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COMMENTARY

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EDITORIAL

Bush slights voters with closed-door rally in Portland

To many, President Bush already smells like an elitist, and Friday's closed-door rally in Beaverton didn't dispel that image.

Bush and Democratic-party candidate John Kerry both spoke in Portland on Friday, making it easy to draw comparisons between the two candidates and their campaigns. That is, if you could have gotten in to see Bush's.

Instead of opening his rally to all interested Oregonians, many of whom were curious to see a president who rarely visits this state, Bush decided to reward his campaign volunteers by granting them admission to his tickets-only event. A few hundred people were at his event, but most were volunteers and others who have supported Bush's re-election campaign.

Kerry, on the other hand, opened his event to all people, drawing tens of thousands to Waterfront Park in Portland. Kerry's campaign required tickets for seats closer to the candidate, but anybody who got on his Web site and gave a name, address and phone number or e-mail address could get up to four tickets for free.

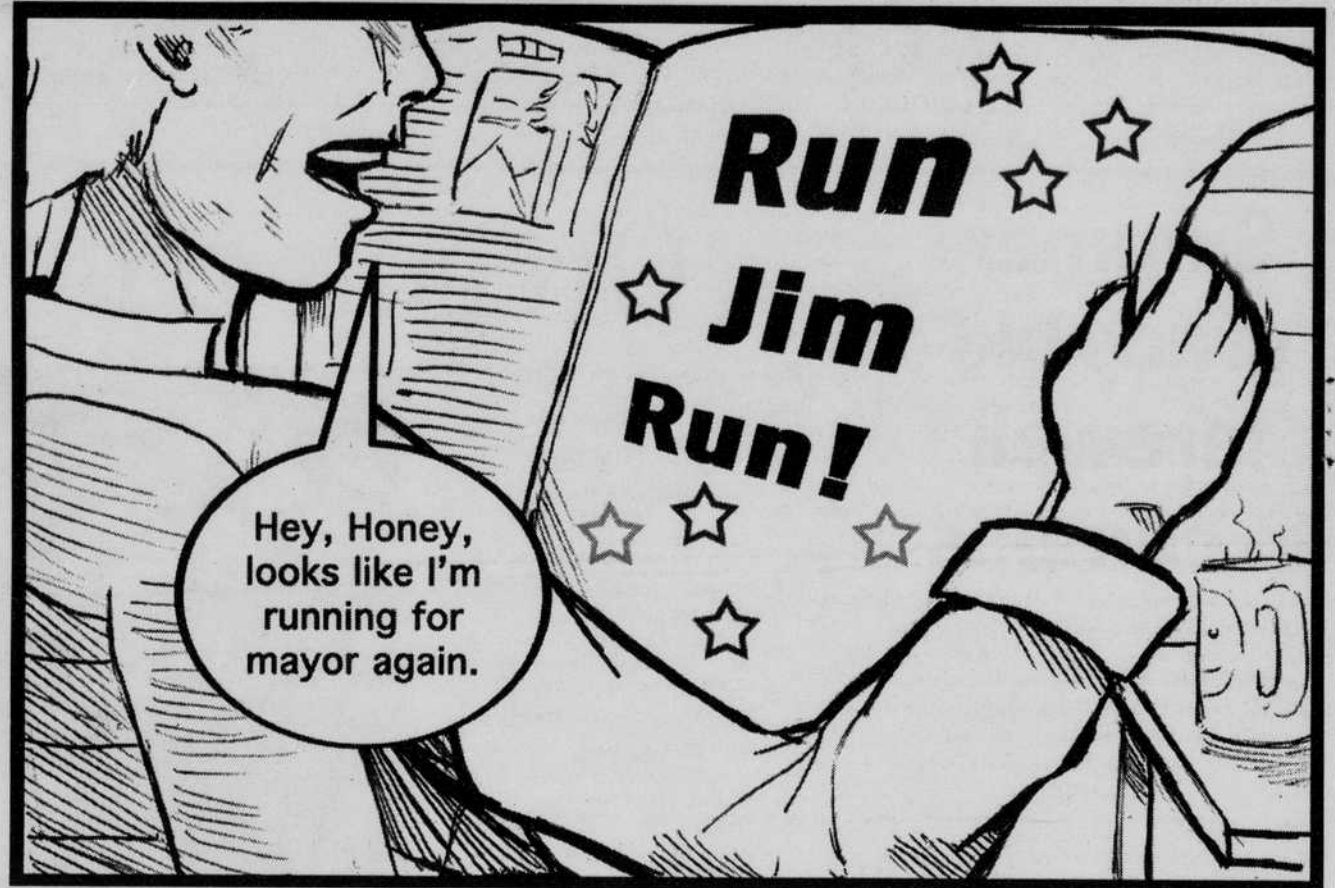
Bush played it safe. Portland has a history of large protests in Bush's honor, and by delivering his speech to GOP volunteers and invited small-business people he was safe from harm to himself and his image. By holding his rally in a relatively new high school in a relatively well-to-do suburban neighborhood that's not conducive to massive protests, Bush managed to avoid the tear gas, rubber bullets and pepper spray that often accompany his not-so-frequent visits to Portland.

But, his closed-door rally tells Oregonians — residents of a swing state that could prove critical this November — that he doesn't care enough about them to bless them with his presence or share his reflection on the past four years with them personally.

Maybe even worse, Bush allowed Kerry to score points with a massive rally that some said was the most well-attended political rally in Portland in at least a decade and at a small front-porch rally in a Springfield neighborhood.

Moreover, on Thursday Kerry held an open-to-anybody rally in Central Point in southern Oregon, a region not well-known for its good-natured support of the Democratic Party. Kerry braved the potential for protests, but Bush wouldn't. Actions speak louder than speeches, and Friday's actions make Kerry look like he was here for everybody.

Nothing is free, and taking the easy road might have left those standing outside Bush's rally feeling neglected. Not that there was more than a handful outside, anyway. We're guessing those politically minded Portlanders decided to attend Kerry's event, instead.



Aaron Sullivan Illustration

Where are the watchdogs?

In case any of you have any misconceptions about my political viewpoint, let me get this out in the open so you can all plaster me with whatever the hell B.S. ideological label you happen to come up with: I think George W. Bush has no right to be in charge of this country. This assessment has nothing to do with his political views or even his personality, both of which appeal to me about as much as a getting slapped in the face with opossum carcass. It's a simple matter of what is actually required to become president of this country: votes.

The Republican Party cheated in Florida in 2000. Republicans cheated boldly and with great vigor and when somebody tried to call them on it, they whined like a pack of spoiled children. Sorry, but it's true. It's the old Joe Stalin adage: It doesn't matter who gets the votes, it's who counts them. Florida was governed by Bush's brother and the secretary of state (who runs the election process) was the head of Bush's Florida election campaign. Thousands of voters found themselves disenfranchised, many of them put on lists that identified them as felons without the right to vote simply because their names were similar to someone who had committed a felony. That a disproportionate number of these disenfranchised voters were black is not so much a matter of racism as it was demographics: African Americans vote more often for Democrats than Republicans. But it sucks no matter what you call it.

It was a travesty of justice and one of the worst cases of voter fraud in American history, yet it got hardly any press and hardly any protest. I predict it's going to happen again this year, and once again the will of the American



RYAN NYBURG
 BUDGET RACK

people will be subjugated by the greedy and the corrupt.

I know this sounds like a roundabout way of getting to this subject, but what I find particularly interesting (and infuriating) is the role news media played — or didn't play, as the case may be — through this entire debacle. Major news sources across the country were hardly more than play-by-play color commentators, rather than the watchdogs they were supposed to be. What most people don't seem to grasp is that we do not suffer from a liberal media or a conservative media, just a lazy media more content to get news from each other than actually go out and find it.

Take the war in Iraq. Reporters go to report on that war while "embedded" into military units. The idea is to give reporters a closer view of military operations, but the flip side is that the reporters see only what the military wants them to see, and you end up with a lot of rah-rah cheerleading instead of clumsy things like facts and civilian body counts because the journalists don't want to lose the privilege of being force-fed the army's take on the whole operation.

Even worse is the Washington news corps, those select few in the journalism field who are allowed

to be mouthpieces for the White House.

So you end up not hearing about some of the news stories that might actually make people think that the government is not doing such a good job. A few, like the war in Iraq and the screwed-up economy, are hard to ignore, but some of the little things tend to get skipped over. Like when anyone attending a rally in New Mexico held by Dick Cheney had to sign a loyalty oath in order to see their vice president (Wyoming's Casper Star Tribune, July 30), or like when the Republican party in Arizona insisted on knowing the race of a reporter assigned to a separate Cheney rally (Arizona Daily Star, July 31). You know what Bush's next big thing is? Mental health screenings for all Americans (Intervention Magazine, August 8), under "The New Freedom Initiative". Guess who benefits from having all Americans screened for mental illnesses? You don't have to be on meds to figure it out. A similar program goes on in Texas, and has come under fire when it was discovered that influential state officials were taking kickbacks from drug companies.

I don't mean to diss on the Republicans so much, but they just happen to be in charge at the moment (not that you could tell from the amount of complaining you hear from the conservative press). Whoever is in charge tends to abuse their power to an extent, and I think what we have here is a particularly bad president who happens to be a conservative. I'd act the same way over a morally deficient liberal if I had the chance. But I can only work with what I've got.

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ONLINE POLL THIS WEEK'S POLL RESULTS

What role should presidential and vice presidential significant others play? (21 votes)

1. They're not elected, but they should act as goodwill emissaries - 48 percent
2. They should make or influence policy - 24 percent
3. They should be arm-pieces; they're there to decorate the White and Blair houses for the holidays - 19 percent
4. They should support their significant others' politics - 10 percent

NEXT WEEK'S QUESTION

What's the best thing to do with a law degree? Visit www.dailyemerald.com to vote.

• Corporate law

- Defend the accused
- Government work
- Patent or copyright law
- Pro bono work

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