

## Gridlock tarnishes Congress' image

Partisan politics and a new Republican motto of "Nothing passes before Nov. 8" will forever stain the 103rd Congress and permanently damage the legislative branch's credibility.

When voters ousted entrenched incumbents en masse in 1992 and swept a new crop of inexperienced reformers into Congress, there was an optimistic hope that business (or lack thereof) as usual would end.

Voters and pundits alike dreamed of legislators willing to put party affiliations aside and begin a new era in which the business of the country became the sole focus of the lawmakers.

Unfortunately, the idealism quickly faded to mean-spirited stall tactics and unreasonable partisanship.

The five health care plans went down with nary a whimper. Amending the environmental Superfund laws lost to the GOP's insistence that Clinton and the Democrats should receive no credit for passing a major environmental statute. All this despite joint support from environmentalists and industry. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, sponsored by Republicans during the Reagan and Bush administrations, couldn't muster enough votes and is dead until after the Nov. 8 elections, when GOP support will most likely return.

Worst of all, a bill designed to stop members of Congress from accepting gifts, trips and meals from lobbyists fell to a bipartisan filibuster. It seems the only thing Congress can agree upon is the continued flow of freebies from special interests.

It is apparent that the tactics used by the Republican Party, led by Bob Dole and Newt Gingrich, are ploys to increase the public's perception that it is the Democrats who are responsible for the endless gridlock.

But voters should see through the smokescreen and realize the blame lies at the feet of the Republican minority. Instead of worrying about the legislation and policy in the public's interest, many GOP lawmakers are posturing for a takeover of the House and possibly the Senate. Hoping that a no-action Congress will influence November's outcomes, the Republicans are taking a substantial gamble while holding hostage the important issues facing this country.

So once again voters will blame Congress for all that plagues the country, increasing their calls for more reform. Possibly, another round of incumbents will fall, as seen already in the case of Rep. Mike Synar of Oklahoma, who lost to a retired school teacher who spent \$17,000 on his election campaign.

No matter what happens during the upcoming elections, Congress will have to live with voter cynicism and a tarnished reputation until it proves to the voters that the public's interest is foremost on the agenda, rather than the recently demonstrated personal posturing that did nothing more than inflame constituents.



**■ OPINION**

## Internet users: Keep it clean!



ANNE MOSER-KORNFELD

Writing a column about the Internet is risky because it constantly changes. Keeping up to date requires frequent use of the Internet and all its resources.

Tunneling into Ohio State's library system databases via Gopher without a clue how to get back out is only one of the perils of being a new user.

The democratic structure of the Global Village, Cyberspace or the net mandates that when someone helps a new user find his or her way around it's almost expected that person will repay the favor by helping somebody else. The first rule of thumb when using the net is don't be afraid to ask for help!

Thousands of individual computers access the Internet. That is the net's greatest strength and its greatest weakness.

This brings up the basic problem on campus: hardware access. Most newly initiated computer dweebs hog hours at the various computer centers while wannabes wait for a terminal to open up. The secret to getting on the Information Superhighway is not to try getting on between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Go to the labs during "off" hours and Zam!, the open road goes on forever.

But for students still stuck in the "I hate computers" phase, remember — NO ONE learns how to use Internet in a day. The EMU and the Computing Center and the whole mess of computer whiz kids take on an elitist air to keep novices off the hardware because of the lack of available terminals.

This brings me to my next point of the \$50 computer fee, the

University administration and more than 15,000 students wanting access, an insufficient number of seminars to learn about using all the on-line education opportunities and everything else in between. Did the Computing Center and the administration think that students wouldn't want to gain access into the World Wide Web?

Hopefully, things will get worked out soon so more students will have the chance to sharpen their computer communication skills.

Communication in the electronic world, through e-mail and bulletin boards is publication. Publication brings with it responsibility and the ability to stay in touch by being on the best behavior any new user can ask of him or herself.

Internet do's and don'ts include thinking before sending e-mail. Follow the rules and the electronic publishing world will be a happier place.

Anyone can download a letter and repost it to another bulletin board. Netiquette isn't just a pleasant suggestion. Netiquette is protocol. Be cool, chill, smile, and run! (But beware some of the folk on the I-way are the people Mom and Dad said to avoid!)

E-mail communication requires a solid background in grammar. An appreciation for not *what* gets said, as most folk on bulletin boards ask questions while those with the answers are too busy to post a random teaching seminar on-line, but *how* something is said is a necessity.

Computer technology is a tool. In the wrong hands, tools can sometimes be misused and/or used as a weapon. The sound of silence means more today than ever before.

Using language that may have more than one meaning or may be offensive to others defeats the purpose of communicating as a faceless entity across oceans and continents.

Outspoken, informal speech that is continuously available

doesn't mean users can forget they're sending their thoughts back and forth with a living, breathing human being.

When popular magazines print e-mail responses with obscene language, to keep the author's intent pure, the magazines aren't simply showing their ignorance, but the lack of originality on an author's part, which then alienates others who may not want to read any further.

Regardless of how intelligent a writer's opinion may be or the point her or she may contribute to the ongoing conversation via the electronic world, without respectful use of language the author's intent will have been lost.

This doesn't mean a new user shouldn't take a chance after getting run off by a native who loses his or her cool by spewing verbal garbage about perceived or real computer ignorance. Learning by doing is the only way anyone can get really proficient at cruising' the I-way.

Connection is the key. The *Emerald* and the *Oregon Commentator* have gone on-line to maintain that connection with the this campus and campuses worldwide.

By breaking free of the printing restraints set on newspapers, both have become more interactive and enable readers to engage in more open communication. Computer news fosters participation in today's media that did not exist in the past.

The on-rushing technology intends to bring more fair-minded opinions that can help sort out today's complex social issues.

And for new users, when the worst happens, hit control C. The connection to that unknown tunnel from the cyber-world will be broken and it's possible to begin once more.

Anyone wishing to respond directly to this column can send an e-mail message to Kornfeld@duckmail.uoregon.edu.

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