

UO students: Weren't we supposed to vote?

OUR OPINION: University voters decide to be inactive in Oregon's future

Unless thousands of University students sped to ballot-drop boxes yesterday, the ASUO's aggressive campaign to register campus voters had little effect on the number of students who exercised their right to representative democracy.

In fact, as of Monday, only 31 percent of registered voters in the four precincts around the campus had sent in their ballots. This would be a dismal turnout in any election. But this time, our rate of ballot return is 23.5 percent lower than the state average.

It's hard to believe that just last year the University was named the most politically active campus in the United States.

If that doesn't disturb you, you're not alone. Apparently, we don't care that we're apathetic.

OK, maybe that's a little harsh. After all, the negative campaign may have turned many of us off to the election. And yes, some may view the election as a selection between the proverbial lesser of two evils.

Or perhaps because so many of us are from out of state and will leave Oregon the second our diplomas grace our palms, we feel no incentive to invest our energy in this state's political dealings.

We can easily rationalize our (in)actions. In the end, however, all of these excuses amount to little more than a whiny, Gen-X justification.

Twentysomethings complain incessantly about being labeled as do-nothings

who have no work ethic or sense of civil responsibility. We're told that we are media-savvy and cynical, aware of the world's problems but unwilling to take them on. In revolt we cry: "We're not slackers! We are not a target market!"

And then we go out and prove them right.

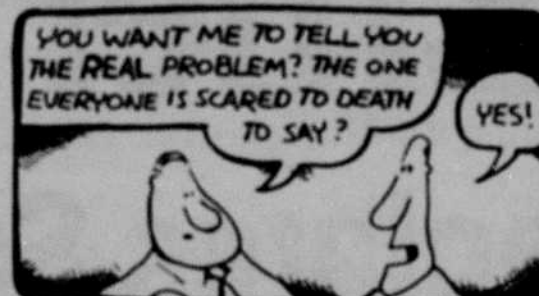
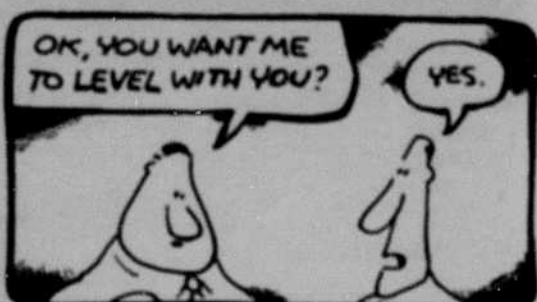
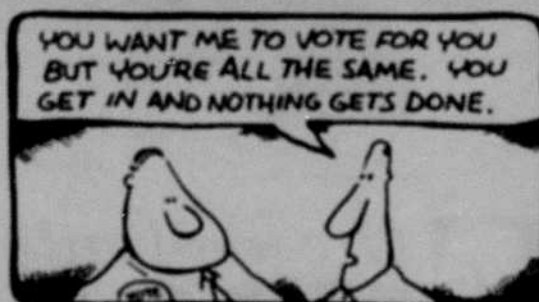
In our defense, we did register in record numbers for this election. That was the easy part. It takes minuscule political passion to fill out a card and get the ASUO off your back. Taking part in the political process and helping shape the nation's future requires work. It requires you to care.

Why bother? Because more than senatorial elections are at stake.

Political power is money-driven. For the most part, college students can't wield influence with that sword. We are, however, a huge voting block, and we get our needs met (e.g., student loans, financial aid, tuition-cost control, student health-care funding) by casting our ballots. We matter in the political debate only because 4,000 of us can swing an election.

Thus, when we don't exercise our rights, politicians lose interest. And we lose our voice in Salem and Washington, D.C.

As jaded Gen-Xers, most of us won't be dragged to the polls by some archaic sense of duty or patriotism. No matter. Voting can appeal to us for selfish reasons. We won't get what we want unless we punch a hole in a ballot, lick a stamp and head for the mailbox. Oh, the sacrifices we make for democracy.



LETTERS

Weapons ban threatens student safety

Do you pack a .38 Special in your purse on campus? Do you carry a .25 auto in your backpack? If you do, you have a serious new choice to make.

If you carry a gun with a concealed carry permit, you won't be legal on campus any more.

A proposed change to the student conduct code will prohibit concealed weapons on campus. This forces people with permits to choose between leaving their guns off campus, handing them over to the Office of Public Safety (OPS) or carrying them illegally.

This is an unnecessary rule change; we don't have a problem with concealed weapons on campus. It infringes on the rights of law-abiding citizens, and does nothing to increase safety on campus. It will actually increase the risk for those who now choose to carry a weapon for self-defense.

And how will this new rule be enforced? Well, for the most part, it won't be. If OPS officers have reasonable cause to search you, they can do it. The legal means to deal with disorderly or dangerous people already exists. Those who carry weapons now might well ask: If the OPS and Eugene cops can't deal with the problems on 13th Avenue, how do they figure they're going to make campus safer by removing a legal means of protection from licensed and monitored people?

You can assume that anyone with a permit is a law-abiding citizen because the sheriff's office gets a weekly report on all permit holders, and those convicted of misdemeanors or greater offenses lose their permits. Four or five people per month in Lane County have their permits revoked for misdemeanors such as shoplifting, or for a DUI or an assault.

OPS and the Eugene Police Department support this ban because of some scary situations they've experienced with people who had concealed weapons (and permits). Problem is, this new rule would allow the confiscation of personal property based on a crime that *might* happen.

Let's say you drink now and then, and your ex-roommates hate your guts. Let's say they call OPS and say you've been drinking, and you own a car, and they're just terrified you're going to drive, and they say you once threatened to run over your biology professor. An imminent murder, right?

Should the police be able to come and get your car? You can check it back out when you need it, so what's the problem?

For that matter, do you really need a car on campus? Perhaps we ought to ban possession of cars because people might drive them.

Considering the number of assaults, rape, and attempted rapes on or near this campus in the

last year, I can't believe the OPS is trying to explain its support for banning concealed weapons by insisting "no one needs concealed weapons on campus."

But then, I wouldn't expect large males trained in law enforcement to understand that some of us small females must occasionally walk alone after dark across campus to our homes. I understand and agree with forbidding possession of weapons on a plane. I understand banning their possession at grade schools. I might even support banning them from residence halls or athletic events. But take a look around, boys and girls — this campus is not a grade school, and Eugene is not a small, rural town where the cops play cards at the donut shop on Friday night.



Kelly Andersson

During the 15-or-so years that I carried a gun, I never shot anyone, and I drew it only once — the night in 1982 when I watched a very drunk man scuffle with a friend of mine.

When it became obvious that she was within inches of being raped, I aimed at his chest and told him to stop. He looked at my gun, then at my face, and he split. I am still not sure

whether Ellen would have been raped had I not done that.

I am sure, however, that I would have shot him. And I am sure that I was glad I had that pistol in my coat pocket. I am even more sure that Ellen was glad I had it.

I am not telling you this because I think I am a hero. I'm telling you this so you'll understand that there are both pros and cons to this rule change.

The new rule won't keep the nuts from carrying guns. But it might keep people like me from carrying them on campus, and it puts those who leave them home at risk.

Don't kid yourself into thinking this new rule will make campus any safer.

It will not keep loony psychopaths from packing guns around to shoot you with. It will not keep violence-prone people from drinking. It will not keep guns off campus. It does give OPS and the real police one more tool: a citation they can write that they couldn't write before.

When it comes to safety, though, this is nothing but a feel-good rule, a politically-correct declaration that guns are dangerous and we're going to keep them off campus so that students will be safer.

Kelly Andersson, a senior majoring in journalism, is a columnist for the Emerald.

Oregon Daily Emerald
P.O. BOX 3158 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. A member of the Associated Press, the Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union.

Unsigned editorials represent the opinion of the Emerald editorial board; signed columns represent the opinion of the columnist.

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

Editor-in-Chief: David Thorn
Managing Editor: Colleen Puhlig **Design Director:** Steven Asbury
Night Editor: Sean Smith

Community: Cherry Rainey, editor; Abe Estimada, Melissa Leblain, Samantha Martin
Higher Education: Cindy Long, editor; Regina Brown, Sean Rossick, Jennifer Schmitt
Student Activities: Jennifer Carter, editor; Ashley Bach, Kristin Bailey, Doug Irving
Sports: Trevor Kearney, editor; Andrea DeYoung, assistant editor; Chris Hansen, Pete Schneider
Entertainment/Supplements: Nicole Krueger, editor; Natasha Shepard
Freelance: Kelp Hunter, editor; **De-Lite:** Joshua Olson, editor

Editorial: David Bartlett and Sean Smith, editors; Kelly Andersson, Jesse Bohrer-Clancy, Keith Cunningham, Primo A.J. Fontana, Larry Hall, Kay Krauschied, Songa Sherwood
Copy Desk: Karl Hastings, copy chief; Dawn Paugh, Paige Bills, Anna Beth Grimes, Paul Van Sickle
Photography: Natalie Montgomery, editor; Andrew Brackensick, En Min Chang, Elena Gerber, Shannon Kilbuck, Matthew Stiffler, Darcie Westman
Graphics: Dennis Bell, Matt Garlon

General Manager: Judy Riedl

Advertising: Becky Merchant, director; Anne Amador, Marro Ching, Justin Gruber, Nikki Harper, Matt Johnson, Heather Johnson, Sarah Mitchell, Tom Mittenzaed, Trina Shanaman, Lee Yen Bih
Production: Michele Ross, manager; Ingrid White, coordinator; Shawna Abate, Rachel Cunningham, Laura Daniel, Nicole Herzmark, Carrie Jones, Tara Knight, Molly McCanta, Carly Schwenker, Juli Seitan, Allison Stormo, Serena Williams, Michael Young
Business: Kathy Carbone, supervisor; Judy Connolly
Distribution: Jeff Johnson, John Long, Ferenc Rakoczi
Newsroom: 348-5511
Business Office: 348-5512

Classified: Tara Gaultney, manager; Jennifer Noel
Display Advertising: 348-3712
Classified Advertising: 348-4343