

Oregon Daily
Emerald
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Perspectives

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Make our vote COUNT

Victims' rights, taxes, crime prevention. These issues have an impact on our lives. Daily, weekly, yearly or once-in-a-lifetime impact. Impact on the wallet and impact on law. They matter.

But we students don't seem to think so. Tuesday was the deadline to vote in the 1999 special election. There were nine state-wide ballot measures and one Lane County ballot measure on which voters had their say.

The state-wide measures encompassed such pivotal issues as victims' rights and tax regulation. In no small matter, they sought to change the constitution of this state. Closer to home, Lane County's sole ballot measure was just as significant: crime prevention and safety in our community.

Some say we don't care about the issues. Some say we don't feel connected to government. Some say we lack the social responsibility. Add all these damning characteristics to the fact that we often live in a community for only four years or so before we pass on to "real life," and you have a negative picture of student voters.

The proof is in the numbers. We students on average do not vote in the same percentages as our older counterparts. In 1998's general election, 18-34 year-olds made up only 17 percent of the total voters even though they make up 30 percent of all registered voters. And that's well above voter turnout for our own ASUO special election from the same school year at 1.8 percent. What's wrong with this picture? What's more: How can we fix it?

Well, some answers seem to be obvious — voter education for one — but you can't force people to care. The ASUO Executive held a panel discussion on the ballot measure last week and did their annual voter-registration drive, but they noticed a decline from last year's participation in similar events. It's a down year for interest in elections, mostly, people think, because there are no burning issues or candidates to cause a stir.

ASUO President Wylie Chen said he realizes that students generally only vote

when issues impact them directly, such as a higher education ballot measure would. Thus said, one of his office's main goals this year is to educate students about what does impact them. This stretches from state-wide elections to our own elections for the ASUO. Voter turnout is low because, in theory, people vote when they think it they have a stake in the outcome.

We need to convince each other that we do have a stake in the elections. We are not just little adults-in-training who will someday vote more often because we have children or jobs. We are adults now who share the burden of taxes, draft eligibility, crime prevention and jury duty. These things affect us now, and we need to start caring.

The crux of the problem is that if we don't vote in large numbers, politicians and government agencies think we don't care and don't target us. And you know what, they're taking advantage of that. It's easy for politicians to dismiss our needs when we don't give them a reason to listen. Yet, if we think politicians don't care about us, then we tend not to vote. Let's get out of this illogical cycle. We should vote now and become a voice to be reckoned with.

We should vote now and have a say in the 21st Century. A new era really is dawning, and we can't miss being an active part of it. We can't miss being the center of it.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

QUOTED

"Survival of the fittest applies to cancer cells. We now think of cancer not as disease but as a genetic process."

— Richard Schilsky, associate dean for clinical research at the University of Chicago, on the future of research to cure cancer. Time magazine, Nov. 8.

"It's sad to me because he had a lot greater impact on me than I had on him. He was the best football player I've ever seen. And probably one of the best people I've ever met."

— New Orleans Saints' coach Mike Ditka, summing up the collective thought on the late, great and "sweet" Walter Payton, who still owned the NFL rushing yards record at his death on Monday. The Oregonian, Nov. 2.

"No, I'm a terrible golfer, and I couldn't play baseball."

— Michael Jordan, when asked by ESPN whether or not he was the century's greatest athlete. The Oregonian, Nov. 2.

"As a conservative Christian, I don't think I should have to fund these violently partisan, anti-Christian hate groups."

— Scott Southworth, a University of Wisconsin law student, on the case before the Supreme Court about students' right to choose to which campus groups their dollars go. The Register-Guard, Nov. 2.

Letters to the editor

HRA congratulates administration

I am currently a student at the University and member of the student-led Human Rights Alliance (HRA). I would like to begin by thanking you for the column you published (ODE Oct. 20) that helped to expose the issue we are confronting.

As you know, the fashion show that we held on Oct. 19 was designed to raise awareness of the anti-sweatshop issues and the positive role that our University can play in supporting humane work. We are fighting to establish a corporate code of conduct on campus, and right now the first tangible step in doing so is to push for full disclosure of factory sites from companies the University does business with. We have requested that by Nov. 17 that the University gives its licensees three months to disclose. Other universities have already gained this disclosure.

We were also congratulating the University administration for its positive work thus far. The proposed formation of an advisory committee, though it may easily get caught up in

the decision-making process and avoid making any solid steps, is potentially a movement in the right direction. Though we would like it to be a bit more proactive, the administration so far has been relatively so.

Nicholas Vaughn
 Human Rights Alliance

Nike discloses factory sites

On the same day that Beata Mostafavi's column (ODE Oct. 28) questioned whether the University administration's seeming reluctance to require full disclosure of its licensees was caused by corporate-donor influence, there was a Nike ad a few pages later in the Emerald announcing that the company had disclosed the sites of production for University apparel. This list of addresses of factory locations can be found at www.nikebiz.com.

Public release of information represents a real change in the apparel industry, and it is a change that has been brought about by recent contractual requirements of universities across the United States. Three weeks ago, Nike first disclosed factory sites — long considered an industry secret

— in response to code of conduct established by five universities.

The University administrator in charge of University licensing, Vice President for Public Affairs and Development Duncan McDonald, stated at the Oct. 13 University Senate meeting that he appreciated Nike's action, and that it impelled him to write to Nike requesting the same information for the University. I commend McDonald's initiative and Nike's prompt response; however, McDonald has proven that he has the power to require full disclosure, and he has set the precedent for doing so. The next clear step is to require it of all of our licensees.

Sarah Jacobson
 senior, geology

Student fees fund many programs

As the U.S. Supreme Court prepares for opening arguments of the Wisconsin student fees case next week, there is an opportunity for us to look at the amazing things that student fees do for us at the University.

Student fees fund a multitude of programs and services. Everything from our student union to over 90 fee-

funded student programs to student bus passes to club sports to ... and the list goes on and on. When we came to the University, we came to learn in and out of the classroom. The hands-on experience and out-of-the-classroom learning made possible by student fees is invaluable to the campus life that we enjoy here at the University.

Our student fees are locally controlled through a democratic process. Our process, which employs a series of checks and balances, is based on the fact that students know best how our fees should be allocated. Student fees fund a marketplace of ideas on campus. This forum of ideas would not be possible without our student fees and it is what makes our University experience unique.

As one of your elected representatives, I am committed to maintaining student control of your fees. I would encourage you to check out a Student Senate meeting (Wednesdays at 7 p.m. in the EMU Board Room) or give us a call or e-mail and see the process at work.

C.J. Gabbe
 ASUO student senator