

PERSPECTIVES

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Enlisting distrust

The whole country is talking about the voting irregularities in Florida, and much of the country is upset about it in one way or another. Here on campus there were also some irregularities related to the election — not the votes, but the voter registration. The ASUO let its voter list get away. This incident may not cause the controversy that C. J. Gabbe and Peter Larson's purchase of cookies and coffee did during last spring's elections, but it's a sorry state of affairs nonetheless.

Here's a brief rundown of the ASUO's gaffe: The ASUO compiled a list, with names and phone numbers, of all the students it registered to vote. The list is being used for a Yale study on student voting. But a member of the ASUO gave the list to someone who wanted to call students and ask them to vote for a particular candidate. An ASUO senator also took names off the list to make phone calls. Some student voters were called before the mistake was caught. Another student discovered the release of the list and asked that, out of fairness, it be given to anyone who asked.

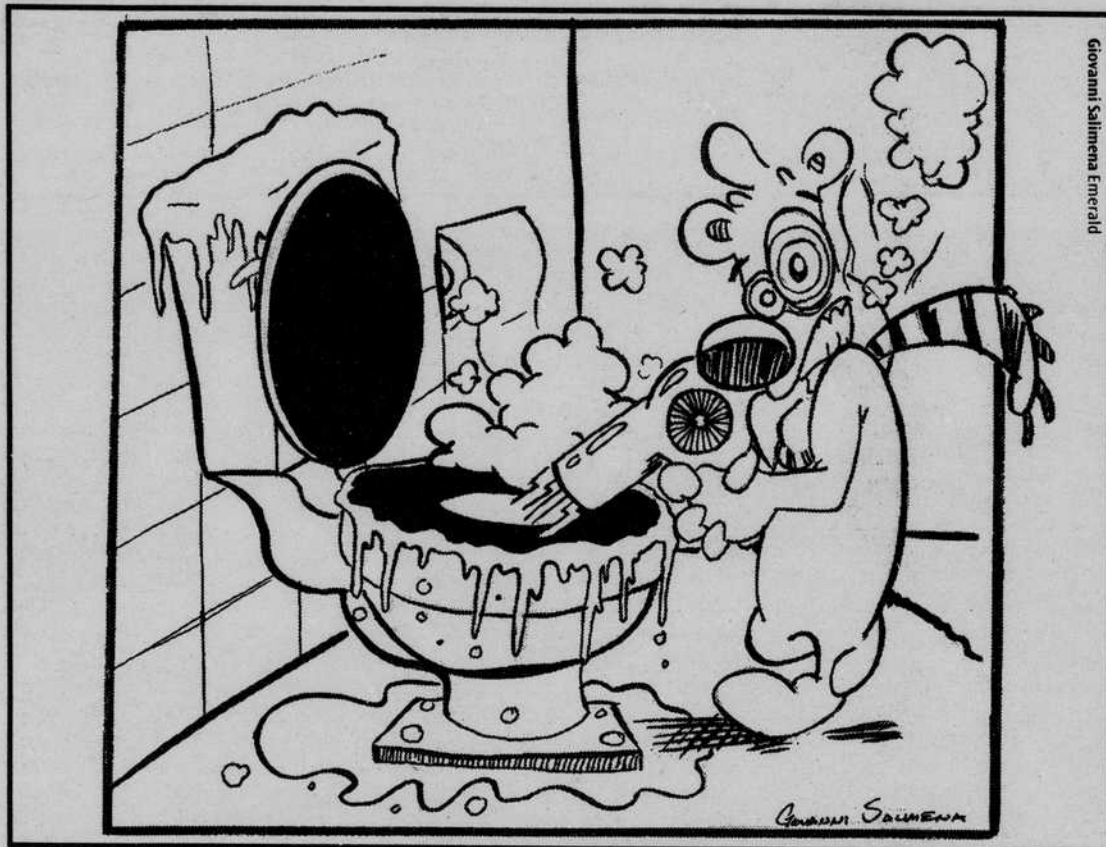
We are concerned about this lack of discretion. OK, to be fair, anyone can pay the Lane County Elections Office to get a list of all registered voters and then whittle

that list down to students. It's public information. But students are a highly sought-after demographic, and a pre-sorted list of student voters would be valuable to many campaigns.

Students who registered to vote with the ASUO surely did not expect that, because they gave their registration card to their student government instead of mailing it themselves, their information would be given out to partisan causes. And these students shouldn't have had to expect such shenanigans. The list should have been confidential.

Students were barraged this election season with the message that their votes counted and that voting is the most important thing they could do. Voting is what keeps our democracy running, and it is important. With all the talk of how critical voting is, and all of the good work done by the ASUO to register students and to be involved in a potentially important study of voting, why was this list not treated with the utmost discretion?

We're not that concerned with the possibility that a few students got phone calls. Many calls were made by groups all across the country, asking voters questions and stumping for a candidate or a cause. We're not even so



concerned that the Yale study may have been tainted by the slip, although that's possible.

What's really frustrating about this error in judgment is that it can make students distrustful of government. The national elections

may already do that on their own: According to CNN, only 51 percent of potential voters actually cast ballots this year. The controversy about the presidency *should* make more people want to be involved in the process, but it might turn some away.

Likewise, not being able to trust campus government could lengthen the list of students who have given up on the process — and that's one list we do want to let go.

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

And the 'winner' is ...



SAINT AND PROFITS

ERIC PFEIFFER

Even as we wait for a new president amid threats of a "constitutional crisis," American voters have already been declared the winners in this year's election.

Several trends have appeared as we inch closer to the moment when a winner will surface as the 43rd president of the United States.

First, the winner loses. According to some Washington insiders and even a few elected officials, our next president won't have a lot of room to maneuver. He will take office without a mandate, facing an evenly divided Senate and House. Couple that with an economy already in the process of cooling, and you have a president-elect whose greatest challenge will be surviving the inevitable fallout from Clinton nostalgia.

If the presidency goes to Texas Gov. George W. Bush, look for him to once again follow in his father's footsteps, this time suffering the wrath of a public that loves turning on those it once elevated.

And if the office goes to Vice President Al Gore, he will face a public almost certainly ready for change, having had the same party in office for eight years.

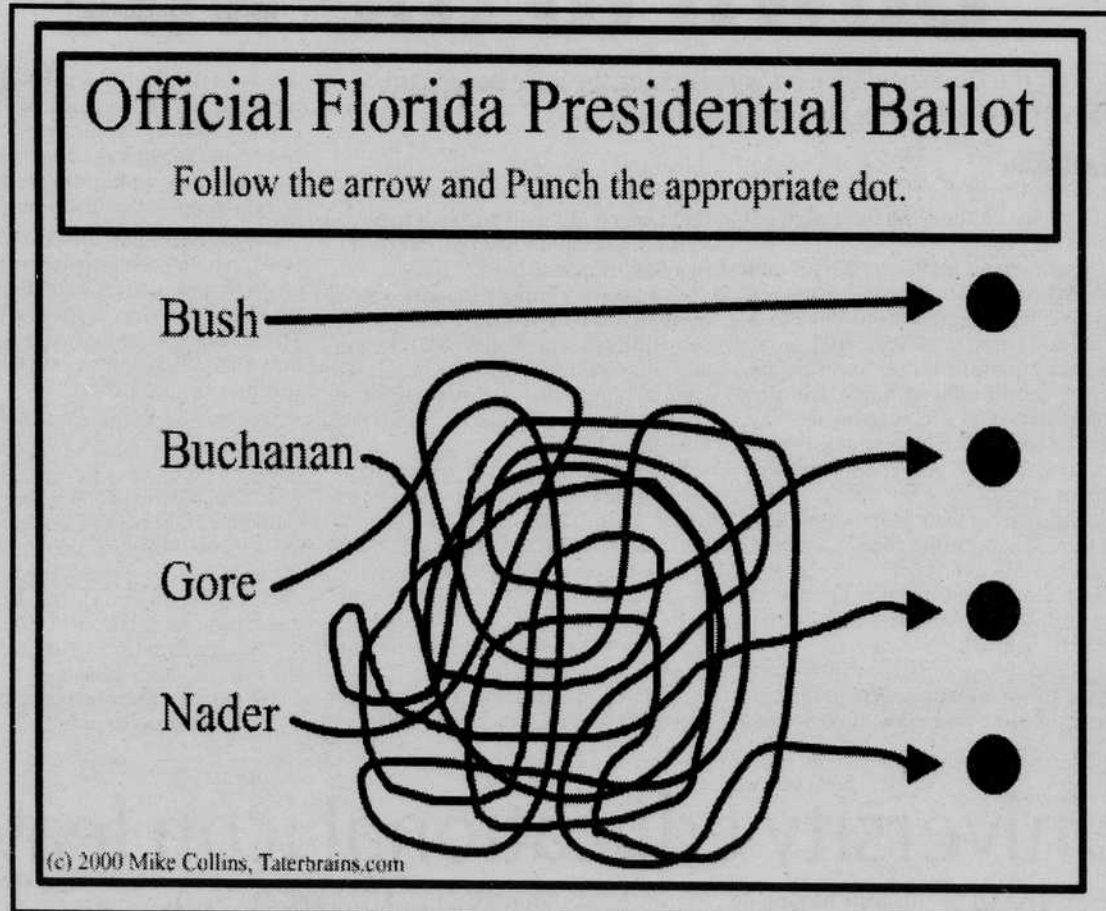
The good news for us is that

things couldn't have turned out better. While a divided government sounds difficult, it's exactly what our founding fathers had in mind. What it means for America is a prescription drug plan, a balanced budget, fair tax cuts, thoughtful military spending and moderate Supreme Court justice appointments — all the things the two candidates promised, but neither would have delivered had they won on a sweeping mandate.

At this point, only one thing is certain: Republicans will retain control of the House for the next two years. Depending on which party captures the Oval Office, Congress could see a dramatic backlash like the one that put Republicans in control in 1994. In the Senate, the GOP also maintains a razor-thin majority. With Washington state Senate results still coming in, Republicans currently hold a 50-49 edge. However, even if Democratic candidate Maria Cantwell prevails in her race against Republican Sen. Slade Gorton, control of the Senate will remain in Republican hands.

In the first scenario, the Senate is tied 50-50, with the deciding vote falling on the newly elected vice president. A Bush-Cheney administration would have the vice president casting his deciding vote in favor of a GOP majority.

In the second case, a newly elected Vice President Joe Lieberman would be forced to resign his Senate seat, where a Republican governor has already promised to replace him with a GOP appointee. In that case, the tally goes back to 51-49, with Republicans



in control.

Outside the two major parties, there is plenty of excitement in the election's aftermath. Green Party candidate Ralph Nader failed to gain the 5 percent that would have guaranteed his party federal funding in the next election. While it's a disappointment for Green supporters, it's far from a defeat. After all, the Green Party isn't about big money. Their victory came in the foundation of a nationwide alliance of progressive voters. If they stay united, they are

the future of American third-party politics.

As for the Reform Party, they are finished. The only consolation in this sad demise of a once-promising movement is the hope that Pat Buchanan will sink with the ship.

The best thing for the country to do right now is to wait. When you turn on the TV and hear politicians or media analysts talking about a crisis sweeping the country, don't be fooled. There is no constitutional crisis concerning

the future of the White House. In fact, the Constitution is simply running its natural course and solidifying the strength of our republic. The next great wave of political change in our country is at least another four years away.

Eric Pfeiffer is a columnist for the Oregon Daily Emerald, currently serving an internship at the National Journal Hotline in Washington, D.C. His views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald. He can be reached at epfeiffe@gladstone.uoregon.edu.