

Legislature must respect voters' will

In November, thousands of Oregon voters cast their votes on more than a dozen ballot measures, ranging from child pornography to public employees' pensions.

It was unusual for state residents to vote on so many measures. But people were given the opportunity to decide what they want, and they did. It's not their fault the last legislative session was so unproductive that it was necessary to file a record number of ballot measures.

In the November elections, voters decided to ban the use of dogs and bait by cougar and bear hunters and to limit campaign contributions. Voters also refused controversial measures like Measure 15, which would require the Legislature to maintain funding for schools and community colleges and Measure 5, which barred new or increased taxes without voter approval.

Unfortunately, the 1995 Legislature is working to change some of the key measures decided by voters. In some cases, the legislator wants to overturn measures that passed by comfortable margins. Legislators are bravely pitting themselves against voters, refusing to pay attention to elections results.

What good is an election if politicians aren't true to the results? Although lawmakers may disagree with the outcome of elections, they need to pay attention to what their constituents want.

About a dozen bills before the Legislature now attempt to change the outcome of November elections. For example, several measures before the Legislature would suspend or go around Measure 18, the cougar and bear initiative passed by voters. The Senate also recently passed a resolution asking voters to approve a constitutional amendment eliminating free speech protections for obscenity and child pornography, similar to Measure 19, which failed by 54 percent.

And although Measure 9, which placed limits on campaign contributions, passed by 73 percent, the Legislature is looking at amendments that include tenfold increases in the new limits.

What good is an election if politicians aren't true to the results? Although lawmakers may disagree with the outcome of elections, they need to pay attention to what their constituents want. People appreciate their right to vote and the results of elections should be taken seriously by elected officials.

If a measure is found unconstitutional, the Legislature should enjoy the right to interfere. However, as long as measures passed by citizens are lawful, legislators should stick with what the voters want.

If legislators adopt a pattern where they override or alter election results, people will believe they are powerless and may stop voting. Many voters already believe the Legislature has betrayed them. Politicians are losing the trust of people.

To ensure democracy, the Legislature should focus on what the people want, which is reflected through election results.



OPINION

Empowerment key to ending abuse



GAYLE FORMAN

I have been in an abusive relationship. I am a powerless waif who needs to be protected by a man. No one appreciates me for what I do, which is cooking, cleaning and taking care of the babies. I have little authority in the world around me. I am hated by all men who envy me for my reproductive powers. I am in denial.

Are you confused yet? Don't be. I'm still the same friendly neighborhood columnist; I have not been lobotomized. I gained all of the above insights about myself at a seminar I took a few weeks ago on domestic violence.

The goal of this class was to enlighten the masses about the widespread problem of domestic violence. And indeed it is a huge problem, with 4,000 women murdered in domestic disputes each year and millions of women suffering from all sorts of abuse. (And yes, men are also abused, but they are a minority and they rarely suffer physical beatings, so boys, don't go getting yourselves into a tizzy.)

The seminar had good intentions — to teach people how to recognize and get out of abusive relationships — but the tactics used to attain this goal seemed both counterproductive and disempowering to all the men and women present.

The seminar, for the most part, was fine — educational and provocative — that is, until a male speaker who works with recovering batterers started laying a heavy blame session on the men, which is fine by me. If these in-the-know folks think

that it helps to tell a roomful of twentysomething men that they are all potential batterers because they all hate women, I won't argue. But while these generalizations are meant to create an awareness among men, I suspect that the only thing such blanket statements actually achieve is to make men defensive. And defensive people are not exactly open to new ideas.

Still, I had no problem with this guilt trip/consciousness-raising session. Difficulties arose, however, when said lecturer, in trying to educate the men on the gender inequity of society, began lamenting about the sorry state of women in this country. Judging from his comments, we are all housewives, completely dependent on men. We're not appreciated by the men-folk who don't take our work seriously, our work being cooking, cleaning and raising the kids. We women all expect to be protected by men, but men renege on that obligation when they beat us up.

It went on for hours. Women don't enjoy sex; they only do it for the men's sake, he implied. Men occupy all of the power positions while women iron their shirts. Men hate and disrespect women. They talk about us, deride us, and compare our bodies to animals.

After a few hours of this I was getting really pissed off, and not at the evils of the patriarchy but at this guy's dribble. What century was he in? Yes, women still have a long way to go. Housewives do deserve credit and respect for their unpaid labors. And yes, there still is the "old boys" network that needs to be infiltrated. But 70 percent of all women in this country work. In medical schools, it is the XX chromosome people sitting at over half of the desks. In law schools, universities and other professional programs, we account for over half of new admissions. Not exactly what I'd

call powerless.

But from what this guy said, we are lowly slime in the eyes of American men. We deserve pity and need understanding. Not only am I offended by his assumption, I am disgusted.

You can look at any issue and see it in a variety of different perspectives. I choose to see women as powerful, decisive and strong. That doesn't mean our society has reached the ideal egalitarian state. Women are still raped, abused, underpaid and underestimated and we are working to change that.

My lecturer friend chose to see us as powerless and weak, and that is certainly his prerogative. But is that perspective appropriate for a domestic violence seminar?

When lack of self-esteem is one of the key reasons why women get involved in abusive relationships, how productive is it to lecture 300 of them on how worthless and weak they are? When 16-year-old girls/women are having babies because they feel empty, when women of all ages are starving themselves to death to attain some beauty ideal, when women are tolerating abusive mates because they feel that is their place, why disempower them by telling them how powerless they are?

The single most powerful tool in battling domestic abuse is to empower girls and women, give them a sense of self worth, bolster their self-esteem. Sure, men need to be educated, but the focus should remain on women because it is in their vested interest to stop domestic violence; they are the ones getting their asses kicked. And they are ultimately the ones who can stop domestic violence by having the strength to get out and stay out of abusive relationships.

Gayle Forman is a columnist for the Emerald.

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3159 EUGENE OREGON 97403

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

The Emerald is private property. The unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.

Editor-in-Chief: Kaly Soto
Managing Editor: David Thom
Editorial Editor: Robbie Reeves
News Art Editor: Jeff Paslay
Freelance Editor: Lori Bettineski
News Editor: Rebecca Merritt
Sports Editor: Chris Metz
Supplements Editor: Trista Noel
Night Editor: Patrick Minford

Associate Editors: Amy Colombo, Student Government/Activities; Marcelene Edwards, Community; Colleen Pohlig, Higher Education/Administration

News Staff: Steve Asbury, Regina Brown, Melody Conroy, Amy L. Devenport, Primo Fontana, Gayle Forman, Matt Gartin, Joe Harwood, Kris Henry, Trevor Kearney, Shannon Kilduff, Adam Kincher, Samantha Martin, Matt McBride, Mark McTyre, Patrick Minford, Ben Moebius, Natalie Montgomery, Anne Moser-Kornfeld, Sherry Rainey, Natasha Shepard, Paul Van Sickle, Sean Smith, Mathew Stiffler, Mara Stine, Jeremy Stinson, Kim Weiss, Brian Womack, Les Zaczek

General Manager: Judy Riedl
Advertising Director: Mark Walter
Production Manager: Michele Ross
Advertising: Anne Amador, Anita Borgaes, Marco Ching, Tony Fox, Nicole Herzmark, Kelly Lyon, Jeremy Mason, Sarah Mitchell, Tom Mittelstaedt, Kelsey Weikel
Classified: Becky Merchant, Manager: Kyle Davis, Joli Sellen
Distribution: John Long, Ferenc Rakoczi, Graham Simpson
Business: Kathy Carbone, Supervisor: Judy Connolly
Production: Dehila McCobb, Production Coordinator: Shawna Abele, Tara Gaultney, Brad Joss, Molly McCanta, Jennifer Roland, Clayton Yee
Newsroom: 346-5511
Business Office: 346-5512
Display Advertising: 346-3712
Classified Advertising: 346-4343