

Paulus, DeFazio best choices for Oregon

OUR OPINION: Both are pro-education, pro-environment and pro-choice

With ballots for the Senate primary arriving in mailboxes this week, University students will have to decide whom they want to compete in the race for Bob Packwood's vacated seat.

Oregon's next U.S. senator will be voluntarily thrown into the fray of bipartisan bickering that has come to define legislative politics. Sweeping Republican reforms threaten education funding, our environment, abortion access, care for the elderly and the nation's poor.

As such, our next elected official will not only need to come down on the right side on these issues but be able to resist pressure from lobbyists and other special interests. In short, Oregon needs a senator secure in his or her convictions who will not only vote against damaging legislation but can convince other senators to follow his or her lead.

Republican Norma Paulus and Democrat Peter DeFazio should be given a shot at representing the state and its students.

Paulus is now serving her second term as Oregon's superintendent of public instruction and was a member of the state legislature for five terms. She has been a consistent supporter of higher education and does not favor excessive cuts in student loans and other financing that would inhibit students' access to higher education.

She does, however, support the balanced budget amendment, and it is not

clear whether she would resist the proposed cuts in education or the end of the direct student loan program bill to see it passed.

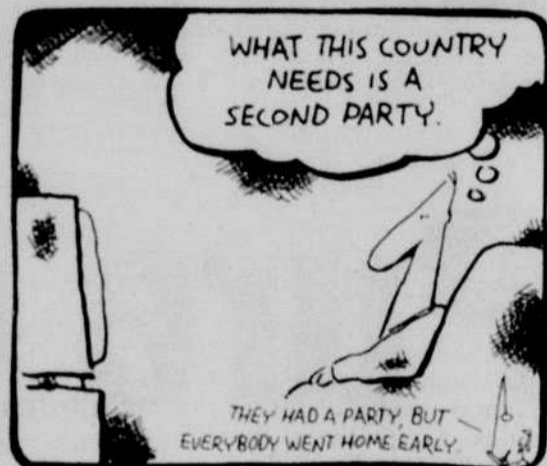
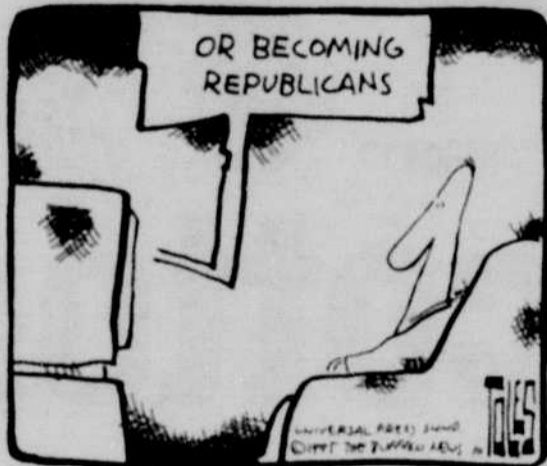
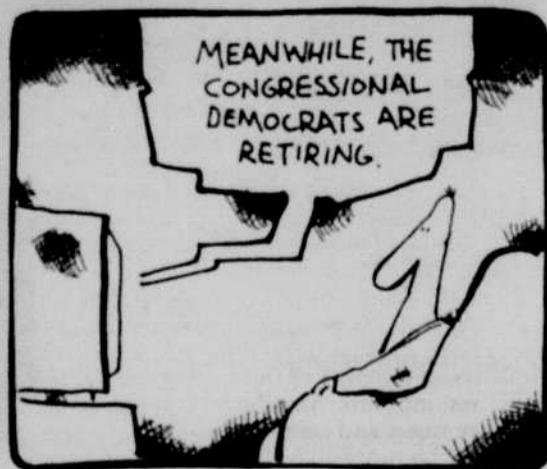
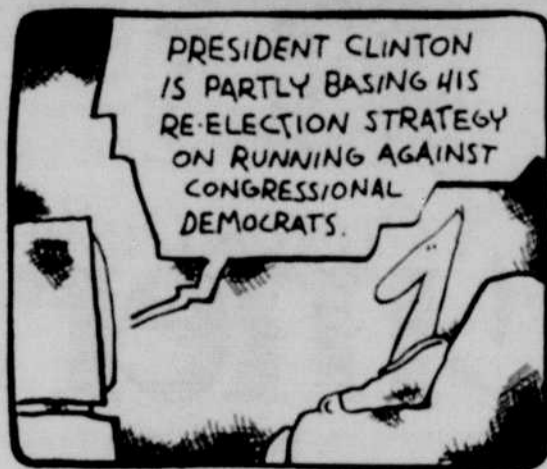
Paulus is the only Republican candidate who supports abortion rights without restrictions, and she says she will fight any bill that seeks to limit abortion access. In addition, she supports term limits for elected officials and has promised to resign after nine years.

Of all the candidates, Peter DeFazio has been the strongest defender of education access and affordability. He has said his first priority would be to fight cuts in higher education. Since he was elected to the House of Representatives five years ago, DeFazio has funneled his pay increases into eight scholarships for college-bound Oregon students.

DeFazio supports a balanced budget but has said the cuts should be made in defense spending, farm subsidies and business tax breaks. He, like Paulus, has pledged to serve only nine years in the Senate and supports term limits for elected officials.

He has been a strong supporter of abortion rights and opposes any government interference with women's right to choose. Both DeFazio and Paulus have also been strong supporters of civil rights protection for gay men and lesbians.

DeFazio and Paulus represent the best within their parties. With these two candidates in the final race for the Senate, we can sleep better knowing that whoever wins the election, Oregon and its students will have reason to celebrate.



Ethics essential to education, existence

How do you make decisions about what you should or shouldn't do?

Are you a utilitarian? A Kantian? A cultural relativist? Do you have any idea what I'm talking about? If you do, you've probably taken a course in ethics.

If you haven't taken an ethics course, I'd like to recommend that you do. In fact, the University ought to require students to take an ethics class to graduate.

I know; I know. That's all you need, isn't it? One more requirement and you'll pop. But requirements are supposed to be things you need to know in life. A certain amount of writing ability, for example, is necessary if you are going to get your ideas across to others, so the University requires two writing courses. Maybe these won't be enough, but at least the University tries to teach you a skill you will need in the real world.

Ethics are nothing less than a question of how we ought to live. I can think of no more important matter. We must know how to decide what is right or wrong — a skill that far too many people lack.

I don't have to tell you (unless you've been living under a rock) that a lot of people are hollering about the lack of morality in our country. Even if I disagree with many of them about what morality is, I agree that morals themselves have become less important to our culture.

I think we've gotten confused about morality. We got the idea somewhere along the line that morality was dependent on religion. Many people, at least many of those bemoaning the lack of morals in our country, believe this.

To make matters worse, religions other than Christianity are generally considered suspect in our culture. To too many minds, non-Christians are immoral. What this country needs, they say, is a rebirth of "good Christian values."

No. What this country needs is people who can think for themselves and make their own moral decisions outside of religious rules. I'm not saying we don't need religion. I think religion can offer a great deal of personal satisfaction. But morals stand apart from religion.

Socrates asked: "Is conduct right because the gods command it, or do the gods command it because it is right?"

Some people say conduct is right because God commands it. But if this is true, then any behavior could be right, as long as God orders us to do it. The biblical commandment, "thou shalt not lie," could just as easily be, "thou shalt lie."

This doesn't make any sense, though.

" This country needs people who can think for themselves and make moral decisions outside of religious rules. **"**

If God commands conduct because it is right, then it is right before God commands it. If this is true, then morality stands apart from religion.

We have forgotten this, so we have forgotten how to think about morality. Some people without strong religious beliefs think morality isn't important. Some people with religious beliefs think they can take the easy way out and just refer to the rule book. In both cases, we've neglected the art of ethics.

Forgetting about ethics doesn't mean that we don't have to make decisions about morality, though. Should we ever lie? Kill? Is it right to provide welfare checks for people who can't work? Is it morally acceptable to allow people to live on the streets? Is it all right to have a baby — or sex, for that matter — if you're not married? Should gay marriage be legal? Is it okay to kill and eat animals? What about abortion?

These aren't easy questions. All right, I think some of them should be easy. But we fight about questions such as these every day in this country, and the fighting threatens to tear us apart at the seams. We fight with ourselves as well. We've all had personal dilemmas in which we had a difficult time deciding what the right thing to do was.

We may have difficult choices to make, but they are made even more difficult by not knowing how to think about the problem. What are the probable consequences? Who will our decision affect? What's fair?

The study of ethics doesn't offer easy answers to the ethical problems we have to solve daily. But it teaches how to think about the problems, so we can figure out answers.

We come to the University to learn, but what do we need to learn? We take our requirements: writing, foreign language or math, a sampling of arts and letters, science, and social science. We choose our majors and learn what we need to get the job we hope for. There must be more than this, though.

One of the most vital skills we will need throughout our lives, as we make decisions about jobs, marriages, children and politics, will be the ability to carefully consider what decisions will be right. We are here to learn what we need to know. Perhaps there is nothing we need to know as much as how to decide how to live.

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



OPINION
Jean M. Bond

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P.O. BOX 3159 EUGENE OREGON 97403

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