

Professors toss in two cents

Opinions on the election run the gamut, with many people coming down on each side of issues

By Brooke Ross
Oregon Daily Emerald

As the country awaits the final presidential election results, University professors are already formulating their opinions about the future of the Electoral College.

Julie Novkov, an assistant professor in political science, is anticipating the announcement of the next president, but said she thinks the final outcome could have complications because the race is so close.

Novkov said she heard that nearly 2,500 Florida voters accidentally cast their votes for Pat Buchanan while meaning to vote for Vice President Al Gore. The mistakes apparently resulted from the unclear layout of the Palm Beach County ballots.

However, Novkov said she thinks either candidate will face questions once he becomes the president-elect.

"We obviously have to wait and see what the recount is, but [the 2,500 votes] could be the margin for victory," she said, adding that she thinks this kind of mistake could give Gore's campaign grounds to file a lawsuit.

If Bush wins, she said, many

could argue that the voting process was unfair.

"I hope the winner emerges with some kind of legitimacy, but I think that's unlikely at this point," she said.

Contrary to popular belief, candidates don't win the White House just by winning the popular vote. When voters cast their votes in the presidential election every four years, they are actually voting for their candidates' electors. The number of electors in each state is equal to the number of Congress members it has — so Oregon, for example, has seven electors. To gain the presidency, a candidate has to win 270 electoral votes.

This year's presidential race is likely the closest ever, with the two major-party candidates in a stalemate until one of them wins Florida's 25 electoral votes.

Though the uncertain results are casting doubt on the process, Novkov said she thinks the Electoral College is important because Oregon would not have received as much attention from the presidential candidates otherwise.

Priscilla Southwell, a political science professor and head of the political science department, said she thinks it is unfortunate that the presidential results are still not determined and that the Electoral College is not efficient for this particular race.

"Most other countries make the popular vote a requirement to win

the majority, and I don't know why we don't do the same," she said.

The popular vote should determine the outcome, Southwell said, and if no one earns the popular vote, the top two candidates should have a run-off to determine the winner. This kind of strategy could prevent waiting for results because the country would not be dependent on electoral votes, she said.

Southwell also said the television media could have been more accurate in reporting the presidential election results.

"Calling state results should be held off as long as possible until polls are closed on the West Coast," she said.

Novkov said she hopes that everyone is aware that several election results cannot be written off at this time because it is still too soon to tell the outcomes of many of the races.

Alan Meyer, a professor of management in the business school, said he thinks the extreme closeness of the presidential race shows neither candidate had a vision for the future because they could not inspire the electors. Neither candidate was able to capture the critical mass because they both avoided tough issues, he said.

Meyer, however, thinks this waiting period is exciting.

"This is an election to end speculation that your vote could never count," he said.

Election dumbfounds networks

By Frazier Moore
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Television networks declared George W. Bush the president-elect, then took it back during a bizarre night of election coverage that left everyone, including newscasters, flabbergasted.

Newspapers across the country didn't have it any easier. They

pushed back deadlines, slowed press runs and planned extra editions. But with the race coming down to the wire and deadlines looming, many papers went to bed — prematurely declaring Bush the winner.

The premature headlines were reminiscent of the Chicago Daily Tribune's infamous 1948 gaffe, "Dewey Defeats Truman."

At 9:55 p.m. EST, CNN had taken back its projection that Gore had won the state. CBS quickly followed, then NBC.

With Florida still in doubt, the next president remained undetermined as the sun rose Wednesday.

"If you're disgusted with us, frankly, I don't blame you," Rather told viewers.

Fallout

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the office, said a steady line of people wound out the door and around the block from mid-morning until 8 p.m.

Brunig added that the counting process is moving slowly because elections officials have to verify the signature on each ballot before the ballot is counted, which can be time-consuming.

Although the final tally isn't in, Bush has held a narrow lead in Oregon since the polls closed Tuesday night. This represents a major change from the last three presidential races, when Oregon voters chose Democratic candidates for president.

Dan Estes, political director for the Oregon Republican Party, said a lot of factors have helped give Bush the edge, including the mail-in ballot system and Ralph Nader's candidacy.

"Nader played a big role," Estes said. "The Green Party really provided an alternative."

Estes worked on Oregon's campaign to elect Bob Dole in 1996, before the advent of mail-in voting, and said he prefers the old-fashioned polls to the new mailing system.

When people go to the polls, he said, a candidate can build momentum and peak on Election Day. With Oregon's new system, Bush needed to peak three weeks in advance and hold that level until Tuesday, which Estes said costs much more time and money.

But Estes said Bush and his running mate, Dick Cheney, were able to keep Oregon voters interested, and local volunteers successfully got the candidate's message to the state's voters, which is giving him his current lead.

"I have never seen so many peo-

ple get excited about licking stamps," he said.

But Oregon Democrats are warning Oregonians not to completely discount Gore.

"It could go in the Democrat column," said Kathy McShea, a press aide for Forward Oregon, the state Democratic Party. "Ballots are still being counted. The situation is still fluid."

McShea said the mail-in election caused local Democrats to change their campaign game plans.

"Participation has been off the charts," she said. "We had a situation where the party infrastructure went through a renaissance."

But she still believes Oregon could remain a Democratic stronghold for another four years.

"It's premature to come to a conclusion. Only certain pockets have reported," she said.

Walker

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more than 24 hours.

"I don't know if I'm going back to regular life or if I'm going to a more creative life," he said.

Miller said he is not claiming victory either, he is just waiting until there is a definitive answer because he has received conflicting election results.

According to the Associated Press, Walker garnered 12,596 votes for 51 percent of the total ballots, while Miller earned 11,964 votes, or 49 percent.

Though the race had been close, Walker claimed victory this morning after a majority of the precincts

had reported in.

"I'm feeling absolutely ecstatic," she said. "I went to bed last night feeling I had lost this race, and woke up finding I had won."

Walker said she discovered the election results almost by accident.

"I got up to do paperwork on the Web and thought, 'Oh well, I'll check out the elections page to see how much I had lost by,'" Walker said. When she discovered she was ahead, "I went screaming through the house. When I saw the final unofficial results, it was an incredible feeling."

She had remained optimistic Tuesday evening as she watched the results slowly unfold at the Lane County Fairgrounds. She reassured her supporters who came to the fairgrounds that she was expecting it to

be a close race, and it was: Miller held the lead with more than 50 percent of the vote for all of Tuesday night, into early Wednesday morning.

"I think the student votes had a lot to do with [the results]," Walker said. "We had a lot of students voting at the last minute."

Like the presidential election, every vote counts, Walker said. She also thanked students for their support in volunteering and voting for her in the tough campaign against Miller.

Brian Lamb, a co-worker of Jeff Miller's who helped work on his campaign, said he knew the race would be a tight one.

"We knew up to the last minute it could go either way," he said. "I wasn't totally surprised."

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