

Thursday, May 13, 2004

EDITORIAL

Piercy's views line up well with students'

With no major budget-cutting measures on the upcoming ballot, the May 18 primary hasn't received the same attention that surrounded recent elections. While most major races will not be determined until this fall's general election, it's important for students to realize that four major races are transpiring, and the outcome of some of these contests is very much in students' hands.

At the city level, students can vote in the mayoral race, and residents of Ward 1, Ward 2 and Ward 7 can vote for their area's City Council delegate. What's more, any candidate who garners more than 50 percent of the vote is the winner — so if students plan to vote, now is the time to do it!

Below is a list of candidates the Emerald Editorial Board encourages students to vote for.

Mayor

The mayoral race pits former state Rep. Kitty Piercy against current City Councilor Nancy Nathanson. From a functionality standpoint, Nathanson seems to be the clear-cut choice because she has 10-plus years of local legislative experience. Nathanson has solid plans on helping the downtown area, and the University graduate wants to create a city liaison to encourage current businesses to remain in Eugene and to entice others to come to town.

On the other hand, Nathanson voted to increase the powers of the Department of Public Safety during the summer, while students were away, because the Eugene Police Department and the University asked for it. She said she supports the sports arena being built near the new courthouse site, where the University and city could share a new parking structure. Such a location wouldn't alleviate the parking concerns many students on campus already have.

Lastly, Nathanson said she wouldn't support citywide housing standards: "I would not be in favor of writing new housing standards for Eugene because that would take months and months." Nathanson acknowledged there are "obvious abuses," but said current state law simply needs to be enforced.

On the other hand, Piercy said she hadn't looked into the DPS situation, but added that she was concerned non-officers were given such power. Piercy said she'd like to see the arena bring downtown and the University together, but also acknowledged a need for easy student-access. Lastly, Piercy said she supports housing standards.

For realizing that the University enrollment is larger than most small cities in the state, as Nathanson pointed out to the Board, she doesn't seem to think students' concerns are much of a priority. A vote for Piercy — and subsequently students' interests — will change that.

Ward 1

Ward 1 needs a breath of fresh air. In 2000, Eugene Mayor Jim Torrey told The Register-Guard that Bonny Bettman, who currently occupies Ward 1, would aid in making it "practically impossible for any meaningful discussion around issues that are important to the city of Eugene."

Perhaps Tom Slocum, who is running against Bettman, will provide a new voice to the ward. He's a University graduate who is dedicated to stimulating Eugene's sad economy. And perhaps he, as a former student, has an understanding of the absurdity of pushing through certain measures, which would greatly affect students, in the summer. See July's questionable passage of expanding DPS powers, which had Bettman's support.

Ward 2

Drawing on some seven years of Eugene City Council service (including acting as the council president in 2001), the Editorial Board endorses Councilor Betty Taylor for a third term in Ward 2. Taylor's priorities are in the right place: She lists economic development and environmental protection among her key issues. Her experience on the Council makes her the most qualified candidate for Ward 2.

Ward 7

The Editorial Board endorses incumbent City Councilor and researcher-writer Scott Meisner for a third term in office, too. Among the numerous changes Meisner has worked for on the council are a new federal courthouse, the new downtown library and the protection of Razor Park. The councilor and former lawyer's years of experience in city policy make him the right choice for Ward 7.

COMING SOON... THE SWAN EDITION DOLL SET!!



Steve Baggs Illustrator

HUMOROUS FANATICISM

Whenever I clumsily attempt humor in one of my columns, I am inevitably barraged by e-mails from readers who just didn't get the joke.

In last week's column I used sarcasm that I assumed was about as subtle as a brick to the face. I guess I was mistaken, because a number of my liberal readers were genuinely shocked that I would blame John Kerry for the death of our soldiers in Iraq.

"You are totally crazy, nuts and full of it," one of my adoring fans wrote. "You are on crack."

"Congratulations on the worst bit of logic I have ever seen in print," wrote another.

Perhaps these liberals, so accustomed to pun-dits saying outrageous things, have become blind to sarcasm. Or perhaps they are fanatics.

The first sign of fanaticism is the inability to appreciate art, in this case the art of humor. Art requires one to look beyond the surface to find deeper meanings. But the fanatic, so clouded by his or her absolute worldview, cannot see past the literal meaning of things and therefore is not amused. The Taliban is the perfect example.

We have many humorless fanatics in the White House: Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, John Ashcroft and Karl Rove to name a few. Is it just me or do these guys look like Batman villains? Can't they hire somebody to teach them how to avoid looking evil? On television, Dick Cheney makes Dick Nixon look like a Teletubby.

I don't think the president belongs with this group. Bush is a likable guy who is well-known for his sense of humor. That is why it has always perplexed me when liberals describe him as a Christian right-wing fanatic. How can they say that? He just doesn't fit the fanatical mold.

At least that is what I once believed. But recently I had an epiphany. Yes, George W. Bush is a fanatic, but he is a much more rare breed: He is the fanatic who cannot take anything seriously.

After I realized this, the last four years suddenly became clear. All of Bush's incomprehensible actions, which I used to blame on his stupidity or his past alleged cocaine abuse, were infused with new meaning.

Why did Bush on Sept. 11, after learning that terrorists were attacking the United States, continue to read to a room full of children? He couldn't take the terrorists seriously. And he really wanted to finish that book; after all, it had



David Jagernauth

Critical mass

been a while since he read a book all by himself.

Why did Bush do nothing when he received a memo entitled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in US"? He couldn't take the memo seriously.

And let's not forget when Bush went to the Radio and Television Correspondents' Dinner in March and joked about the lack of WMDs in Iraq. A photo of Bush looking under a rug in the White House was projected on the wall. "Nope. No WMDs under here," Bush said. Several U.S. soldiers died the next day.

The proof of Bush's "humorous fanaticism" even predates his presidency. During an interview with Talk magazine in 1999, Bush made fun of a woman he had recently put to death in Texas. "Please don't kill me," Bush said mockingly the desperation in her voice.

Gary Bower, the right-wing Christian fanatic who, ironically, looks like Satan, was flabbergasted at Bush's remarks. "I think it is nothing short of unbelievable that the governor of a major state running for president thought it was acceptable to mock a woman he decided to put to death," he said, according to the Houston Chronicle.

He added: "I do not believe he is serious about the sanctity of life."

Exactly! Bush cannot take anything seriously. He cannot take seriously the warnings from his own environmentalists about global warming. He cannot take seriously the warnings from his own economists about our unprecedented deficits. He can't take Colin Powell seriously. He can't take the opinion of the international community seriously.

To summarize: If Vice President Cheney is the Penguin, then President Bush is the Joker. And I think I see the Bat Signal in the distance...

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

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Emerald misses point

This letter is in response to a recent editorial ("Student Senate could be new reality TV show," ODE, April 14), which claimed that the United States Student Association's trip to Washington D.C. was a waste of money, and that the "chance of USSA students bringing meaningful, tangible benefits to the University (is) 1 percent." In this situation, the Editorial Board is simply wrong.

First, this column gives a false impression to readers by failing to fully explain the USSA's conference. This editorial makes it appear that ASUO President Maddy Melton and the others were treated to a five-star vacation. Absolutely not. In reality, this seminar included workshops on becoming allies to different communities, and concrete promises were received from members of Congress for funding of higher education. By giving readers an incomplete story, the Editorial Board showed their lack of support for alliances towards minority students, and are uninformed about the pledges of congressional representatives.

Furthermore, in this same editorial, the editors once more failed to properly analyze a delicate situation with the issue of ASUO Vice President Eddy Morales' assertion of racial discrimination during a Senate meeting. According to this editorial, because Morales' claim was not necessarily agreed on by all Senate members, in the future he "should just keep his mouth shut." Although I am not a racial minority, I can only hope that all people would choose to voice an issue of possible discrimination, especially if related to my actions, instead of "keeping their mouth shut" in order to avoid disturbing a member of the ODE Editorial Board.

Ailee Slater
 freshman
 English