

Re-elect Defazio for District No. 4

In a bewildering election season with scant easy choices, there are only a few races that provide an obvious vote.

The race for U.S. Representative from the 4th District is one such case.

Peter DeFazio has been a force for Oregon in his four terms as representative, consistently bringing home concrete benefits for the state, which have earned him the respect of both his constituents and his colleagues in Washington.

He has the experience, commitment and intelligence necessary to serve Oregon for another term. He should be given that chance.

The debate between environmentalists and the timber industry is often simplistically characterized as jobs vs. the environment. DeFazio has not subscribed to that notion.

Instead, he has been one of the strongest supporters of a ban on log exports, which would keep unfinished logs from leaving the state without first being made into finished products or at least lumber. That generates jobs in this state without simply encouraging the industry to keep cutting down more trees than necessary.

And he has made efforts to ensure that displaced timber workers remain productive citizens. He has even donated some of his congressional pay raise — an increase he voted against — to fund scholarships at community colleges so those workers can get the training they need.

DeFazio's opponent, Republican John D. Newkirk, is running on a platform of stopping "tax-and-spend politicians." That argument would be more appropriate against someone other than DeFazio, who has shown himself to be more responsible in that regard than many other members of Congress.

DeFazio has co-sponsored a constitutional balanced budget amendment — hardly the act of a tax-and-spend politician.

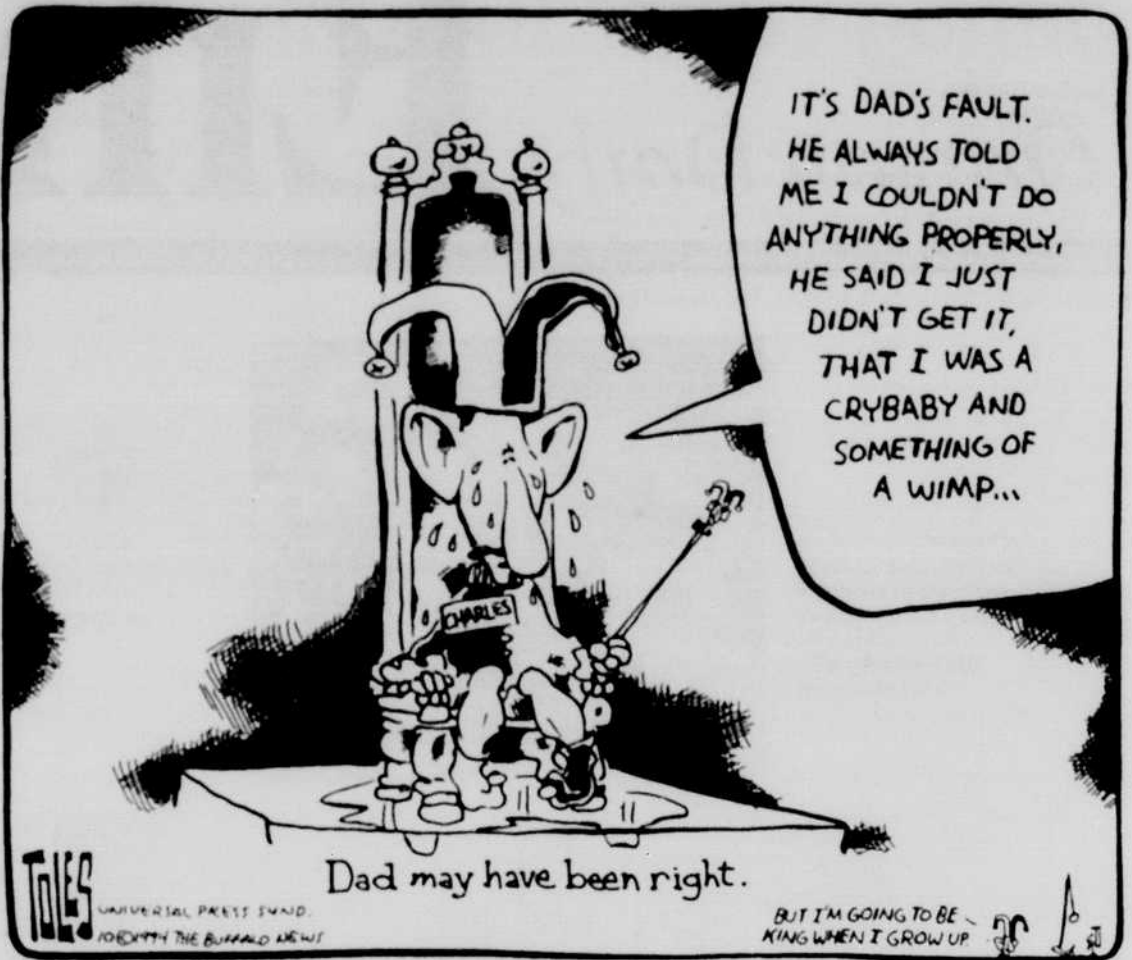
The virtual unknown Newkirk is obviously at a disadvantage in this race. And while his list of priorities may appeal to some voters, it simply can't compete with the proven record of Peter DeFazio.

Newkirk is probably right when he describes DeFazio as a "career politician." But when a career is as effective as DeFazio's has been, then one has to wonder why that's such a bad thing.

According to Newkirk, politicians are persuaded by lobbyists to ignore the concerns of the voters who elected them. Essentially, he's afraid that "special interests" control the politician.

But Newkirk's list of priorities show that he is just as influenced by special interests as any career politician, calling for protection for social security, the opening of closed forests, the preservation of fishing rights and the right to bear arms.

Whether these are worthy causes is not the issue here. The point is, DeFazio has made it clear that he gets the job done in Congress. All we have to do is hire him again.



COMMENTARY

Think twice before you vote

Patrick Mitcheltree

As you look over the measures in the 1994 voters' pamphlet, visualize what would happen if all of them passed. By doing this, you may start to notice some problems — specifically, the combination of Ballot Measure 5 and Ballot Measure 15.

Measure 5, sometimes called "the son of five," is an extension of Ballot Measure 5 from 1990. The first Measure 5 imposed a limit on property taxes in Oregon and caused massive funding problems for almost all state-assisted programs. The new Measure 5 would require that all new taxes and fee increases be put before the voters for approval.

Measure 15, the "kid's first" measure, would require the state to maintain funding for public schools and community colleges at present levels and to increase funding to compensate for inflation and increased enrollment. This would help counteract the fiscal problems created by the first Measure 5, and would also guarantee that the schools wouldn't be hurt.

Both measures appear good on the surface. Taxpayers are tired of the government popping new taxes on them to drain their bank accounts, and schools are a priority for many Oregon voters.

However, both measures are attracting criticism. Measure 5 would put every new tax and fee increase on the ballots. That could add up to hundreds of minor taxes that need to be approved. Most won't be approved. Taxpayers are extremely reluctant to vote in favor of new taxes, and the government will be hurting for money.

Measure 15 also creates problems because the money to fund schools will more than likely come from state colleges and many other state-funded services, such as law enforcement, nursing homes, and juvenile

programs. That means University students would have to pay up to 30 percent more for tuition, or the state universities would have to eliminate 8,000 students.

What would happen if both measures passed? Individually, they have good and bad points, but together they will create a crisis. The state will be required to maintain funding for schools, but will have no way to do it.

With inflation, the general rising expenses of just about everything in Oregon, and all state programs, including public schools and community colleges, are going to need larger budgets. If the government can't increase taxes to fight increased costs because the voters turn down each new tax, almost all services would have to take a budget cut, or be eliminated — including public education.

That would be breaking the law.

What would be the purpose of electing people to represent us in the state government if we tie their hands with a proposal like Measure 5? If it can't levy taxes, then we've eliminated one of the main tools of the government. Because of budget cuts, we'll also be eliminating a good portion of the government.

These people were elected to maintain a state system, provide services and public order. Measure 5 would handicap them, and Measure 15 would paralyze them.

In my experience, no two peo-

ple agree on everything, or even on most things. That's why we have elected representatives. If it were up to the general public, there would be no taxes and very, very little would ever get done.

I'm not necessarily in favor of new taxes or more government, nor am I against maintaining funding for schools. But it seems suicidal to render the present government impotent without having some way to replace it. These measures leave no options.

But it does not make sense to fund education at the kindergarten through 12th-grade level by robbing institutions of higher education. In a world that almost requires a master's degree for a well-paying job, a high school education or a piece of paper from a community college won't cut it. Oregon students won't be able to afford either in-state or out-of-state college tuition.

When you vote on November 8, keep these things in mind. These measures may look good, but they will hurt you in the long run. I'm not asking you to vote like me. I'm just asking you to think about the consequences of your vote.

If you are not planning to vote, I strongly suggest you reconsider. Students are one of the largest voting groups in Oregon and the group with the least votes. So vote, and vote wisely.

Patrick Mitcheltree is a journalism student at the University.

COMMENTARY POLICY

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

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