

COMMENTARY

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Monday, November 4, 2002

Editorial

Ballots are due Tuesday!

This year's election will determine the balance of power in the U.S. House and Senate. Please do your part and vote by 8 p.m. Tuesday.

Drug testing won't predict driving habits

U.S. Senate candidate Elizabeth Dole recently announced she wants legislation passed requiring teenagers applying for their driver's licenses to submit to drug testing — so that they'll realize how important it is to be drug-free.

While we agree that operating a 2,000-pound weapon under the influence of any intoxicant is dangerous and stupid, we think Dole is missing the point. We fail to see how implementing a system for drug testing will predict whether a person will also use drugs while driving.

According to the Mothers Against Drunk Driving Web site, drunken driving is the nation's most frequently committed violent crime. Alcohol, however, is virtually undetectable in a drug test, unless the person being tested had been drinking in the past 24 hours.

Even if alcohol were detectable in drug tests, the assumption is that people who drink do so responsibly, and that they refrain from operating a vehicle if they are intoxicated. Does this same assumption not apply to people who use drugs on occasion? Drug users are not "high" all the time, making them no more likely to get behind the wheel while under the influence than a drinker.

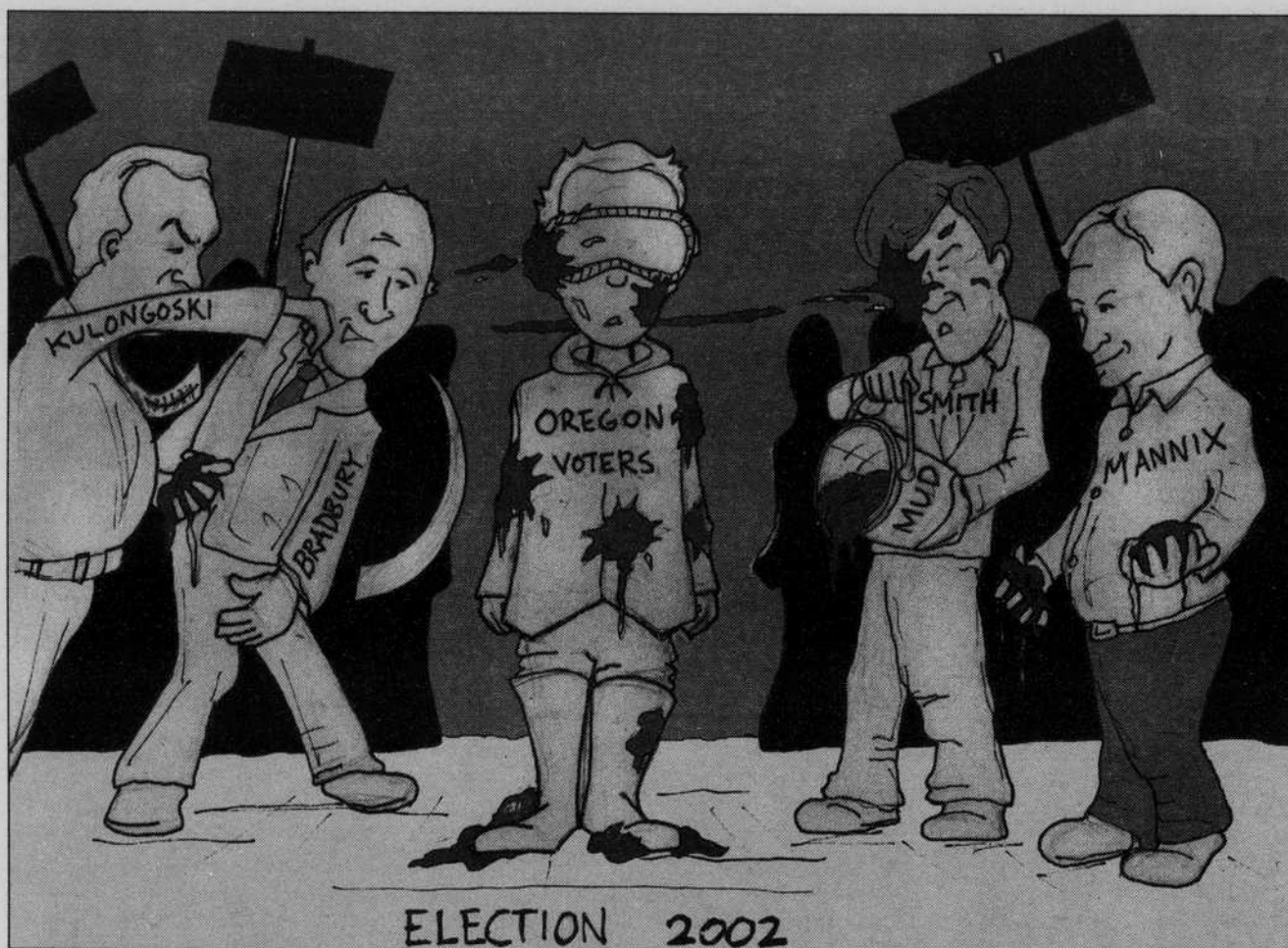
Teenagers are often in an experimental phase of their lives. Some of them affected by this plan may be "just experimenting" with drugs and alcohol. But only those teens who have been using marijuana would fail the test, and those who have been drinking alcohol would not. Either way, the test is not reflective of whether any substances were consumed before driving, and it is not a predictor of whether substances will be consumed before driving in the future.

We also worry about the establishment of a governmental infrastructure to organize and implement drug testing for so many people. This is a frightening first footfall toward a fascist fantasy.

Currently, some states have laws revoking the licenses, at least temporarily, of teens caught driving under the influence. If Dole is interested in a policy that will actually deter dangerous driving, maybe she could promote legislation that would permanently revoke the licenses of people who are found to be driving while intoxicated. Drug testing isn't the answer.

Editorial policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.



Peter Utsey Emerald

OUS cuts staff, students out of 'The Deal'

Guest commentary

Anyone who thinks that bureaucracy moves slowly is probably unaware of "The Deal" — the latest OUS scheme to "save" higher education — which is currently moving through the various governmental layers at warp speed. Not familiar with it? In place of solid information, rumors quite naturally abound. OUS has, for example, vehemently denied that what is being proposed involves "privatization," but certain tell-tale odors suggest otherwise.

Take the concept of putting the results of research up for bid to private corporations. Assuming this is part of the plan, then one must ask oneself: Does this kind of profit-oriented philosophy have any place in an institution built and maintained, at least in part, on the taxpayers' dime?

And tuition? According to the Emerald ("Students, University agree on tuition plan," ODE, Sept. 30), there will be no limit on how much students must fork over, other than some vague notion that it will "not be more than half the cost" — whatever that ultimately turns out to be. A cap on enrollment is mentioned, but based on

what criteria? GPA, or ability to pay? One hopes OUS will nobly claim the former, but if higher education is to become a "for-profit nonprofit," then one can only wonder.

Which brings us to the faculty. If you're into research, then you'll probably do well. But what kind of revenue is there to be had from music, dance, ethnic and women's studies, anthropology, geography, creative writing, etc.?

Of course, we classified employees will get the butt-end of the stick, as usual. The talk is of pulling out of the PERS retirement system, which will then be replaced by "something else," and the same with insurance. What "something else" will actually be is, again, unclear, but it is difficult to picture a better "deal."

As for collective bargaining: If the seven universities are cast out to fend for themselves, then the resources for negotiation are split — and it is difficult to believe that has not been taken into consideration over at Susan Campbell.

Years ago, OUS separated from the rest of the state for many of the reasons now being restated (i.e., fewer "pesky"

regulations to follow) and with many of the same promises (greater efficiency). Apparently the first try didn't work; are we to have more faith now?

As to the first point: Sometimes, much as we might hate them, many regulations are effected for good reasons — to prevent bureaucrats from abusing power. And the second point: The promise of "greater efficiency" simply has not materialized.

Indeed, with the unregulated increase in the number of officers of administration to a point where, according figures taken from the ODE and other sources, there are two officers for every three classifieds — the people who do the real work.

Maybe therein lies the beginning of a solution: If one were to cut back the number of officers to a reasonable level, return those positions that were inexplicably removed from classified status, and cut redundant managerial and administrative posts as well, then millions of dollars per year could be saved at the University alone. Now there's a "deal."

Bill Smee is chief steward for SEIU/OPEU, Local 085 and kiosk attendant at the University.

Letters to the editor

Limited parking causes towing woes

I and eight people in our group were victimized by your local B&B Towing. We came back to the Centennial Plaza shopping center after the game Oct. 19, about 5 p.m., to find my vehicle gone. At first we thought it had been stolen, then we saw the B&B sign and suspected it was probably towed.

We called the phone number on

the sign only to find out there was a recording indicating we had to call back after 7:30 p.m. The problem compounded for our group of nine because we are from out of town, as many fans are. This delay was terrible service; it created schedule problems for all our friends and family.

We finally spoke to someone around 7:45 p.m. who said they would be willing to give us directions and meet us at the towing yard if I had \$190 in cash only.

I saw only upper end late model cars towed. Mine is a 2003 GMC 4x4 truck. Although B&B was cer-

tainly under their rights to tow, it was clearly premeditated.

Many people come from out of the area to support the University's athletic programs. As the facilities grow to encourage more fan support, the need for adequate parking and traffic control grows with it.

Currently, parking is limited around the stadium. It is in the best interest of the local community to support this situation the best that they can.

Wayne Lecomte
Medford

End vicious cycle by voting

Candidates make no attempts to reach out to us because we don't vote, and we make no effort to vote because candidates don't reach out to us.

Let's end the vicious cycle.

We need to support candidates who acknowledge young adults' contribution to society and vow to fight for us. By voting, we can make ourselves heard. If young voters increased our voter participation by just 1 percent, we would be the deciding factor in competitive races across the nation. As our generation begins to decide the outcome

of elections, politicians will begin to work for us.

On issues many of us care about — affordable education, housing, health care, good-paying jobs, corporate accountability, the environment — Democrats have been defending our agenda. This election, we have the ability to set the issues. Get out and vote on Nov. 5 and show politicians we are an active, mobilized, educated force that won't be underestimated.

Jenn Kauffman
director

Drive Up The Vote
Washington, D.C.