

# OPINION

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## Vote to Affect Change

### Fulfilling the vision of equality

BY U.S. REP. ALBERT WYNN

It is time for a new direction in the country. The war in Iraq is a mess, the number of Americans without health insurance continues to rise and our public schools continue to suffer from underfunding. The only way to change the direction of our country is to get involved in the Nov. 7 election process and vote.

In 1776, when this country announced its independence from Britain, voting rights were based on property ownership. This typically meant that those voting were Caucasian, Protestant males.

"The 14th and 15th Amendments recognized African Americans as citizens and gave us the right to vote. However, some state officials continued to prevent African Americans from voting. As a result, it took passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act to increase the African American community's access to voting booths.

Recently, we witnessed a historic milestone with Congress' passage of the reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, designed to protect the right to vote against modern voter suppression tactics, such as providing an inadequate number of voting machines in minority neighborhoods. The Voting Rights Act represents the hard work and hopes of many great Americans who shared a vision about the

kind of America that we ought to be: an America that works for everyone.

But, it is not enough to just pass the Voting Rights Act. We must fulfill the vision of equality by fighting against discriminatory voter ID laws that work to disenfranchise African Americans, Hispanics, young people, seniors and the disabled.



To address the problems of faulty electronic voting machines, we need to insure that election officials are properly trained. The state and county board of elections must be certain that election officials have adequate time to familiarize themselves with new technologies and procedures.

While it is fair that we hold election administrators accountable, we must also insure that they have the support, training and compensation they require to perform their duties. Therefore, mandatory refresher training programs must be taught during off-election years to boost operational efficiency.

Lastly, remember some people want to use the prospect of Election Day problems or voter fraud to discourage African Americans from voting. Do not let that happen. You can do the following things: vote; help eligible family members get their ballots cast; and remind your neighbors and friends to vote.

Congressman Wynn represents the state of Maryland. He is a member of the Congressional Black Caucus.

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## Democracy in Action!

### Our Voter Guide:

The Portland Observer makes the following endorsements for the Nov. 7 General Election:



**Governor:**  
Gov. Ted Kulongoski,  
Democrat



**Circuit Court Judge:**  
Ulanda L. Watkins



**Multnomah County Commissioner:**  
Lew Frederick

- Measure 40: No**  
Takes away your vote for all Supreme Court judges.
- Measure 41: No**  
Tax deduction would reduce revenue for state services.
- Measure 42: Yes**  
Credit scores in insurance rates discriminate against minorities, poor.
- Measure 43: No**  
Another attempt to chip away at Roe v. Wade.
- Measure 44: Yes**  
Opens Oregon Prescription Drug Plan to all.
- Measure 45: No**  
Throws out limited African-American incumbents with term limits.
- Measure 48: No**  
Imposes arbitrary state spending limit that hurts schools, seniors and low-income people.
- Multnomah County Library Levy: Yes**  
Retain our vital library services.
- Portland Public Schools Levy: Yes**  
Funding is needed to improve, maintain local schools.

## Put Obama and Kerry at Top of Ticket

### Coalition for a winning strategy

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

U.S. Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., has finally admitted that he is thinking of running for president in 2008. The first term senator says he'll make his decision after the November elections.

Obama's name and the word 'president' have been linked every since he wowed the nation at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. In fact, it seemed Obama was the only one saying he wouldn't run for president. Now that his tune has changed, the criticisms have begun: His challengers have said Obama doesn't have enough experience working on national and foreign policies. To some degree this is true. But, over the years, many presidents have lacked certain skills. To compensate, they chose a running mate to fill in the gaps.

If Obama chooses to run, Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., the 2004 Democratic presidential nominee, would make up for any holes in Obama's experience.

Obama, once a community organizer and civil rights attorney, spent many years fighting for the needs

of the poor. In his current role as a U.S. Senator, he focuses on bringing jobs and economic growth to Illinois. Obama understands the needs of the average American and has worked tirelessly to make sure they have access to the opportunities they need to succeed.



Kerry on the other hand is considered one

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of the country's most respected voices on national security and international affairs. Combined, Obama and Kerry represent a political ticket that fights for the rights and needs of all Americans while, at the same time, realizing America must work closely with other nations to advance a global agenda.

Kerry would have won the 2004 election, if it hadn't been stolen from him. Ohio, the state that gave President Bush the electoral votes he needed to win a second term, reported many voting irregularities. Election officials in that state reportedly failed to process registra-

tion cards Democratic voter drives generated and mostly Democratic precincts didn't receive an adequate number of voting machines.

Though Kerry is considered a potential Democratic candidate in the 2008 race, his perceived lack of personality has always been seen as a weakness. Obama, considered one of the country's greatest orators, has both the vision and the charisma to make a strong run for the White House.

Sen. Hilary Clinton's name has also been mentioned - numerous times - as a possible candidate. But her experiences as the first lady during the Bill Clinton years make her more of a liability to the Democratic Party than an asset.

Campaigning for the 2008 presidential election hasn't even gotten started but, already, the race is shaping up to be an interesting one. If the Democrats want to make a serious push for the office, they must be strategic about the alliances they form within the party. If they play smart, America could finally begin to move away from the elitist conservative mentality that has led it astray for the last six years.

Judge Greg Mathis is national vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

## Vouchers Weaken Public Education

### Lets government give up

BY REV. ERIC BROWN

As a minister, I fully support the right of religious private schools to exist, but as a Christian my first commitment is to providing a quality education for all children. Vouchers drain vital resources away from our public schools, and steal money from the children who need it the most.

It's no secret that our public schools face great challenges, but I'm appalled by lawmakers who seem to think that the best solution is to give up on them.

For years in this country, public education has been the great leveler. No matter where you come from or how poor you are, our communities have taken on the responsibility to give every child a quality education. In the public school classroom, all students are equal, and they have the ability to accomplish whatever their God-given gifts will allow them.

Education lifts us all together. Education is good for the economy; it drives down crime; it creates good citizens. In my opinion, we provide an education to every single child because it is the moral thing to do.

In his time walking the earth, Christ showed love for all, but he showed special concern for the poor, the vulnerable, the downtrodden, and children. If we are to follow in his footsteps, we must follow his call to behave in the same way.

All of us are required to stand up for those who

cannot stand up for themselves and to make sure that the least of our brothers and sisters are cared for in a responsible, Christian way.

We owe it to every child to offer a quality education. The only way to give one to each and every child is to build strong public schools. Vouchers don't work, and it's time that Congress faced up to that fact. The voucher program takes money from all children to give it to some children. That's exactly what the public schools are supposed to avoid.

When Ohio offered vouchers in Cleveland, we saw that the children who got them were the children who were going to go to private schools anyway. The rest of the students stayed in the same school, but now it had fewer resources than ever.

The voucher program did nothing to help the students who needed help the most:

It punished them. It is immoral to punish children because of the poor economic status of their parents.

Our tax dollars should stay in public schools. They don't belong in private schools; they should work to help every single student. For the state to embrace vouchers is for the state to give up on our commitment to educating every child. Embracing vouchers enables the state to continue being unconstitutional, and therefore illegal, in its funding of public schools.

Rev. Eric Brown is pastor at Woodland Christian Church in Columbus, Ohio.

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**ODOT IS KEEPING OREGON ON THE MOVE**

Major construction is under way on Interstate 5.

The Oregon Department of Transportation is investing in Oregon's economy and infrastructure with nearly \$3 billion in highway construction projects. Construction over the next five years will be the heaviest Oregon has seen since the interstate system was built 50 years ago.

Oregon remains open for business while ODOT modernizes one of the state's most critical transportation lifelines. ODOT is keeping motorists on the move by scheduling work during nighttime and off-peak hours and planning ahead to minimize delays for events such as university football games in Eugene and Corvallis.

Still, some delays are unavoidable. For up-to-date information about construction and traffic on I-5 and around the state, visit TripCheck.com or call 5-1-1.

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