

OPINION

editorials, letters, commentary and perspective

CONTACT US
BY MAIL: P.O. Box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403
BY PHONE: (541) 346-5511
BY E-MAIL: ode@oregon.uoregon.edu
IN PERSON: Suite 300, EMU

Election '96 worst in political memories

■ **OUR OPINION:** From beginning to end, this year's Election day resulted in grim returns

Besides changing the history of Oregon and electing a president for the rest of the century, the Nov. 5 election was one of the worst ever in our limited political memories. With the results of 23 ballot measures finally in, many groups of people as well as certain issues came away hurting. And for these, the effects of Election '96 will surely linger for a long time. For others, the election was a success in which their causes were validated by millions of voters. But for us, this election was a bust — and here's why.

Two words — Measure 47: It happened. They passed it. And we can't believe it. But our shock aside, real-life solutions must now be found. And we can all help in that effort. Before the election, Gov. John Kitzhaber vowed his commitment to prioritize public schools in future budget allocations. And on Tuesday, he announced the formation of a working group of city and state officials to help in legislation amid the measure's passage. President Dave Frohnmayer has already expressed his concern, including today in the *Emerald*. Now students must join in — voicing their concerns and learning about the future. As many of us know, the measure will not directly affect the University. But indirectly, million of dollars could be lost if the state must delve into the General Fund — the source of state funding for the University.

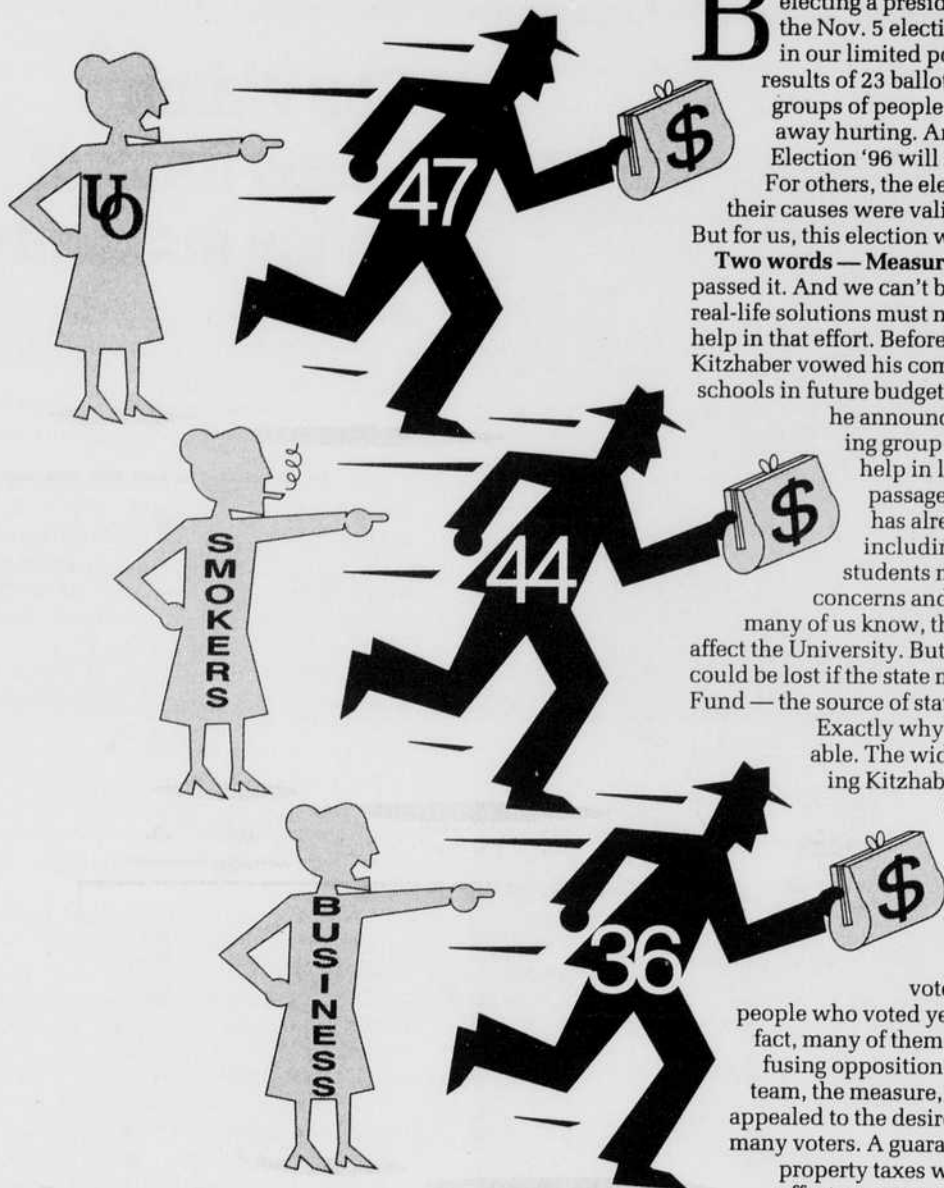
Exactly why the measure passed is debatable. The widespread opposition, including Kitzhaber and school and city officials, obviously didn't do a good job promoting their cause. And voters didn't do a good job of educating themselves of the many possible ramifications of the measure. Are voters greedy? Yes. Do all the people who voted yes on 47 hate schools? No. In fact, many of them are parents. But after a confusing opposition and a single-minded support team, the measure, or at least the image thereof, appealed to the desire for something tangible in many voters. A guaranteed 10 percent drop in property taxes was too easy to pass up. The effects on state services, like public safety and education, were portrayed as questionable and very negotiable.

It is true the effects of Measure 47 are open to change and to outside forces. And we as the University community can play a big part in that process.

A lower-class dilemma: With a higher minimum wage and cigarette tax in the future after the approval of Measures 36 and 44, many lower-class workers will feel the squeeze. Raising minimum salaries to \$6.50 per hour over three years, many small businesses that rely on a low wage like \$4.75 for their workers will be forced to eliminate many jobs initially. Will the status quo be eventually raised, raising the quality of life for minimum-wage workers? Hopefully. But before that happens, many minimum wage workers must deal with a 78 percent increase in the state tax on cigarettes because many of them smoke. Their ability to handle the new tax in an uncertain job market is highly questionable.

Forget the environment: Oregon voters overwhelmingly rejected the expanded Bottle Bill and the banning of livestock in streams and other property. The opposition campaign to the Bottle Bill, led by many out-of-state interests, outspent supporters by a 10-1 margin. Voters were misled by big money and confusing ideas. But nonetheless, the bill that would put a deposit on bottled water and non-carbonated beverages was defeated by uneducated voters. Voters also couldn't envision fences along all streams and waterways, keeping cattle from our already polluted water. Farmers convinced voters to shun that image, complaining of the inconveniences the measure would have caused. Despite the bill's problems, depleted salmon runs and rural waterways would be vastly improved with the measure. Voters didn't want it nor did they want more recycling. That's a scary commentary.

A strange aftermath: After the presidential race was all but over, voters' interest lay in state issues, like the measures and Senate race. Unfortunately, on election night, when public interest was most high, Eugene's television coverage was hopelessly flawed. Local stations' anchors repeatedly misstated incoming figures and facts. It seemed without fixed scripts, local TV personalities didn't know what to say. National stations weren't above the fray either, declaring President Clinton the winner before West Coast voting stations ever closed. They just couldn't keep the information in any longer, despite the pleas by secretaries of state all across the West to hold off on the numbers. And on a final note, state results were more delayed than ever. With an estimated 50 percent of voters using absentee ballots, final results of many races weren't available until Friday. Waiting three days for voters' final decisions solely because many voters choose not to go to their nearest polling station is ridiculous.



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

Measure 47 need not be a disaster, president says

Last week's election brought the University some good news — and left us with one major question mark.

On the good news side, the legislative races appear to be sending some strong supporters of higher education to Salem. Even better, voters decisively rejected all of the most ill-considered measures dealing directly with public employees, some of which would have made administering the University more difficult, and others that would have made life harder for our faculty and staff.

The question mark comes with the property tax "cut and cap," Measure 47.

Passage of this measure means an immediate \$1 billion loss over two years in revenues for Oregon elementary and high schools, local governments, parks, libraries, police and fire protection. That's about a 20 percent cut in local budgets.

At this immediate stage, Measure 47 will have no effect on the University's budget at all. But the state may move to offset most of the shortfall in school budgets with state

“There is no way of predicting what the effects will be with Measure 47. But this time I believe there is good cause for guarded optimism.”

— Dave Frohnmayer
UO President

dollars, and legislators will have to find the money somewhere. It is possible they may look to the source of state revenue for the University — the state General Fund.

That is what happened six years ago when voters passed a similar property tax limitation, Measure 5. The result was a significant cut in the University's budget. In response, we were forced to eliminate 24 academic programs, close one entire school, phase out faculty and staff positions, trim administrative costs and as you know all too well, raise tuition.

To illustrate the magnitude of what happened, consider this: In 1990, state taxpayers provided one dollar in three of our overall budget. Today, that amount has shrunk to one dollar in six.

There is no way of predicting what the effects will be with Measure 47. But this

time I believe there is good cause for guarded optimism.

Things have changed since 1990. This year, a booming state economy, rising income tax revenues and a growing amount in the state's "kicker" bring new sources of funds to the table. The governor has strongly and publicly supported the case of higher education, and we have done a good job of convincing legislators of our value and the need to stop disinvesting.

With hard work and wise leadership, we can reverse the disinvestment trend and make our case that higher education, instead of being first in line for budget cuts, must be the first in line for substantial reinvestment.

I intend to fight for that reinvestment and am confident we will see success. I know the ASUO will work with me. And I look to students and their parents to help me as well. Together, we can make certain our University receives the support it deserves.

As always, I hope you will e-mail me your thoughts and concerns at pres@oregon.uoregon.edu.

Dave Frohnmayer is the president of the University. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3159, 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. The Emerald is private property. The unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.

Editor-in-Chief: Steven Asbury

Managing Editor: Jennifer Carter Night Editor: Jennifer Carter

Community: Jennifer Schmitt, editor; Christian Hill, Doug Irving

Entertainment: Nicole Kraeger, editor; Jesse Stephenson

Higher Education: Shana Cohn, editor; Tamara Howser, in-depth; Laura Cadiz, Benjamin Kwasney

Opinion: Ashley Bach, editor; Chris Hutchinson, illustrator; Brian Diamond, Larry Haftl, Sonja Sherwood

Student Activities: Kristin Bailey, editor; Tom Potter, Angie Suchy

Sports: Mark McTyre, editor; Andrea DeYoung, assistant editor; Chris Hansen, Ryan Frank, Ryan Halvorsen

Copy Desk: Thom Schoenborn, copy chief; Sarah Kickler, Paul Meznarich, Mike Schmierbach, Kendra Smith

Photography: Dennis Bolt, editor; Matt Garton

Production: Mathew Stiffler, editor; Andrew Brackensick, Joe Bunik, Amanda Erickson, Shannon Kilduff, Chad Patteson

Freelance: Lara Pittman, editor; On-Line: Nicholas Stiffler

General Manager: Judy Riedl

Advertising: Becky Merchant, director; Anne Amador, Lee Yen Beh, Marco Ching, Yujin Chi, Matt Johnson, Anne Miller, Trina Shanaman, Rose Soll, Matt Solomon, Greg Walsh

Classified: Tara Sloan, manager; Natasha Lumpkin, Debbie Levy, Heather Moyer

Production: Michele Ross, manager; Ingrid White, coordinator; Shawna Abele, Laura Daniel, Susan Head, Trevor Kearney, Tara Knight, Melissa LeBahn

Molly McCanta, Allison Stormo, Mike Young

Business: Kathy Carbone, supervisor; Judy Connolly

Distribution: John Long, John Paull, Ferenc Rakoczy

Newsroom: (541) 346-5511

Display Advertising: (541) 346-3712

Business Office: (541) 346-5512

Classified Advertising: (541) 346-4343

OPINION



Dave Frohnmayer