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■ In my opinion

EJECT ELECTORAL COLLEGE



TRAVIS WILLESE
RIVALLESS WIT

During the past month or two, I've followed presidential election projections on MSN Slate Magazine's Electoral Scorecard (slate.msn.com) and Electoral Vote Predictor 2004 (www.electoral-vote.com).

Both sites venture their current best guesses for the winner using the same simple process: Collect the most recent poll for each of the 50 states (and Washington D.C., which is so thoroughly Democratic that it needs no polls to determine which candidate will see its votes). Then, assign each state's electoral votes to whichever candidate the poll shows is ahead in that state. (Slate sometimes appeals to judgment calls in places factoring in several recent polls, but the idea is the same.) Finally, total the electoral votes that each candidate gets. Whichever candidate gets the most votes is predicted — for that day — as the winner.

On Oct. 15, President Bush led Senator John Kerry 284-228 electoral votes (55 percent of the assigned electoral votes), according to Vote Predictor. But by Tuesday, Kerry topped Bush 284-247 (53 percent). How could such a commonsense system show an eight-point swing over only four days when the national polls have shown the candidates in a steady statistical tie? Because of that age-old political monstrosity: the Electoral College.

The key factor in Vote Predictor's dramatic change of heart is a recent

poll: An Oct. 15-17 Survey USA poll now puts Kerry ahead 50-49 in Florida, edging the Sunshine State's 27 electoral votes from the red into the blue column. That's enough for a 54-vote swing in Kerry's favor. (I use the term favor very loosely, as the one-point gap is swallowed by the poll's 4 percent margin of error, leaving the race a statistical dead heat.)

We saw in 2000, of course, that this numerical caprice isn't restricted to projections. The will of a fickle electorate, coupled with the college's winner-take-all system (well, in every state except Maine and Nebraska, and maybe Colorado this fall), means that a handful of voters — say, 537 of them — can render the political intentions of millions silent.

Worse, because the gap between vote totals within states is usually much narrower than the difference in votes that each candidate receives nationally, individual states, and thus the Electoral College system, are more sen-

sitive to problems like voter fraud, disenfranchisement, and ambiguous ballots. (Florida, of course, suffered all three of these problems. Any of them could have accounted for Bush's razor-thin margin of victory, meaning the state — and thus the presidency — could have plausibly been former Vice President Al Gore's.)

The solution to this is straightforward and simple: Dump the Electoral College, and institute a presidential election by popular vote. The Electoral College had some merit when it was created by the Constitution's framers. It was a compromise between the (nascent) national government and state governments; it was a way to ensure that candidates from everywhere in the nation were considered, and some even argued that a popular election was technically unfeasible.

These considerations and others are now either moot or much less important than they were in the 1780s. At any rate, they're certainly less compelling than the best reason for ejecting the college: It's possible (as happened in 2000) that the winner of the electoral vote (the inbound president) isn't the winner of the popular vote. And a democracy that doesn't reflect the electoral will of the majority runs the risk of being an illegitimate one.

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INBOX

Bush needs to take action to rescue Sudan refugees

Open letter to President George W. Bush,

I am deeply concerned about the two million refugees from Sudan who were driven from their homes by their own government to die in the deserts of Chad. Over 60,000 have been killed and more die each day. Several humanitarian organizations are doing all they can to help but they are overwhelmed.

I plead with you as president of the most powerful nation of earth to take immediate action to rescue these people. Show the world our country's humane face.

First, in consultation with the United Nations, NATO and neighboring Middle East and African countries, launch a massive airlift (like your father did for the Kurds in Iraq) to supply the 22 refugee camps with temporary shelter, food, water, clothing and medical supplies.

Second, with the U.N., tell the Sudanese government that you will immediately start returning all refugees to their homes. Tell them you will help them rebuild their lives (homes, herds, schools, medical care) and will guarantee their future security for as long as it takes.

It is a moral imperative that this be done without delay.

Robert C. Sabin
Eugene

Kerry/Edwards campaign shows poor judgement

John Kerry and John Edwards' vote against the \$87 billion would not only have adversely affected our troops, but also Iraqi reconstruction. This vote seriously undermines 50 years of successful U.S. foreign policy. Kerry has made a huge issue of the president's post-war handling of Iraq, and he talks about the importance of winning the peace, but Kerry lacks the judgment to get this done.

The \$87 billion wasn't only for our troops, but also for the reconstruction of Iraq. We won the peace in Japan and Germany following WWII because we dumped money into these countries and showed our good will towards them by rebuilding them. This is what the U.S. does. We don't "spread misery around the world" as Michael Moore would have us believe. We don't seize territory after war, as other nations. We use our own money to rebuild them without any expectation of return. We are the most noble nation on earth and Kerry voted against this policy (he actually showed up for this vote ... that shows you how much he must have cared about this issue).

This greatly illustrates a serious lack of good judgment on behalf of the would-be president from Massachusetts.

Abraham Taylor
Washington, D.C.

Write-in campaign to teach Distric Attorney a lesson

Write-in Charles O. Porter for Lane County District Attorney and send a message to F. Douglass Harclerod. Porter is not a candidate for District Attorney and not likely to serve if elected. But there are important reasons to write that name on the ballot: To honor a great man and to suggest a lesson to another man.

This is not merely a protest vote. This is a practical and effective action, a necessary response to events which occurred after the May primary election. Harclerod's manipulation of the political process with a surprise sabbatical and expedient executive appointment of a chosen successor to the elected office he just semi-abdicated, which must be considered in the context of the many misjudgments of his tenure.

This will not be a wasted vote. Charles O. Porter deserves recognition. Even after a long life of various and monumental accomplishments, to recently still have the courage and facts for a serious attempt to impeach the United States Supreme Court, clearly shows that he merits in his honor a rabble-raising display of voter revolt.

The election starts now with the mail-in ballots, so make a few phone calls, compose e-mails, hand out flyers, stand on a corner with a sign, take out an ad, have a party, or whatever active magic that you do to spread the word.

Bernard Nickerson
Eugene

■ Editorial

John Kerry for president, regardless

U.S. President — John Kerry (D)

There are a lot of negative things to say about President Bush, and a lot of negative things to say about Sen. Kerry, but we prefer to focus on the positive. Kerry's promise of a more cautious, deliberate foreign policy is enticing and America will be safer for it. We agree with Kerry's health care and education proposals, especially his Service for College initiative. He wasn't our first, second, third or even 10th choice, but we are willing to give him four years to prove he can keep his promises. The Emerald reluctantly endorses John Kerry for president.

U.S. Senate — Ron Wyden (D)

It is hard not to vote for Wyden when the man running against him is Al King, a rude, right-wing windbag who wants to destroy the Education Department. Wyden has experience in the Senate and a vision for bringing nanotechnology and green-energy industries to Oregon, which will be good for the University and the state.

Oregon Secretary of State — no endorsement

Bill Bradbury showed his true partisan colors during his mishandling of the Nader ballot controversy. The last thing we need is a partisan politician in control of the state's electoral system. Unfortunately, we are more afraid of challenger Betsy Close's partisanship, so she is a poor alternative. Libertarian candidate Richard Morley says all the right things in his platform but lacks experience. Therefore, the Emerald will not offer an endorsement for this race.

U.S. Representative, 4th District — Peter DeFazio (D)

DeFazio is a senior representative that offers strong leadership, an understanding of issues and the ability to get things done. Jim Feldkamp has no experience and lacks a firm grasp on the issues, simply parroting the current administration's policies. This is not a tough choice.

Oregon State Treasurer — Jeff Caton (R)

Professional money manager Jeff Caton recognizes the PERS crisis and the danger of keeping taxpayer money in poor investments and holds the government to the same standards it expects of private sector businesses. He has little government experience so we'll keep an eye on him if he wins. It would be nice to have someone in office who has a realistic view of the financial quagmire Oregon has been in for the last three years.

Oregon Attorney General — Hardy Myers (D)

Hardy Myers is a seasoned attorney general, respected even by his critics and endorsed by liberals and conservatives alike, even Oregon's county district attorneys. The eight-year incumbent does not play partisan politics, a claim we do not feel comfortable making about his challenger Paul Connolly, a lawyer for the Oregon GOP.

Oregon Senate, District 4 — Floyd Prozanski (D)

Incumbent Floyd Prozanski has experience and broad support. Also, education is his top priority, which gives him points in our book. We look forward to him going on to bigger and better things when he is termed out of the state senate.

Oregon House, District 8 — Paul Holvey (D)

State Representative Paul Holvey doesn't say much (especially when it comes to education) and is endorsed by all the people you'd expect him to be endorsed by. Even so, his competition fails to impress. We'll go with Holvey's experience for now and wait for him to be termed out.

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.