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EDITORIAL

Nader's bid means new possibilities for country

Ralph Nader is a political enigma, more an issue for debate than an actual presidential candidate.

Nader was in Portland Monday night, gathering 1,000 signatures so he can get on Oregon's presidential ballot in November. He's doing this across the country, gathering signatures to appear on 52 ballots.

But a signature to put somebody on a ballot doesn't mean anything. A vote, as we all learned in American history, is worth much more. We found out exactly how much those votes matter in the past presidential election.

Some Democrats would like to blame Nader for that close election in 2000. They blame him for Al Gore's close loss and point to the more than 97,000 votes he scored in Florida, a state Bush won by 537 votes officially, almost 2,000 in other counts. In Oregon, Gore won by a slim 6,765 votes in 2000, while Nader received 77,357 votes. Who knows, they say, what would have happened if Nader had nabbed 84,000 votes?

First off, it's a myth that only Democrats vote for Ralph Nader. Maybe Nader only stole votes from Libertarian candidate Harry Browne in 2000. The common wisdom is that Nader stole Democrats, but that can't be proved.

Second, welcome to a democracy. The only way to support our government is to give our voters as many choices as possible. The more choices the better. And this doesn't even include write-in votes. Why aren't people criticizing Cathy Gordon Brown, the Tennessee native who somehow pulled in 1,606 votes in 2000?

Nader is, simply, another candidate. We have a two-party system in America, and both parties are strong. And yes, both parties are in opposition to each other on most issues. For abortion? Vote Democratic. Like tax cuts? Vote Republican.

But what if you want somebody who supports gay marriage and also wants to crack down on media conglomerates? That's Ralph Nader. Maybe Nader's views match up with yours across the board, more so than any Democratic or Republican nominee. Are we supposed to have those people vote for a major-party candidate, simply because Nader doesn't have a good chance to win the presidency? Are we supposed to ask voters to sacrifice their political views for the supposed greater good?

To win the presidency, a candidate has to work. If Nader is preventing you from winning, maybe you weren't meant to be in the White House anyway.

So all the detractors need to back off, stop worrying about Nader and start focusing on how they can help their own candidates.

In 1968, George C. Wallace garnered the most electoral-college votes, 46, of any third-party candidate in American history. Wallace was an ultra-conservative governor of Alabama who was notorious for his extreme racism. But Wallace's success didn't hurt Republican candidate Richard Nixon, who easily won the presidency by 110 electoral-college votes (Bush won the 2000 election by five electoral-college votes). The actual vote was closer — Nixon won by 510,314 votes — but Wallace never prevented his conservative counterpart from making it to the White House.

Third parties, fourth parties and fifth parties are good for the democratic process. Don't blame Nader for trying.



Eric Layton Illustration

Politics of division

Our president isn't talented in many areas. He doesn't talk so good and he has now literally made a joke of his foreign policies.

But George W. Bush is very good at one thing: Division.

I'm not talking about eighth-grade, get-up-in-front-of-the-class division. I don't think Bush could divide 56 by 12. I'm talking about partisan-politics division, and our president is more partisan than the Republican elephant himself. Eventually, Bush's division of America will only serve to weaken our country.

Bush, of course, has campaign commercials that blast Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., for various reasons. One discredits Kerry for being "wrong on defense." The ad says Kerry will weaken the USA PATRIOT Act and that Kerry wanted to wait for United Nations approval to enter Iraq.

While those issues are for another column, another time, the point is that Bush has always and will always divide America along these "patriotic" lines.

If you think the PATRIOT Act is quasi-McCarthyism because it essentially lets the government spy on Americans, then you're practically a terrorist yourself. If you're appalled by the fact that 610 American soldiers (470 since the war "ended," as of

Sunday) have died in Iraq, you might as well move to Germany and wear lederhosen on Saturdays.

I know, these catty commercials come out every four years. The Democrats do it just as much as the Republicans. Kerry even has a feature on his Web site that al-



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lows you to vote in the "Final Four of most embarrassing Republicans." It's all just classic attack politics.

But the difference with Bush is that he's aligned himself with patriotism. He is Uncle Sam. If you're against him, you're against America. And nobody wants to be un-American. Heck, I feel un-American for writing this column.

In a democracy, we should be able to

criticize our government without feeling as guilty as Martha Stewart.

Bush pulls it all off for one simple reason: He's strong. Even if every word he says makes him seem dumber than a signpost, he absolutely believes it all. I'll admit, it's infectious. Sometimes I have to slap myself and listen to the words. Listen to the words! In 2000, Bush was The Rock to Al Gore's Pee Wee Herman. Obviously, a few hundred Florida voters thought that was enough to elect Bush.

But it's time to look at the facts instead of the rhetoric. Bush is supposedly strong in foreign policy, but he has created only death and distrust in Iraq. He just lost Spain to the socialists. He has created animosity in the United Nations because of his false claims that weapons of mass destruction existed in Iraq. He treats the rich like one giant buddy and is destroying our education system with No Child Left Behind laws.

Don't let Bush fool you with his big words and ridiculous policies. Fight Bush's division. Vote Kerry.

Contact the editorial editor at peterhockaday@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Greeks receive unfair bad press

This commentary is in regard to an article written about fraternity conduct and its relations to University policy ("Fraternity incidents elude University sanctions," ODE, March 12). This commentary is more an invitation and challenge to University students and the community. You could argue many of the statements and implications being made about fraternity men and sorority women could be directed toward other student groups or university-related organizations as well, but I chose to focus on greek life, as did the Emerald.

Greek life in general is the largest student organization in the ASUO. And, in my opinion, it is one of the most active with regard to the fostering of personal development and community impact, not to say that other student groups don't share the same values and goals. It is true that greek life does have its fair share of problems; however, they are very specific and, I feel, negatively glorified by the press. Who wants to hear about

the thousands of dollars fraternities and sororities raise for charities? Who wants to hear about the service that is assisting all aspects of our community on a consistent basis? Who wants to hear about the Fortune 500 company leaders, or political figureheads, or number of times a member of one of our organizations has been in the history books? Who wants to hear about the sheer impact this organization has on our beloved university? Instead of focusing on the successes, the media focus is on the negative, based on mistakes that are not exclusive to our organization. It seems the spotlight shines just a little bit brighter on our parties and the "rumors." The truth of the matter is, we are not a perfect group. I want to clearly get across to our community, by virtue of having a label, I gladly accept the responsibility that comes with being greek.

What is right about our organization is we are not afraid to be called out. Come into the Greek Life office, ask us questions, or better yet, talk to Director of Student Activities Gregg Lobisser, or speak with Chris Loschavo (judicial affairs). Their jobs are to help our

students, and they can provide you with definitive, reliable answers to your questions.

Do you want to know what fraternity and sorority life is about? Have you taken the time to actively seek the truth? Find out if the rumors are true; find out if we spend more time planning parties or more time studying and planning brotherhood/sisterhood events. Find out if we invest more time in drinking and causing damages than supporting one of our struggling brothers or sisters. Find out and see why we are the biggest student organization, and why no matter where you go you will see, hear, or experience a positive reflection of what a greek member has to offer. All it takes is a little bit of effort and a conversation. As a matter of fact, this is an open opportunity to challenge and prove we are not passive students and that positive actions, although not necessarily getting the press desired, do cultivate that which is important and relevant to nurturing leadership, continuing education and creating family.

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