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Perspectives

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Some 'dirty' ADA business

Two lawmakers and Clint Eastwood want to amend the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Americans with Disabilities Act, signed into law by former President George Bush 10 years ago Wednesday, is one of those pieces of legislation that most of us don't even think about.

Need to get through that heavy front door with no automatic opener? Not a problem, unless of course you use a pair of crutches for mobility. Tired of walking up and down that set of stairs at your favorite local restaurant? Imagine being in a wheelchair and having to maneuver yourself up a ramp to get in.

That's not to say that people with disabilities are incapable of taking care of themselves. No, in fact, most

people with disabilities manage just fine without the far-reaching paternalistic hand of someone else guiding them through life's barriers and obstacles.

Do they sometimes need a little help? Certainly. That's why the courts ruled in favor of Eugene's Casey Martin in his case against the PGA. Martin asked golf's governing body for an exception to the rule that forbids the use of a cart during tournaments. When PGA officials denied his request, Martin sued under the ADA, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled for Martin. The PGA has appealed the



decision, however, so Martin's ability to play the game he loves may eventually be taken away again.

But the ADA wasn't put into law so that people with disabilities would feel better about their different situations. It was established to ensure employers or privately-owned entities that might be less than accommodating in regards to people with disabilities don't discriminate or fail to provide equitable service to all customers.

Now Congress is debating whether or not to amend

Title III of the Act — the one dealing directly with public accommodations. Florida Republican Reps. Mark Foley and Clay Shaw have sponsored a bill that would require plaintiffs to give defendants notice of alleged violations and then 90 days to comply.

None other than actor Clint Eastwood, who was sued three years ago because his California hotel is in violation of the ADA, has stepped up to add a bit more bang to the Florida lawmakers' shot across the bow of

the act. Eastwood spoke to a House committee in May, asking them to amend the act.

We believe that H. R. 3590, like so many of Eastwood's foes in his "Dirty Harry" flicks, should die on the floor.

When Eastwood spoke to the committee, officials with the Paralyzed Veterans of America handed out statements that read in part, "owners of properties ... have had almost 10 years to comply with the law." Good point. What has Eastwood or any other business owner in violation of the law been doing for the past decade? It's not as if the government is suddenly picking on companies. They've had time to renovate their structures and access to those buildings.

Eastwood's other complaint was a common one heard in regards to this issue: that he and other small-business owners are being preyed upon by money-seeking attorneys since the disabled cannot collect monetary damages under the law. Only attorneys' fees can be claimed.

Good tactic on Eastwood's part. Who likes the idea of lawyers raking in the dough while those truly affected are left out of the compensation cycle? Except that the actor's basic claim is false.

In fact, according to statistics from the Department of Justice, as of May 1997, only about 650 lawsuits had been filed. That number is minuscule when one considers that about 6 million businesses, approximately 666,000 public and private employers, and 80,000 units of state and local government must comply with the ADA.

Hey Clint, we need your rhetoric like we need a hole in our head.

We also don't need Foley's and Shaw's flawed legislation. You can register your opinion with Rep. Foley through his e-mail address, mark.foley@mail.house.gov, and you can reach Rep. Shaw by calling his Washington, D.C. office at 202-225-3026.

Go ahead, make their day.

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

Party conventions: lackluster politics, amusing protests

Now that Texas Gov. George W. Bush has selected Dick Cheney to be his vice presidential candidate, the focus can begin to shift to the upcoming Republican and Democratic Party conventions.

More of a staged theatrical event than a meeting to decide each party's nominees, the conventions this year should be even less interesting for the average viewing citizen because the conventions are now, for all real intents, meaningless. While protests outside of the events could offer an entertaining show of sound and fury that signifies nothing.

The Republican National Convention begins Monday with almost no drama available. The Democrats will try to throw together an equally non-controversial, uplifting springboard

for Al Gore two weeks later.

As for the Republicans, any controversy has been removed from the convention, taking away all of the unique drama that once played a great role in the events. Bush has the nomination wrapped up and the raucous John McCain has been vanquished. The convention managers will make sure that the party's most accomplished speaker and longshot candidate Alan Keyes will never speak during prime time so that he can't pull a Pat Buchanan, sink-the-ship speech, declaring war on liberals that costs the party dearly at election time. The only possible disagreement could be on Cheney, but that won't amount to much.

In Los Angeles, Gore will be fresh off his announcement of his veep candidate and hoping that his coronation as a candidate goes smoothly as it is slated to do. The only groups inside the convention who won't openly kiss the feet of the Democrat king are the Teamsters who are angry with Gore's support of free trade with China and will also have attended the Republican convention. But by November this lover's spat

will be all over and the status quo will once again reign.

Protests outside of each convention, however, threaten to detract from the bedazzling spectacle of free-flowing confetti and star-spangled balloon drops. While the pomp and circumstance of a marriage between party factions takes place inside, political outsiders will be braving the mild summer elements so that their voices will be heard.

Protesters have set up training camps in California to prepare another WTO-esque political statement to the Democrats, one that says the party has sold out their activist fan base in favor of big money interests. And protesters have been fighting legal battles to protest on the property of the Republican convention site in Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love and "civil" protest.

It is these protesters who offer the best entertainment value during this political period. You see, no one is more fun to watch than blind and frenzied believers who have everything backwards.

The very essence of party conventions is so that various voices within

a group can be heard. Yet these self-imposed outsiders choose not to have their voices heard in a constructive fashion, but rather cast themselves in an antagonistic role.

Modern protesters have become more aggressive and less reasonable in their demands. They believe that whenever decision-making groups don't purchase wholesale the ideas of the demonstrators that there is a massive conspiracy against the American people. These groups are easily identified by ridiculous rhetoric, ugly signs and even uglier dancing.

Thus by their own choices, they ensure they are not taken seriously and then have even more reason to complain. But that should be enough reason to tune into the party conventions in the coming weeks. After all, since the politicians are no longer providing any legitimate entertainment, might as well take it where we can get it.

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THUMBS



To University fundraising

An all-time high of \$58.5 million in contributions was pulled in from 21,000 individual donors. The effort by the Oregon Campaign proved to be the most successful private fundraiser in state history.

To the first male Blazer Dancer

Jeremy England, 19, will become the first male in the 13-year history of the Blazer dance team. England, who is also a member of the Portland Fire's mixed-gender Hip Hop Squad, was one of 100 dancers who tried out for the team.



To Yahoo for selling Nazi objects

Yahoo! Inc. is offering 1,000 Nazi objects for sale through its Web auction site. Items include SS daggers, swastika-emblazoned battle flags and replica canisters of Zyklon B, the lethal gas that killed millions in "shower rooms."

To a trio of Beavers

Three Oregon State football players allegedly beat another OSU student after a party early Saturday morning. The football players — James Newson, Alton "Junior" Adams and Robert Prescott — along with two other named assailants have been arrested on charges of third-degree assault, a Class C felony which holds a five year maximum penalty.