

# PERSPECTIVES

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## Three measures present voters with choices about political involvement

In order for the American system of representative democracy to work effectively, people must participate. How is the system working now? According to the magazine *Mother Jones*, the National Republican Congressional Committee has established a program where, for \$25,000, you can dine with Republican leaders in Congress. The Democratic National Committee has a similar program, where for \$100,000, donors get weekend retreats with party leaders and dinner with the president. Who do you think is buying this political involvement? It isn't college students.

Support for Ralph Nader's inclusion in the presidential debates and the popularity of John McCain's campaign finance reform efforts is evidence that Americans want more voices to be heard in the political process. And a few of the legislative candidates the Emerald interviewed in the past week have mentioned their desire and their efforts to have more citizen involvement.

With that in mind, we look to Measures 92, 98 and 6. Measures 92 and 98 would limit citizen involvement by making it more difficult for specific groups of citizens to be involved in both politics and charities. Measure 6 is a welcome attempt to expand involvement by offering candidates for state offices the choice to limit individual contributions and then receive taxpayer funding for their campaigns.

Measure 92 would amend the Oregon Constitution to prohibit organizations from collecting payroll deductions for political purposes without the employee signing an authorization form every year. This sounds innocuous at first, but upon closer inspection, it hampers the ability of organizations to collect funds and the ability of employees to give funds.

The measure's supporters say that

unions are using employees' money to further a political agenda against employees' wishes. This isn't true. Union members can opt out of political expenditures and pay union dues for only non-political purposes. And if union employees don't like their organization's political activities, there are ways to be more involved in the process and have their voices heard. They can go to union meetings, become union leaders, rally support from other employees and fight to change the system. That's involvement. To stifle involvement would be un-American.

Measure 92 gets onto dangerous ground, as does Measure 98, with charities. First, all employees already have to authorize payroll deductions. No one is taking money without employees' permission. Organizations such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association and the American Red Cross collect funds through payroll deductions; some charities occasionally lobby legislators on behalf of their causes. Even if the lobbying is a tiny portion of the good work these organizations do, the money is "used for political purposes" and would have to be authorized with a specific form used solely for that purpose every year. Charities don't have the time to collect permission slips from thousands of employees on a yearly basis. This is why the employee can choose whether to sign up for payroll deduction or not.

Measure 98 takes the silencing of employee voices a step further. This measure would single out public employees and tell them they cannot have money deducted for political purposes because to do so would use the state's payroll department (and thus taxpayer money) to deduct the funds. So one group of people is denied this avenue of political involve-

ment because of where they work. The state, similar to any other employer, should have the right to allow payroll deductions. State employees should have that right. It's that simple.

There is a voice of sanity crying out in all of this. Measure 6 offers the chance for more voices to be heard. If candidates for state office voluntarily limit their campaign fundraising to \$100 donations from individuals or political action committees, and if they raise enough \$5 donations from individuals, then Measure 6 would give them money from a special campaign finance fund that the state has established. The money for the campaign finance fund comes from eliminating the tax deduction that people now use to deduct massive contributions to candidates from their state tax bill.

Measure 6 would limit the influence of big money donors on candidates and require that they raise funds from ordinary citizens — a candidate for governor, for instance, would have to raise 8,000 \$5 donations from electors. This demonstrates support and levels the playing field of influence on our politicians.

If a representative democracy is going to work, everyone needs to be represented equally by the elected officials. Measures 92 and 98 work to limit that influence of ordinary citizens. We urge you to vote no on 92 and 98. Measure 6, by contrast, is a novel idea for a system of equal influence and taxpayer-funded campaign finance. We recommend you vote yes on 6.

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

### Letters to the editor

#### We the people

Mr. Payne's "A Historical Interpretation of the Second Amendment" (ODE, Oct. 16) really misses the target — he even misquotes the Second Amendment, which actually reads:

"Amendment II. A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

The Founding Fathers understood who "the people" were. The word "people" is used once in the Preamble to the Constitution, once again in Article I, Section 2, and five times in the Bill of Rights; once each in Amendments I, II, IV, IX, and X. If the word "people" is universally accepted to be the meaning described in a standard dictionary, that meaning must be applied consistently across all uses of the word as it appears in the Constitution, including the Second Amendment.

According to Merriam-Webster Online, "people" are defined as "the body of enfranchised citizens of a state." If the definition of people is consistently applied, the Second Amendment cannot be interpreted in any way except as a fundamental right retained by individual citizens. No compelling reason can be offered why the Second Amendment should not be held on an equal footing to the other uses in the Constitution of the word people.

Sean Walston  
 graduate assistant  
 physics

#### What you don't know can hurt you

Measure 9 doesn't protect children; it puts them at risk.

HIV Alliance exists because we believe that HIV is preventable. Our mission is to provide HIV education to all levels of the community, including our middle-school and high-school-age citizens.

HIV Alliance believes that people make healthier behavioral choices with access to accurate information in a setting allowing for questions and responsible discussion.

HIV Alliance believes that programs like our Speakers in the Schools protect the lifelong health of our young people by arming them with facts about how HIV is contracted and transmitted. Research shows that the information and discussion the nationally recognized Speakers in the Schools program provides helps students make better choices about their behavior.

HIV Alliance believes that Measure 9, called the "Student Protection Act," will have a chilling effect on our children's ability to receive objective information about the transmission of HIV or

any aspect of sexual health. We believe that Measure 9 may interpret health education as promoting sexual activity.

HIV Alliance believes that open discussion, coupled with responsible, factual information about the nature of HIV and the behaviors that can lead to infection, is the right of every citizen.

HIV Alliance believes that denying information and discussion to young people who are making decisions daily about their social behavior threatens the future health of the entire community.

Therefore, the Board and Staff of HIV Alliance strongly oppose Measure 9 as it protects no one — unless keeping people ignorant is considered protection.

Leslie Habetler  
 community relations  
 coordinator  
 HIV Alliance

#### Right to bear arms

I was appalled at Pat Payne's recent column regarding the Second Amendment. Our country was founded for freedoms he seems eager to relinquish. Why? Following his logic, we have the right to free speech so long as it's not over a telephone, on the radio or via a computer because these hadn't been invented when the Constitution was written.

Will more gun laws deter criminals? Hello? They don't follow laws. That's why they're criminals. More laws will only stop law-abiding citizens from protecting their lives. Does he think self defense is only justified with fists or words?

Heaven forbid that a woman (or any of us) should be allowed to defend her life effectively against a larger, more physical attacker.

"The police can protect her."

Right.

"She can talk her way out of it."

Right.

"She shouldn't have been there."

Right.

Like it or not, a gun is one of the few things that can equalize a 110-pound woman in a fight with a 225-pound man. Rape happens. In Eugene.

If I were his friend, I wouldn't want to depend on the self-proclaimed Captain Sensible's pleadings for mercy as help in a crisis. While CS will, no doubt, count me among the "tanked-up rednecks," as far as I'm concerned, if a woman is physically attacked, she should have the right to defend herself effectively and put a large hole through the [person] anywhere she chooses. I, for one, will applaud her when she does.

Mick Briscoe  
 graduate student  
 fine art

