

Oregon's reps talk elections

■ Politicians speak about the election's effect on Congress and issues in Oregon

By Ben Romano
Oregon Daily Emerald

In the uncertain weeks since the polls closed, local and state politicians have had the opportunity to reflect on this historic election and speculate about the future in Congress. Oregon's senators and representatives are facing a narrowly divided Congress and an administration that will gain office without gaining a convincing majority of the popular vote.

Rep. Peter DeFazio, who was elected Nov. 7 to his eighth term in Congress, said this election reminded him of when, as a kid, he waited anxiously for the results of the 1960 election, which pitted Democrat John F. Kennedy against Republican Richard M. Nixon.

"I still remember when my teacher came into the room to announce that Kennedy had won," he said.

In that election, Kennedy won only 118,550 more popular votes than Nixon. The divide between Al Gore and George W. Bush in the current election is the slimmest since the 1960 election.

Elections across the country for positions in the Senate and House of Representatives have left Congress narrowly divided. The fate of the Senate is yet to be determined. Former Democratic Rep. Maria Cantwell was declared the winner of Washington's Senate race over incumbent Republican Sen. Slade Gorton, but the close results triggered an automatic re-count. If Cantwell wins, the Senate will be split 50-50. A Gorton victory will give the Republicans a one-seat majority.

The Senate has never been split 50-50, though there are many occasions in history when it has been divided by only one seat. In any case, the Republicans will likely retain power in the Senate because if Dick Cheney is elected vice president, he will become Senate president and will cast tie-breaking votes whenever the Senate is deadlocked. Should

Joe Lieberman become vice president, he would have to relinquish his seat as Connecticut's senator. Connecticut's governor, a Republican, would then appoint a replacement, also likely to be a Republican.

Wyden promotes pain relief

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., said the prospect of a narrowly split Senate strengthens the Democrats' position relative to the last three sessions, in which the Republicans have held between a two- and five-seat majority.

Wyden said he thinks the Democratic gains in the Senate have increased pressure on Sen. Don Nickles, R-Okla., to pass the Pain Relief Promotion Act before the Senate adjourns. This act, which was attached to a Republican tax relief package last month, would block Oregon's law allowing physician-assisted suicide. Wyden has filibustered to stop the legislation, with the hope of having the act removed from the tax relief package.

Wyden said he thinks Nickles will be pushing hard to pass this legislation as soon as possible because "I've got more potential allies come January," when the next Senate session begins. The Pain Relief Promotion Act is still on hold while Congress waits to see who will be elected president.

Smith speaks for bipartisanship

If Bush wins the presidency, Sen. Gordon Smith, R-Ore., may find himself part of a Republican-dominated government, with majorities, albeit slim, in both chambers of Congress and the White House. The last time the Republicans held a majority in Congress and occupied the White House was in 1953 when Dwight D. Eisenhower defeated Democrat Adlai Stevenson for the presidency. At that time, the Republicans had an eight-seat majority in the House and a one-seat lead in the Senate.

Smith said that no one comes away from this election with a clear mandate to lead.

"Our country is severely split down the middle politically," Smith said. "I want to see this closer margin as fostering more bipartisanship."

Smith said he thinks it behooves elected officials to put aside the traditional rancor of partisan politics and work across party lines. He noted that neither party rules the Senate until it holds 60 of the 100 seats.

In the House of Representatives,

Democratic gains whittled the Republican majority to two seats. Republicans took 220 seats, Democrats 211 seats, and independents two seats. A majority in the 435-seat House requires 218 seats.

DeFazio said this will facilitate more bipartisan legislation, such as the Steens Mountain Bill, which President Clinton signed into law Oct. 30. The bill designated the southeastern Oregon mountain as federal wilderness land, the largest such designation in six years. DeFazio said he hopes to make more progress in resource protection even in a divided Congress.

The Electoral College?

With the nation facing the possibility of putting a president in office who did not garner a majority of the popular vote, politicians have had cause to consider the merits and fairness of the Electoral College system.

Phil Barnhart, representative-elect for state House District 40 and chairman of the Democratic Party of Lane County, said he has overheard lots of discussion about the Electoral College in the past few days.

He said he is in favor of the system because it forces candidates to campaign all over the country.

"They have to campaign in small states as well as in big states," he said. "You end up with a person who actually has the capacity to represent the whole country."

Many believe that it is unlikely that a change in the Electoral College system would ever come about. It would take a Constitutional amendment, requiring two-thirds majorities in both chambers of Congress and three-quarters of all state legislatures to ratify it. Smaller states, which would stand to lose a considerable amount of influence if the president was elected via popular vote, are unlikely to ratify an amendment that would take away their power.

Smith said Oregon would not have gotten as much attention in this election if not for the Electoral College.

"Both campaigns developed strategies around the Electoral College system that included Oregon in the calculation," he said.

He said he was open to debate about changing or abolishing the Electoral College but added, "It's unlikely that I would vote as a U.S. senator to abolish the Electoral College."



DEFAZIO

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Morse center

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of Wayne Morse.

Frohnmayr's speech followed, and he took note of the \$1.8 million donation from the estate of Morse's good friend Ed Conklin that funded the law school commons and chair office, and launched the center.

He said the center will be "a true crown jewel" in interdisciplinary studies and will continue to impact the community.

"The center improves the community and has always improved the community," he said.

Hallock said it was a "tremendous privilege" to become the cen-

ter's director after working with each chair for the last 12 years. She said the center is a way for the University to deal with community issues in the form of healthy debate.

"The center has authentic links to the community and the true and purest discussion," she said.

In addition to working with the community, Hallock said the center will become a resource for students of all departments by hosting more speakers and activities to deal with timely issues of law and politics.

Students will also be able to earn fellowships through the law school to work with the center. The first three recipients, Aaron James, Tiffany Harris and Michael Arnold, were on

hand for the opening ceremonies.

"It's quite an honor, especially considering [Wayne Morse], Arnold said, "I admire him; he's just got tenacity I admire."

He added he also was honored to receive the fellowship because it will involve him in several community events and service projects, which he said were at the core of a lawyer's profession.

Harris said the fellowship was a validation of what she wants to do with her law degree. She said because of all the different aspects of law, many law students lose focus, but earning the fellowship has given her a definite idea about what she wants to do in the community.

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