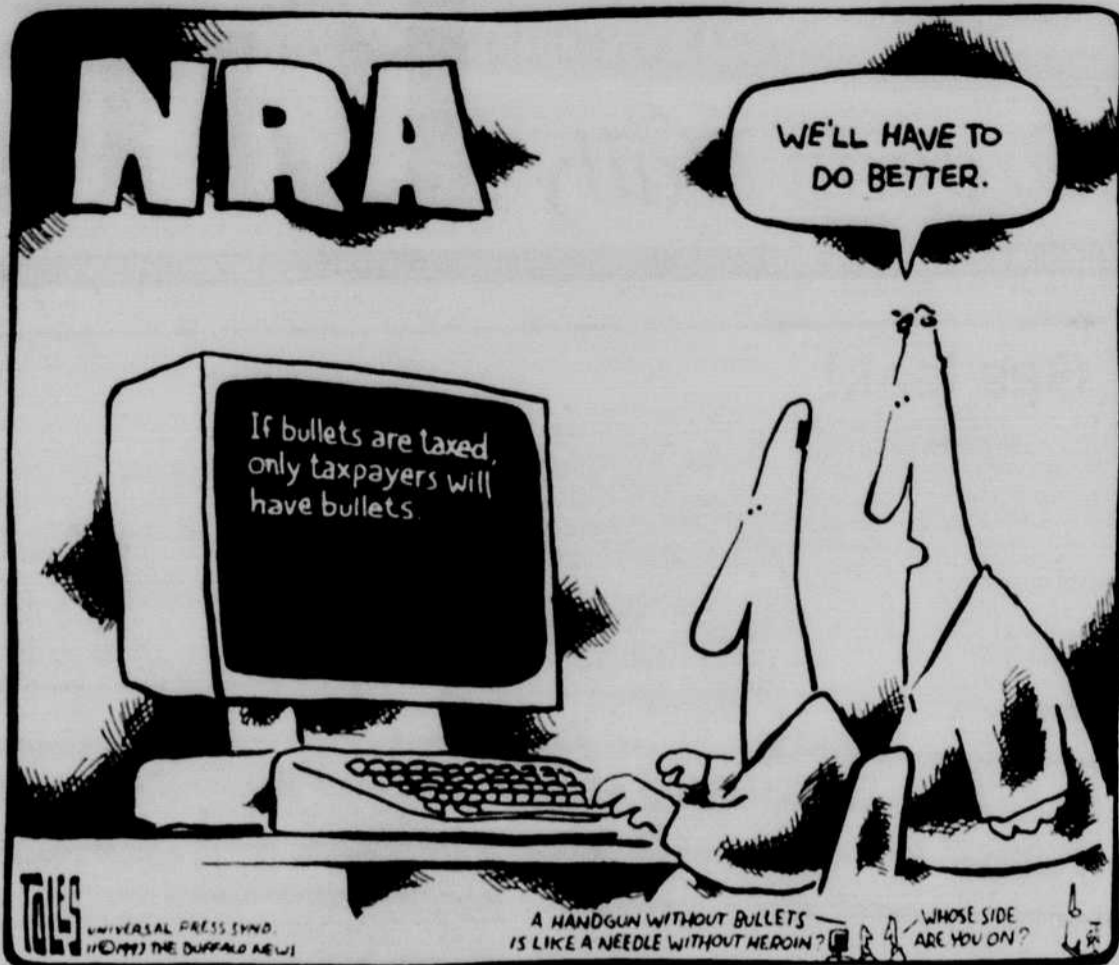
Opponents and supporters of the sales tax both seem to be missing the point. Supporters are convinced that if the opponents only informed themselves of all of the guarantees contained in the sales tax measure (like an unchangeable 5 percent limit, or the dedication of all the revenue to schools), they would all say, "Oh, well, in that case, sure."

Well, first of all, opponents don't believe that the state government will be true to those promises (no matter how hard supporters try to convince them otherwise). The voters believe state government cheated them out of the savings they were supposed to realize under 1990's Measure 5. Most homeowners saw only slight (if any) property tax relief under Measure 5, because their property was assessed at a higher value. They accuse the Legislature of ignoring and deliberately undermining the popular mandate that Measure 5 was supposed to be. It's no wonder that the voters are refusing to trust the Legislature now.

Second, many of the voters who supported Measure 5 did so in an effort to lower their individual tax burden. If a person loses \$10 to taxes, and then passes a measure that he or she believes will lower their taxes to \$7 (but, in effect, lowers it only to \$9), how can we seriously expect that person to pass another measure which will practically nullify the effects of the first measure? OK, maybe he or she pays \$9.60 instead of the original \$10. The point is this: How much a person is made to pay is more important to them than what kind of tax it was that made them pay it.

The real division between opponents and supporters of the sales tax is this: opponents want to pay less taxes, supporters are willing to pay as much as before (or even more). This division has been virtually ignored during this campaign, but it will probably be the principal issue affecting the outcome of the election.

That's politics. Get out and vote.



LETTERS

Donut holes

I agree with the opponents of state Ballot Measure 1 that it is unreasonable to subject staples of the American diet such as donut holes and potato chips to a sales tax. However, I believe that Oregon's economy would benefit in the long run if our state's voters should decide to approve Measure 1.

Measure 1 would significantly rearrange our tax structure so that our state's economic horses would be placed, so to speak, in front of our state's tax carts. This change would allow room for Oregon's 98-pound weakling economy to grow and gain enough strength to support the 250 pounds of government body we have acquired over the past few decades.

Removing school financing from property tax should make essential human needs like housing less costly while the sales tax makes less essential consumer goods more expensive. Most of the goods that would be subject to a sales tax are imported into Oregon from other states and foreign countries.

A sales tax would not only broaden our tax base to include tourists but should also capture contributions from our many Oregon residents who thrive in our large and growing underground economy and pride themselves in not paying income taxes.

Oregon has always spent heavily on education but has tended to receive a relatively low return on its investments because we export our most capable students to out-of-state jobs while preparing our least capable students to fuel the revolving doors of our state's only real growth industry — our criminal justice system.

Perhaps a sales tax is not the worst thing that can happen to Oregon, even if it does include donut holes and potato chips.

Nicholas J. Urhausen
Eugene

Longer letters

Lia Salciccia's opinion (*ODE*, Nov. 2) that "boring, pointless letters won't improve the *Emerald*" rags on various contributors and says be concise, be specific. Her editorial interested me because the *Emerald* had published a letter of my own that day.

I wrote a good letter with a point, but the printed form was not the letter I submitted. The original child was too long at 370 words. Going to the newsroom, I myself edited out the verbiage that made it readable and gave it nuance and literacy. More matter, less art, sad to say. A gourmet repast reduced to crudites and dip.

The *Emerald's* limit of 250 words per letter restrains expression. Student columnists have a much freer field ... to make boring pointless remarks like Salciccia's (whose column seemed to be a "filler" that day). Boring topics are not so; they are intangible without science or numbers. Such "aery spirits" need space. Two-hundred-and-fifty words is a cattle-pen to expound on Ayn Rand's corporate deception. Perhaps the *Emerald* should up the word limit to 350 words and pare out the twinkie matter of student columns.

Andrew Shaffer
Eugene

PACs

The principles of democracy in our Constitution is that all citizens of the United States have an equal opportunity to choose and influence their representation through voting. The state of Oregon has threatened the fun-

damental principle because it has no limits on campaign contributions by individuals, PACs or corporations, allowing representation to be unduly influenced by the highest bidder.

In 1972, the average campaign for a House seat cost \$3,100. In 1992, a campaign for the same seat cost candidates about \$38,000. During the same 20-year span, individual campaign contributions have decreased from 61 percent to 13 percent while the contributions from PACs have increased from 22 percent to 69 percent. Also, PAC contributions weigh heavily in favor of incumbents, which greatly explains why 54 of 59 incumbents were re-elected.

A disturbing side note is that PAC contributions have increased at a faster rate than campaign spending, leaving candidates with excess funds that they are legally entitled to spend as they please. An example of profiteering from PAC contributions is House Speaker Larry Campbell who after receiving \$82,000 in PAC contributions declared that he could "do any damn thing" he wanted with the money (*The Oregonian*, Sept. 4).

The coalition for Campaign Finance Reform has filed an initiative to reduce the influence of PACs by limiting all campaign contributions. The coalition needs to collect 66,771 signatures in order to get the initiative on the ballot for November 1994. I encourage all students who want to see a return of equality to politics to sign the petition and, at least, give the initiative a fighting chance.

David Almeida
Political Science

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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