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EDITORIAL

Inaccurate negative ads only alienate, annoy voters

With the negative presidential ad campaign bombarding American televisions, it's clear the election year is bound for yet another round of candidates evading the issues.

The climax of the ad spree is the Bush administration's incessant allegation that Sen. John Kerry is "flip-flopping" on the issues. At a recent Westminster College speech, Vice President Dick Cheney outlined these points by, naturally, taking Kerry's statements completely out of context.

But, oh my, a quick glance at Cheney's voting record doesn't exactly do him justice. For instance, did you know Cheney voted against the Head Start program while he was a congressman in 1988, but during the 2000 election went on record pledging his support for the program, according to <http://www.issues2000.org>?

And, what's this? In an Aug. 30, 2000 speech to the Southern Center for International Relations in Atlanta, Cheney stressed the importance of President George W. Bush renewing trust between the military and the Bush administration. But in 2002, Bush pushed to deny health benefits for 164,000 veterans, according to the Washington Post.

In the Westminster speech, Cheney criticized Kerry for voting to end certain weapons programs in the U.S. military during Kerry's 20-year Senate career. But Cheney, in a 1993 budget proposal he made as Secretary of Defense to George H. W. Bush, sought to terminate certain programs, including the Midgetman missile program and advanced cruise missile program. In fact, Cheney's plan was to cut \$50 billion from defense from 1993-1998.

But wait! Cheney recently told Fox News Channel's Brit Hume that "what we're concerned about, what I'm concerned about, is (Kerry's) record in the United States Senate, where he clearly has over the years adopted a series of positions that indicate a desire to cut the defense budget, to cut the intelligence budget, to eliminate many major weapons programs."

Also, let's not forget that some of the very weapons systems Cheney sought to disarm in 1993 appear on the Republican National Committee's list of weapons they argue Kerry was wrong in trying to cut, according to <http://www.fair.org>.

The paramount example that critics say proves Kerry's tendency to "flip-flop," however, stems from Kerry's proclamation that he "actually voted for the \$87 billion before I voted against it." Kerry is referring to a bill to dedicate \$87 billion to the Afghanistan and Iraq military efforts.

But it seems those critics are leaving out a vital part of that statement: The context. According to The Washington Post, Kerry said in the same speech that he would support the \$87 billion if Bush's tax cuts were dropped. Since they were not dropped, however, Kerry later chose to oppose the bill.

A kind of fuzzy logic can be found in the Republican Party's charges that Kerry is on a crusade against the military. Republicans accuse Kerry of voting against weapons systems as though he cast several individual votes against each individual system. But in reality the weapons systems motions were all part of one big Pentagon appropriations bill in 1991, which Kerry opposed, according to www.fair.org. So, Kerry's alleged 20-year mission to topple the U.S. military and render the country defenseless against the evils of the world was actually just one vote.

Speaking of opposing defense measures, Bush resisted the creation of a department dedicated to American security before the Department of Homeland Security was established, according to The Washington Post. So, in theory, the newest Kerry anti-Bush ad could feature Bush saying, "I actually opposed the Department of Homeland Security — before I supported it!"

The moral of this murky story is that very few politicians in this country have completely noble motivations. Politics being as they are, oftentimes a legislator or public servant will support something at one point and then oppose it later for political reasons, or vice versa. Cheney did it with education and defense. Kerry did it with defense and undoubtedly many other things. Focusing an entire campaign on these factors is ridiculous, deceptive and a perfect example of why the American people are so sick and tired of caring at all.



See Dick Run

The un-American smokeout

Smokers unite!

The University Health Center's Campus Advisory Board has launched an anti-tobacco crusade to stop Erb Essentials, the EMU convenience store, from selling cigarettes and to extend the no-smoking area around campus buildings to 50 feet.

"The ultimate (goal) for campuses is to have a totally smoke-free campus where there is no smoking on campus grounds," said Paula Staight, the Health Center's director of health information. Staight called the advisory board's current campaign "baby steps" and said the University may be 10 or 20 years away from totally banning smoking on campus.

Who appointed the advisory board to be the anti-tobacco police? College students — or the vast majority of them — are adults, and should be permitted to smoke on campus.

Smoking is smelly, addictive, harmful to your health and just plain stupid, but if students want to smoke, the powers that be should let them.

Eliminating tobacco sales at Erb Essentials will not make anybody quit smoking. It will just annoy students who have to go off campus to buy their cigarettes and eliminate a source of revenue for the EMU, which is due for major renovation and needs all the money it can get.

The fact that Erb Essentials sells cigarettes does not constitute a University endorsement of smoking. It merely recognizes that 22 percent of University students smoke, according to a Health Center survey, and many of them like to have a convenient place to buy their cigarettes.

Moving smokers farther away from buildings is a good idea. But if the University is going to push smokers out into the rain, they should build shelters where students can smoke and stay dry.

The stigma smokers face these days is extraordinary. They can't walk down the street without getting disapproving glares, not to mention the nagging they continually receive from family and friends imploring them to quit.



Chuck Slothower
Taking issue

Non-smokers often like to say they have a right not to breathe second-hand smoke. It's funny, but I can't seem to find that one anywhere in the Constitution.

Smoking in public places is not merely a campus issue. Local governments from Eugene to New York City have enacted smoking bans. Miraculously, Lexington, Ky., passed its own smoking ban in July, the Southern equivalent to Idaho banning potatoes.

What is happening to smokers in the United States exemplifies the so-called tyranny of the majority that Alexis De Tocqueville wrote about more than a hundred years ago. The danger of

democracy, De Tocqueville wrote, is that the majority can impinge on the rights of the minority.

The parallels are clear. Smokers make up a minority of the voting population, so non-smokers can screw them over by restricting smoking.

The anti-smoking movement is yet another example of modern Americans valuing safety over liberty, an inversion of the values espoused by the founders of our country.

From smoking bans to bicycle helmet laws, people think they have a duty to save others from themselves. I say, if someone wants to make poor decisions that could be detrimental to their health, that's their business.

The Health Center should be applauded for providing nicotine gum and patches for students who want to quit smoking, but there is a difference between helping smokers who seek help and restricting the rights of those who don't. The attitude of Staight and her allies is well-intentioned, but simultaneously maternalistic and condescending.

EMU staff will explain to the EMU Board of Directors the financial impact of what will happen should Erb Essentials cease selling tobacco. The meeting is today at 4 p.m. in the EMU Board Room and represents an excellent opportunity for students on either side of the issue to voice their opinions.

Contact the columnist at chuckslothower@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.