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■ In my opinion

VOTED OUT WITH THE GARBAGE

During the Democratic National Convention, almost-president Albert Gore discussed life lessons learned from the 2000 election.

"The first lesson is this," he said: "Take it from me — every vote counts. In our democracy, every vote has power. ... Don't let anyone take it away or talk you into throwing it away. And let's make sure that this time, every vote is counted."

Funny, Al, but I learned the opposite lesson in 2000. Every vote doesn't count in America. Ask the tens of thousands of African Americans in Florida, whose votes still have absolutely no

power. Ask the millions in regions where gerrymandering has predetermined most races. Ask the majority of Americans who voted for you, Al, whose votes didn't make a lick of difference.

There is one place where every vote still has power: The U.S. Senate. When a joint session of the House and Senate met to formally award Florida's electoral votes to Bush, members of the Congressional Black Caucus raised an objection. According to an 1887 law, the objection had to be signed by at least one senator. Any senator.

But not even one member of the Senate would sign.



DAVID JAGERNAUTH
CRITICAL MASS

Representative after representative came forward to call the election what it was — a fraud — and not a single senator would sign.

"I don't care that it is not signed by a senator," Rep. Maxine Waters said during the joint hearing. "The chair would advise that

the rules do care," Gore answered, followed by laughter and applause. Nice job making sure every vote is counted. Do the rules care about election fraud, Al?

This sad episode epitomizes why real progressives hate the Democratic Party. For Democrats, the crime in Florida was the result: Gore lost the election. He was the victim. And Bush and his Republican cronies were the evildoers.

For progressives, the crime had nothing to do with the result. The crime was the illegal disenfranchisement of tens of thousands of innocent black citizens. Bush and

his cronies are guilty, sure, but Gore is just as guilty for turning his back on the black community. All white politicians in the all-white U.S. Senate — including Sens. John Kerry and John Edwards — are guilty for refusing to support the Congressional Black Caucus and their attempt to stop the election.

Likewise, I partially blame the democrats in Congress for the war in Iraq, the USA PATRIOT Act, No Child Left Behind, the tax cuts and John Ashcroft's confirmation.

If the Democrats aren't willing

JAGERNAUTH, page 3A

■ Guest commentary

Green Party: Kerry must win

During the upcoming presidential election you will have the opportunity to shake up our broken political system — not by ignoring its realities and casting a protest vote for a candidate who cannot win, but by helping to choose the ultimate victor.

Oregon's students live in a swing state and will have the opportunity to vote in an unusually close election. On your campus alone, the votes cast by students — or the votes students fail to cast — could tip the balance.

As members of the Green Party, we recognize that John Kerry and the Democratic Party have tremendous failings. Former consumer advocate Ralph Nader sheds light on them and plays a crucial role as a corporate watchdog.

But the best way to forward the causes he has championed is not to vote in support of his candidacy.

Despite John Kerry's serious failings, it is imperative that he win because his presidency would be far superior to four more years under the right-wing Bush administration. Bush must lose and be prevented from doing further harm to our environment, labor rights, civil rights, women's rights and gay rights. That will happen only if Kerry wins — meaning swing state progressives need to vote for Kerry.

Ideological idealism drives successful movements, but idealism that ignores practicality cannot forward ideals and can even be counterproductive in the struggle to realize them. Recognizing this, we've formed the www.GreensforImpact.com committee and ask progressive students in swing states to support Kerry.

We must vote in a manner that accounts for political realities. We live under a political system that is rigged against third parties. We absolutely must change that, but it is a reality of the current mechanisms that swing-state votes for a third-party candidate will not aid in defeating the Bush administration and could help yield four more



BRET FURTWANGLER | GRAPHICS EDITOR

years of tax cuts for the wealthy that starve state governments and force local tuition increases.

This election is not a theoretical or academic exercise — real people's lives are at stake. We cannot afford to treat our votes as acts of mere symbolic, individual expression.

David Segal is minority leader of the Providence, R.I., City Council. Austin King is an Alder in Madison, Wis.

INBOX: NADER

Nader hurting chances by sacrificing principles

It happened at a post office in Central Point. A canvasser stood on the sidewalk asking voters to sign petitions for George Bush. An alert TV reporter noticed something strange. The 50 signatures he'd gotten were on Ralph Nader petitions.

"How can you do that?" the reporter asked. "It's legal."

Maybe. But it's only one dismaying example of the way Ralph Nader has become the favorite new campaign tool of the Republicans and their wealthy supporters from the far right. Why doesn't Nader disavow these tactics? Sadly, it looks like he is behaving like those he's always blasted: sacrificing principle for political gain. But in this case he's hurting his own causes.

Truth in advertising: I'm a former Nader supporter, current Kerry supporter.

No, John Kerry isn't perfect. But he and George W. Bush have some big differences. Under George Bush we fought a useless war with 1,000 American casualties and \$200 billion. We lost millions of jobs, gave millionaires a \$30,000 tax cut and the rest of us about \$300.

John Kerry will create jobs, support choice, protect the environment and roll back those outrageous tax cuts for the rich.

With this kind of choice do we really want Ralph Nader running as a George Bush surrogate? Ralph Nader has used his energy for so many good causes. Now he's letting the Republicans use him. This election matters too much. Nader should come to his senses as so many of his supporters already have.

Ruth Duemler
Eugene

Nader's removal victimizes voters, hurts right to choose

You have just watched the Democratic Party and the Kerry campaign conspire to throw Ralph Nader off the ballot rather than compete against him on the issues. They have robbed you of your right to choose. They have stolen your civil right. Think of this when you vote. Your vote now becomes one of approval or disapproval of what you have experienced. You have been victimized. They don't trust you to make the right decision with Nader's name on the ballot. Why should you trust them? Think about this when you vote.

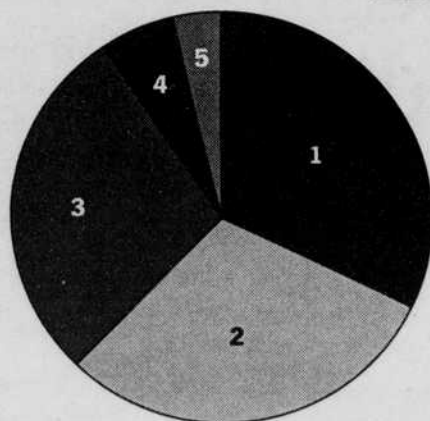
Stephen Coon
Ralph Nader for President 2004 staff member

Editor's note:

In an effort to diversify the Commentary Page and write more in-depth editorials, the Editorial Board has decided to print its columns Monday through Thursday each week. Today's piece is a special feature, sparked by the first presidential debate in Florida. The editorial will usually be printed down the right-hand side of Page 2 to avoid confusion with other commentary content. However, commentary will occasionally run on Pages 2 and 3, and Global Update and weather will run on Page 4.

ONLINE POLL

THIS WEEK'S POLL RESULTS



What do you think of Ralph Nader's exclusion from the November ballot?

1. 32.1 percent — It's good; it will increase votes for democratic nominee John Kerry.

2. 30.2 percent — It's good; Nader's campaign was removed for legitimate reasons.

3. 28.3 percent — It's bad; it gives Oregon voters fewer choices in the election.

4. 5.7 percent — It's bad; more votes for Kerry worsens Bush's chances.

5. 3.7 percent — Who is Ralph Nader?

Results out of 53 votes

OREGON DAILY EMERALD LETTERS POLICY

Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged, and should be sent to letters@dailymerald.com or submitted at the Oregon Daily Emerald office, EMU Suite 300. Electronic submissions are preferred. Letters are limited to 250 words, and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submissions should include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style. Guest submissions are published at the discretion of the Emerald.