

## Payment date shouldn't depend on postal service

■ **OUR OPINION:** Bill would eliminate fees for mail-delayed credit bills

What you won't hear from the credit card representatives in the EMU: Regardless of when you mail your payment, we will charge you a late fee/interest if it arrives late.

Therefore your credit rating and amount owed depend partially on the efficiency of the U.S. Postal Service. Not a comforting thought.

However, a new bill under consideration in Congress would change that pro-lender policy. If passed, the bill would require credit card companies to consider payment dates based on the postmark date. So, if debtors get their payments to the

post office on the day their bill is due, the credit company would be forced to consider the payment on time, even if it arrived a week later. Just like the IRS.

While politicians who reside in the back pockets of big business will oppose the bill, it would be a great boon to consumers. Visa and MasterCard have called the bill "misguided," but they could lose a lot of money if the bill gets the congressional OK.

Clearly, credit card companies earn enough money in interest without penalizing consumers for the lethargy of the postal service. But the bill may actually benefit them in the long run. Consumers with more cash in their pockets are more likely to spend it ... well, charge it.

## Flier statistics don't present complete truth

■ **OUR OPINION:** What we consider "fact" can be one-sided information

The racist-slanted flier stuffed in mailboxes and tacked to bulletin boards in Esslinger Hall last Wednesday raises intriguing questions about the nature and use of statistics to sway public opinion.

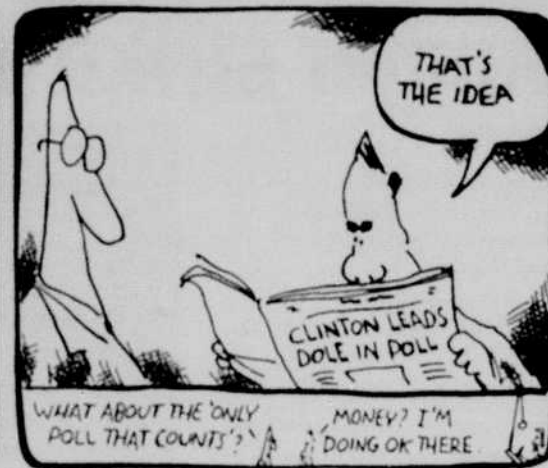
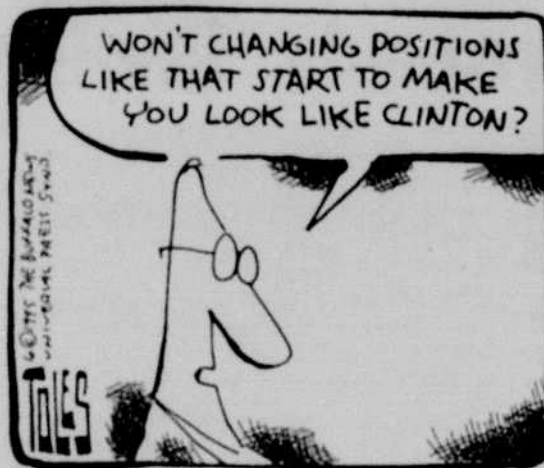
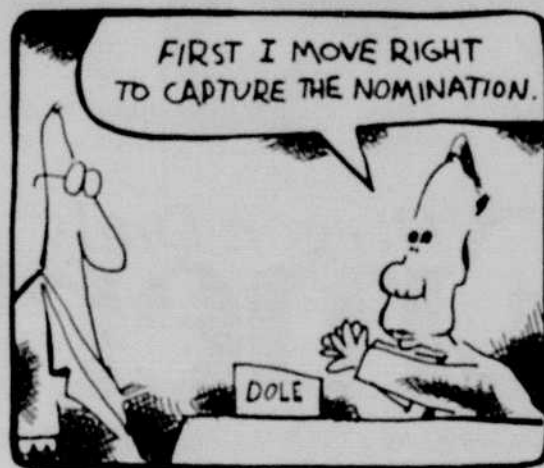
Apparently compiled by an Australian journalist, the statistics portray African-Americans as criminals who have a penchant for committing acts of violence against white people. The reporter said the information he released "could not possibly be published or discussed in the U.S. mainstream media."

He is right.

Even if the statistics were numerically accurate, they paint a warped picture of reality. Americans tend to be easily influenced by mathematical "fact," but statistics can lie.

In this case, the reporter has released a selective section of data that supports his views. It may be true that 1,600 white people are murdered by black people each year, but how many black people are murdered by whites? How many of those murders involved inner-city drug deals or the police? What is the cause of the violence?

Statistics don't show the whole truth, and American journalists would be irresponsible to present them to the public.



## No room for gays, lesbians in GOP?

Time to start gearing up for the political season once again — the Republican primaries, the race for Bob Packwood's Senate seat and, of course, gathering signatures for the referendum measures Oregonians love so dearly.

Part of the political tradition in Oregon in recent years seems to be an intense political focus on gay, lesbian and bisexual issues. June may be Gay Pride Month, but around here, November is Gay Politics Month.

Okay, so it's only October. But why wait for the rush? There's already plenty going on.

To start us off, there's Bob Dole and the Log Cabin Republicans.

For those of you who don't know, the Log Cabin Republicans are a national organization of gay and lesbian Republicans whose goal is to achieve equal rights for gays and lesbians in the Republican Party.

Personally, I've never been able to understand how someone can be a gay Republican. To me, the two seem diametrically opposed. To be fair, it's an admirable effort to try to get gays and lesbians accepted by a party whose vision of "family values" clearly excludes those families with two mommies.

Enter Bob Dole. In June, Log Cabin sent Dole a \$1,000 contribution, which was solicited by Dole's campaign manager, John Morgan. In August, shortly after news of the contribution became public, Dole returned the money, saying he didn't agree with the group's views.

Last week, however, he took the money back, blaming the donation's return on his campaign committee. He also said that accepting the group's money didn't mean he agreed with their agenda.

Can you say "waffle," boys and girls?

But Dole isn't the only one accepting endorsements from those he doesn't agree with.

Gordon Smith, a Republican who will be vying for Packwood's Senate seat, recently accepted an endorsement from the Oregon Citizens' Alliance.

The OCA is a rabidly anti-gay organization whose main focus over the past few years has been to undo or prevent gay rights legislation. Aside from a plethora of local measures, the group has worked on Measures 9 and 13 — statewide initiatives that would have prohibited passage of any gay rights legislation.

Smith opposed Measures 9 and 13, but he also opposes gay rights legislation. He says gays, lesbians and bisexuals are already protected by the Constitution.

Without specific legislation, however, gays, lesbians and bisexuals do suffer discrimination in areas such as employment and housing. In theory, the Constitution may protect everyone in

our country, but if it's not spelled out legally, there is little recourse for those affected by discrimination.

To make Smith's story even more interesting, he is not only endorsed by the OCA, but by the GOP's only openly gay legislator, Chuck Carpenter, as well.

An OCA and gay-backed candidate? I never thought I'd see the day.

Of course, the OCA is on the warpath again, gathering signatures for yet another anti-gay initiative. Oregon voters have defeated this kind of thing twice now, but the OCA is going to keep trying until it has made this palatable enough for the voters.



With a little luck, though, the Supreme Court will be able to shut up the OCA's anti-gay rhetoric for good. They have heard arguments for Colorado's Amendment 2 and will decide whether states can limit gay-rights legislation. Amendment 2 passed in Colorado in 1992, the same year Oregon voters defeated Measure 9. The Colorado Supreme Court eventually proclaimed Amendment 2 unconstitutional. This is the first gay-rights-related case the Supreme Court has heard in almost ten years.

And this is just the beginning. I have no doubt the OCA will get all the signatures they need for their new initiative, and that's when the campaign will get really ugly. I'm pretty sure gay rights can't be avoided in the presidential campaign, and I'm sure there are lots of twists and turns I can't possibly foresee.

On one level, it's mildly amusing to watch politicians do backflips around gay, lesbian and bisexual issues. On another level, it's frightening to see the anti-gay conservatives have such a stronghold on party politics.

Mostly, though, this is painful.

It's painful to see people so divided on this issue. What this really comes down to is an issue about whom we love. And in a country supposedly based on freedom, shouldn't choosing who to love be the ultimate freedom?

Jean M. Bond, a junior majoring in journalism, is a columnist for the Emerald.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The Oregon Daily Emerald welcomes your opinions on this and other issues. You may submit a letter no longer than 250 words to the Emerald offices at Suite 300 in the EMU or send us your thoughts via e-mail at ode@oregon.uoregon.edu

## Oregon Daily Emerald

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