

# GROUND GAME

THE ROAD TO NOVEMBER 6, 2012  
BY NANCY WEBBER

## Voter Suppression

Millions could be surprised on Election Day

The question came just as I was loading the last bag into a car packed with everything I would need between now and Nov. 6, Election Day.

"Which grater do I use to make coleslaw?" my husband, Bill, asked.

I knew that he really didn't want me to get in the car. My grown children and even the dog looked forlorn. Leaving Oregon in the fall to go help register voters in Florida may be a fool's errand, but frankly, I'm wondering why we all aren't heading east to do the same.

Through Idaho and Utah, I heard stories that will be mentioned in future columns, but the picture of what voter suppression means became clear in Carbondale, Colo., where I stopped to visit my friend Barbara Dills.

Barbara moved from Oregon to Colorado last year and has taken many opportunities to become involved in the civic life of her new community. Recently she went to the local Organizing for America office — Obama's field office — for her first volunteer stint to help register voters. What she learned in what turned out to be an hour-long training would be enough to scare most people away from participating, much less hitting the streets alone with a clipboard loaded with legal paper-sized voter registration forms.

Republican Colorado Secretary of State Scott Gessler has implemented strict new rules for community-based voter registration drives, typically organized by the Democratic and Republican parties and the League of Women Voters, among others. In Colorado, if an organization loses a form issued to them, that organization can be fined \$2,500 for each missing form.

As a former Oregon voter, familiar with the vote-by-mail system and used to seeing piles of blank voter registration forms stacked in post offices and other public places for easy access, Barbara was surprised that the form and the process are so complicated in Colorado. She learned in her training that it isn't enough to ask someone if they are registered to vote here. The two questions the Obama field organizer instructed her trainees to ask are: 1) is the address on your voter registration up-to-date?; and 2) did you vote in the 2010 mid-term election?

On her first shift, Barbara learned why these two questions are so critical. She asked a young woman if she had updated the address on her registration. The woman answered that she had lived in the same house since 2006 and started to walk away, but Barbara followed her and asked the second question.

"I don't think I did vote in 2010," she replied. "I really can't remember."

Barbara explained the hitch. If she didn't vote in 2010, even if she previously requested to *permanently* receive her ballots by mail, she won't receive a ballot in the mail for the Nov. 6 election this year. Secretary of State Gessler's new rules — purportedly designed to prevent voter fraud — include kicking all the by-mail voters who didn't vote in 2010 off of the active voter lists. They can still vote in person at a polling station on election day, but the majority of them won't know that until it's too late.

By the end of her first shift, Barbara was shocked at how many people she had talked to that had no idea what Gessler's new rules might mean to them and their ability to vote.

"Any sane person would assume that if they had checked that box for mail-in ballots, there would be no issue," says Barbara. "What makes it more confusing is that these folks do receive mail-in ballots for local elections, like the one we had recently here in Carbondale. The two lists are completely separate."

**None of the new requirements** address voter fraud, which is illegal, but only occurs when someone impersonates a registered voter and actually attempts to vote. Most volunteers I know who've done voter registration have watched pranksters register as Jack Daniels or Mickey Mouse and then walk away laughing. Those are the forms that normally get thrown away, the forms that could now cost an Obama field office \$2,500 each.

Of course, Jack Daniels and Mickey Mouse never show up at the polls, but the secretary of state isn't so sure. He sent a letter to nearly 4,000 Coloradans asking them to provide proof of citizenship or voluntarily remove their names from the voter rolls. According to his office, 86 percent of the letters went to registered Democrats or Independents.

And while his focus has been on finding the illegally registered voters, Gessler has until recently left the registration of new voters to volunteers. More than 3.5 million Coloradans are registered to vote. As of Sept. 1, Gessler's office lists 2.3 million as active voters and 1.1 million as inactive.

There are 59 days left for volunteers like Barbara to find the 1.1 million who don't know their vote may not count.

*Nancy Webber of Eugene is a longtime Oregon political activist and author of Ground Game to be published this fall, a book that chronicles her life at high levels of the 2008 Obama campaign.*



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



### TOO LATE FOR TALK

The lowest Arctic sea ice volume ever recorded! Yet another confirmation of rapid human-caused global warming. But climatologists are not cheering; they're not celebrating the vindication of their theories. The results they predicted are not happening in a petri dish or a computer model — they're happening in irreversible real time in the real world, the only world. And they're happening faster than predicted.

Visualize this: almost all of Oregon, including the Cascades, experiencing above-freezing average winter temperatures. That is the mid-range prediction for the year 2100 cited in the *Atlas of Oregon*, published over 10 years ago.

*The Register-Guard* says it's "time for Obama, Romney to discuss climate change." Please, it's way too late for that. Obama has been fast-tracking tar sands pipelines and Arctic oil drilling.

There may still be time for local communities to slow down the pace of the climate crisis. Coos Bay wants to speed it up by helping to export coal to Asia. Here in Eugene, we can do the right thing by urging our city councilors to pass City Resolution 5065 banning passage of coal trains through Eugene. Phone, email, attend City Council meetings. Neither Obama nor Romney will take the climate crisis seriously unless we take action locally.

*Jere C. Rosemeyer  
Eugene*

### BUTT-WIPE INDUSTRY

Lately, I've been seeing more trucks with bumper stickers proudly reading "If You Don't Like Logging Then Wipe Your Ass With Plastic."

Thank you, proud loggers, for now it all makes sense to me. Now I can sleep at night knowing that it truly *is* necessary to clearcut forests, degrade the entire food chain, contaminate and compromise the watershed, and render thousands of species of plants, animals and insects endangered — so that our fat asses can be supplied with butt-wipe!

The first man-made plastic was invented

and presented in London in the mid-1800s. The first documented use of toilet paper was by the people of medieval China. Americans did not really embrace TP until the mid-1800s, and in the early 20th century it was becoming more common for average households to use TP.

So, I guess it's time now to harvest the soft lamb's ear leaves in my backyard. Natives used mosses, leaves, wool, ferns, hemp, seaweed, shells, etc. I would go up the hill in my neighborhood and collect such things; however, that hill has been logged and more than likely has been contaminated with 2,4-D herbicide by the proud logging industry.

*K.J. Hawn  
Cottage Grove*

### PASSION FOR THE ANIMALS

Greenhill Humane Society has been coming under fire quite harshly lately. I am not writing here to cast judgment upon anyone here, quite the opposite; I wish to praise and thank all in our community who take on the responsibility of caring for our domesticated wild friends who cannot speak up for themselves.

I totally respect the passion people share when writing editorials. Thank you for standing up for what you believe in and for putting yourself out there! For full disclosure, my wife is a local veterinarian. Thus over the past 15 years I have had the pleasure of meeting many caring folks from veterinary hospitals and local nonprofits. As with any issue in Eugene, there are as many ideas/solutions for animal welfare problems as there are people involved. I consider myself blessed to know many of these deeply caring and hard working folks.

I am asking that we all take a breath and give thanks to all who are working on behalf of our amazing, furry four-legged friends. Let us set aside our differences and be grateful for everyone's contributions. It saddens me to see so much time and energy being spent on bickering when we could be using that passion in a positive direction.

I will leave to others who work in the veterinarian profession to address details of appropriate animal care. All I will say is that