

Wyden is best choice for Oregon, America

OUR OPINION: As the state's next senator, Ron Wyden will represent Oregonians honorably

The end is near. With only two weeks to go before the ballot deadline in the contentious race for the state's new U.S. senator, University students and faculty will join millions of other Oregonians in deciding who will represent and lead them in the years ahead.

Ron Wyden should be that leader. With more than 22 years in public service and 15 in Congress, Wyden knows the ins and outs of the system and has a proven track record for staying true to the needs of his constituents. From the outset, he has been, and continues to be, a staunch supporter of the rights of the elderly and an opponent of the Republican push for drastic cuts in Medicare and Medicaid.

Cuts, he says, should be made in the multibillion-dollar defense budget before the Senate starts axing social programs. This logic has eluded congressional Republicans.

Wyden opposes any laws that would restrict or limit *Roe v. Wade* and a woman's right to opt for a legal abortion. He has maintained his unflinching support for the gay and lesbian community (shocking enough for any politician), including civil rights protection and access to same-sex marriages.

Despite ads that paint Wyden as a "tax-and-spend liberal," Wyden supports welfare reform and a two-year limit on welfare recipients who are physically able to work. He also favors a balanced budget, but not the

budget proposed by Newt, et. al. He has said he will not vote for any budget that slashes programs for seniors or education.

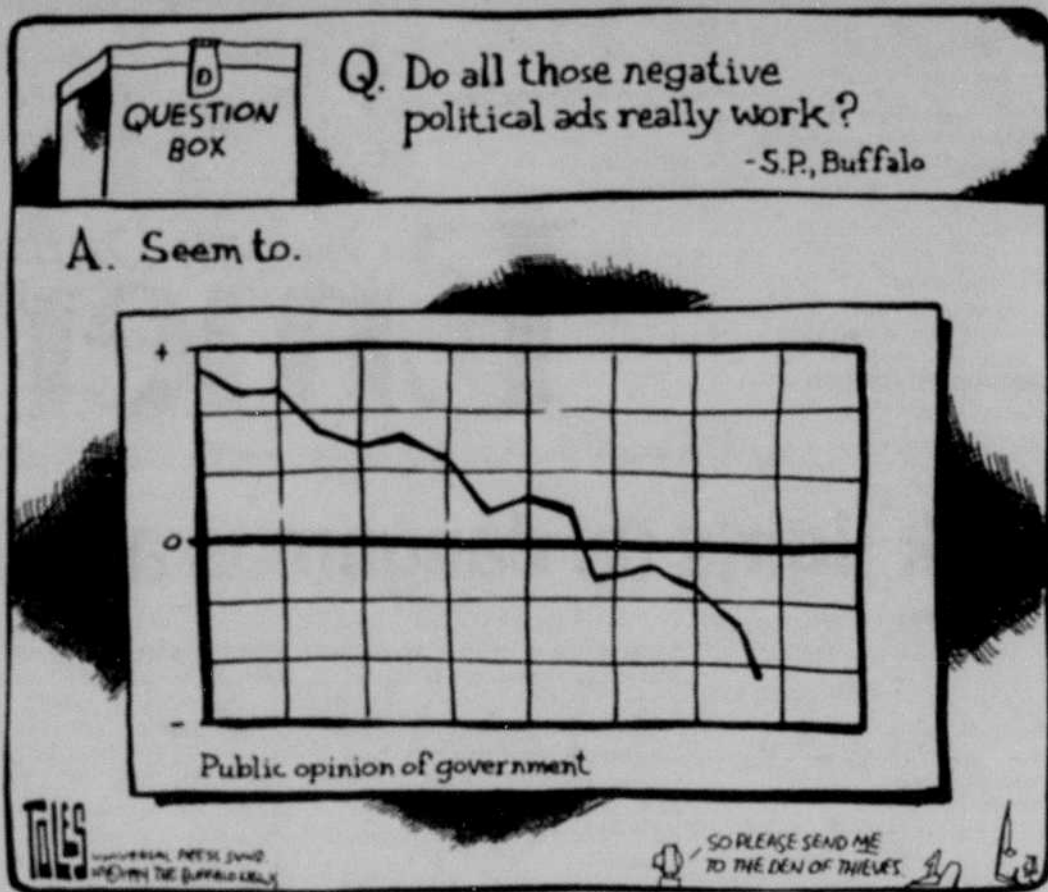
Wyden attended mostly public schools and graduated from the University School of Law. He maintains that the future of this state and this country are inextricably linked to the quality of education.

In addition, Wyden has not lived a life of luxury. Unlike his opponent, his political success has come from hard work and establishing grass-roots organizations to empower citizens. Unlike many politicians, he has worked (rather than paid) for his success.

Equally important is the effect Wyden could have on the future of not just Oregon, but on the country as well. The Senate already has a Republican majority brimming with followers of the party line. Electing another Republican to that majority, especially one who spews its dogma so unctuously, would do nothing to set Oregon apart or to speak to the needs of working class Oregonians.

Finding a senator who supports big business is easy in any state. These men get elected because they receive financial backing from people of influence and can afford expensive campaigns.

But Oregon has been given a choice with Ron Wyden. He will stir things up in the Senate, but he will also bring them together. He is one of the people rather than an employer of them. He votes to clean up rivers rather than polluting them. He is an Oregonian rather than a millionaire who lives here. He is one of us. He deserves our vote.



LETTERS

Burning question

Congress is reviewing The Flag Protection Amendment (H.J. Res. 79) and similar bills that prohibit the burning of the U.S. flag. The Constitution should not be amended to prohibit flag burning.

Americans deplore the act of burning the flag and view it as unpatriotic. However, as U.S. Supreme Court Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes stated 80 years ago, "The Constitution protects not only freedom for the thought and expression we agree with, but freedom from that thought that we hate."

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified to protect unpopular and controversial symbolic expressions such as flag burning.

While amendment proponents present many emotionally valid reasons to protect America's symbol, their intent is to actually bypass the Constitution. The Supreme Court ruled that previous flag protection acts violated the First Amendment and were therefore unconstitutional.

Thus, ratifying the proposed flag amendment would directly contradict the First Amendment. This would not only unnecessarily amend the Constitution, it would severely limit the First Amendment's protection of speech that Americans hold so dearly.

Proponents argue that flag burning is symbolic action, not speech, and therefore would not contradict the First Amendment. However, the Supreme Court ruled in *Texas v. Johnson* in 1989 that flag burning is "symbolic political speech" and protected by the First Amendment. The flag "does serve as a central symbol of national ideals, but sanctity lies with the ideals themselves, which can't be harmed by burning the flag," says *Oregonian* columnist Stephen Chapman.

Finally, there is no compelling need for a flag protection amendment. The

House of Representative's Committee on Rules learned that less than fifty flag burning incidents were known to have occurred since the nation's inception.

Although both sides have valid concerns on this emotional topic, such a flag protection amendment is not needed, and would severely limit the First Amendment's protection of free speech.

The U.S. Supreme Court determined in *Texas v. Johnson* that "If there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that government may not prohibit expression of an idea simply because society finds [the] idea itself offensive or disagreeable."

Sue Simons
Pre-Journalism

Denying reality

On November 26, The *Oregonian* ran a syndicated article by Hillary Clinton that contained some rather disturbing messages.

Mrs. Clinton was attempting to give a positive Thanksgiving message, both for her own family's good fortune and her country's honorable ways. Good marks for trying to be positive, but the message ultimately meant nothing in light of her surprising Ivory Tower naivete.

Mrs. Clinton wrote that Americans "take for granted the cleaner air we breathe and the lakes and rivers we swim in and fish in today that were polluted a few years ago."

I have spent time on some clean rivers in America and Canada, and I have never once seen someone take them for granted. My experience has shown me that people marvel at the awesome beauty of the rivers and their ecosystems, a respect that is derived from the knowledge that they are becoming scarcer.

And as for the fish in those rivers, there are species of salmon lining up for membership in the not-so-

exclusive endangered species club. I think of that and take nothing for granted.

Mrs. Clinton claims that, unlike the third world countries, "We don't worry about the dangers of unsafe water." Perhaps Mrs. Clinton has not tasted the faucet water in New York, or Los Angeles, or Portland or any other city where tap water is a health hazard. Perhaps she forgets that Evian and Perrier are imported.

Clean air? Where does Mrs. Clinton arrive at this conclusion about clean air? Like most of us, she lives in a city, and I think that most urban dwellers are keenly aware that the air is far from clean.

Mrs. Clinton goes on to write that "We forget the positive ways our lives have been improved during this century because we have a government willing to solve problems people face in their everyday lives." Which America is the First Lady referring to?

Freud would observe wryly that Mrs. Clinton is living in denial, choosing to ignore painful realities as opposed to addressing and dealing with them, and I would agree with him. Optimistic, positive perspectives on the world can only be appreciated when they are based in reality.

Kristian Olsen
Graduate Journalism

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Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

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

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