VOTER REGISTRATION

WHY YOUR VOTE REALLY DOES COUNT

Some students first reaction to people who ask them to register to vote is to ask "Why?" Why should people vote when their vote seems to make such little difference? Why should they vote when nothing ever changes?

"When students vote is when change will happen," said Jennifer Williamson, ASUO President. "How can we expect things to change unless we take action to change them? Students need to vote to show that we do really care about what happens to our country, our community, and our education."

The knowledge that students vote and are concerned about public policy often alerts representatives to student issues. Representatives realize that students will know if they voted against higher education funding, according to Williamson.

"It has been the best tool that students have had historically," said Williamson. "Who would vote against education if 17,000 University of Oregon students, constituents, were going to be upset. Representatives care about their constituents' concerns. It is in representatives' best interest."

People often claim that their own vote cannot make the difference. Williamson claims there are arguments against this logic.

"Just recently, we had library bond measures that failed by a handful of votes," said Williamson. "What if your one vote could have been the vote that saves financial aid or keeps your tuition low? Does it seem worthless to vote then?"

The power of voting is not expressed solely in the mere act, according to Williamson. It gives student lobby organizations more sway with politicians.

"We have two organizations that lobby for financial aid and higher education funding on our behalf," said Matthew Scotten, interim ASUO Federal Affairs Coordinator. "United States Students Association and Oregon Student Lobby are both able to be more effective when they can say that a large percentage of students vote."

The issue is one of self-preservation, according to Scotten. He pointed to the proposed cuts in financial aid that range from $2 million to $8 million dollars. Fourteen-thousand of the 17,000 students at the University of Oregon applied for financial aid last year.

"If we want to keep our education affordable, and ensure that financial aid continues to be a national priority, we must vote. It is the foundation of any political action," said Scotten.

Oregon students have a history of activism that has helped them in the past. In 1992 and 1994, the University of Oregon had more students registered to vote than any other college in the nation. *Mother Jones Magazine* selected the University of Oregon as the most active campus in the nation because of its high registration percentage.

"We have gained a reputation across the nation that has helped us gain support for higher education," said Williamson.

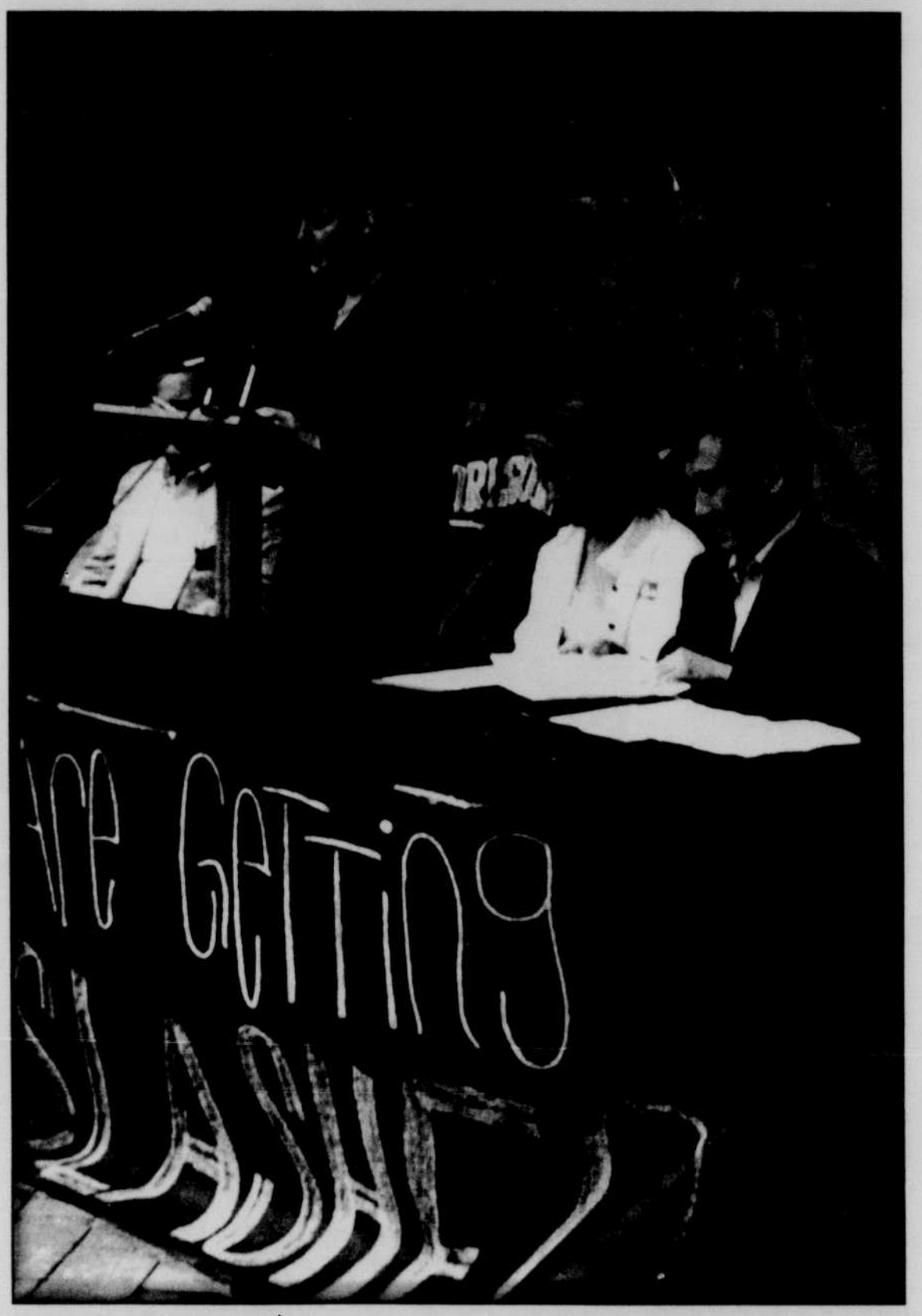
An example of student voting is the support that students have received from local representatives.

"It is a testament to student voting power when our representatives are willing to go to bat for us and do what they can to save our financial aid," said Williamson.

STUDENT POWER

Voter Registration Facts

- **If you are out-of-state, it is important to vote, because your tuition rates are set in Oregon's legislature**
- **Right now Congress is looking at cutting financial aid up to $10 million for the next seven years**
- **There is still time to register for the Senate general election coming up on January 9 and the Presidential primary in March**

STUDENTS ARE GETTING SLASHED— James Peterson, Fundraising Coordinator, and Mandi Hood, former State Affairs Coordinator, register students to vote at theday of action. Chalked body outlines littered the sidewalks of campus on the first day of school. The statewide day of action was used to educate people on the proposed cuts in financial aid, and encourage students to vote. Cellular phones were loaned to students to make toll-free calls to their representatives to ask for their support for financial aid.

SPEAKING OUT— ASUO President Jennifer Williamson speaks at the "Students are Getting Slashed" rally about the importance of voter registration for students. ASUO's voter registration drive will continue through March, the deadline for the presidential primary.