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BRET FURTWANGLER | GRAPHIC DESIGNER

■ In my opinion

Republicans have taken control of the *White House*

Herein lies the peril of writing columns about (literally) current events. I wrote a few introductory paragraphs for this space Tuesday night about the difficulty of talking about an almost-resolved election. No candidate had secured victory, and a win seemed eventual for President Bush, but not immediate enough that I'd have to write these replacement paragraphs Wednesday morning.

I wrote an analysis of why we could probably safely assume a Bush victory sometime after, say, Thursday, even given the quarter million uncounted and provisional ballots. But that's no longer interesting, let alone prescient.

I wrote, too, that I couldn't yet cheer an incoming Kerry administration or lament another four years of dubious foreign and economic policies. Of course, now I can.

On the upside, given the decisiveness of the election, we needn't dread an upcoming, say, 36 days of partisan cacophonies that would extend an already fatiguing electoral season.

Fortunately, I dedicated most of what turned out to be a first draft to a few thoughts about other parts of the election:

Firstly, repeating a surprise string of victories in 2004, Republicans made even deeper inroads than they did four years ago. While the party's platform meshes poorly with Eugene's local political scene, its message continues to resonate with many Americans. Besides a presidential win, the GOP won a net four House seats as of this writing, upping its hold to 231 of the chamber's 435.

It also picked up a net of four Senate seats as of this writing, picking up former Democratic seats in Florida,



TRAVIS WILLSE
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Georgia, Louisiana, South Dakota and both Carolinas, while losing seats only in Colorado and Illinois. The biggest prize of the evening after the presidency was former Representative John Thune's narrow victory over Senate minority chief Tom Daschle in South Dakota.

What explains this behavior for a populace that usually prefers a split in authority between parties? At least part of it can be chalked up to the Democratic message. Democrats plainly settled on a message of "not Bush," but have failed to express most of their other planks with such clarity. While the Dems' message is less muddled than it was a year ago (ODE: "Democrats' demise," Nov. 2, 2003), the ideological recovery is far from over, as this year's electoral figures suggest.

Secondly, Florida is lucky that the vote gap was much larger than polls predicted. (Side note: To that end, CNN Crossfire's firebrand Tucker Carlson summarized faults in the polling system on the network's election night blog: "I think the exit polls are insanely inaccurate. They are a joke. They are historically sucky. (Some of them) foretold a trend that did not exist. A series of polls should show a pattern.")

As much as the state might

deserve a verbal lashing from the media, Bush's 375,000-vote lead in the state — about 700 times his lead there in 2000 — should be more than enough to disinterest lawyers and media alike in pursuing the state's electoral troubles. (Among others: Several officials have cast allegations of votes lost or miscounted by electronic voting machines during recent elections; a Democratic campaign manual in Florida ostensibly called for volunteers to illegally handle votes; a Democratic state legislator said she wasn't given a complete absentee ballot when she asked for one; Orange County's touch-screen voting machine system temporarily crashed; most of 60,000 missing absentee ballots trickled late to voters in Broward County just last week, though officials still had to send 15,000 replacements.)

Finally, Bush won with a clear plurality of the popular and electoral votes, and so far without the intervention of the courts. Moreover, he became the first president in 16 years to receive more than 50 percent of the vote. Critics who have pounded at Bush's legitimacy because he lacked the electoral endorsement of a majority of the country's voters, or because the Supreme Court ruled for him in Bush v. Gore, will have neither argument at their disposal during his second term. But, like the Bush administration shifting its justifications for intervention in Iraq, I suspect those critics will scrap together new (albeit probably unconvincing) philosophical ammunition for Bush's legitimacy.

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■ Editorial

Escapists explore new option: Lane Country

Now that Kerry has conceded the election, and Bush is officially our president for four more years, many liberals in Eugene are contemplating their next move. Republicans control every branch of the federal government, increasing their margins in the Senate and House; they can now easily defeat potential Democratic filibustering on court appointments and, most significantly, the Supreme Court.

The changes America will see during this upcoming "Republican Era" promise to be even more dramatic than during Bush's first four years. The disagreements that are polarizing our country are taking place at a fundamental level, not at the level of bureaucratic nuance. Americans are split down the middle on their world views, priorities and political preferences. And, somehow, the traditionalists, the religionists and the neoconservatives have staged a complete takeover. What is left for progressives to do?

One option we've heard discussed on campus is political escapism. Escapists are those who are so troubled by the results of an election that they flee the influence of their government's new direction. Left-wing escapists have traditionally moved to Canada while escapists on the right tend to form militias and attempt mini-secessions.

If you believe the Democrat's scare tactics about the return of a draft, Canada might seem like a good option. Canada has cheap drugs, virtually no enemies and superior breeds of comedians. But there are lots of good things about America. For instance, we have amber waves of grain. It seems a shame to move to Canada and throw all that away just because of our disagreements.

One of the goals of the American experiment was to find a way for a diverse group of people to live in peace in a large geographic area. But with the population becoming more and more diverse, and the geographic area of this country now much bigger than it was when our forefathers first conceived of our republic, perhaps we should rethink some of the philosophies that underlie our government.

In that vein, the Emerald Board believes it is time for liberals to take a page from the right-wing escapist playbook and develop our own progressive militias who will fight for a sovereign nation: Lane Country. If Lane was a country, we could really get something done. We could decriminalize gay marriage, marijuana and choice. Let the Texas militias create their lawless, taxless distopia where they arm themselves to the hilt in order to protect their property. Lane Country will have a progressive tax structure, universal health care, livable wages and a clean environment.

Yet another possible, and given the current circumstances, entirely logical escapist alternative is the creation of a progressive island nation dubbed "Academia." We believe a South Seas or Caribbean isle near the equator would make an ideal geographic locale for the creation and fostering of a more perfect union based upon progressive ideals. Upon gaining citizenship, Academicians will be issued a hybrid car.

You are probably thinking that secession sounds a bit extreme. After four more years of Bush, we think you will be singing a different tune.

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