

OPINION

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Letter to the Editor

Selfish Fat Cats

Do you understand that our government just allocated \$700 billion dollars of our tax money to "bail out" the selfish, greedy fat cats on Wall Street?

The middle-class and the working poor saved companies that operate in the billions of dollars each year. Oh, my mistake, we "rescued" them.

Now who is going to "rescue" us? The federal government or perhaps Lehman Brothers or AIG (American International Group, Inc.) after they recuperate from their losses; or maybe some kind-hearted CEO who just flew away on his golden parachute with multimillions of dollars? You think?

Some lawmakers said that if the American people did not agree to bail them out of the mess they were in, we, the taxpayers would suffer even more for it. Well maybe so. But I can't believe that AIG just thanked the federal government and hard working Americans by taking an extravagant week long vacation at the plush St. Regis Resort by splurging and spending \$440,000.

When was the last time you and your family were able to take a luxury vacation? Oh I guess the executives needed a relaxing break from work and worry about whether they'd get the bail out money to keep their company from going bankrupt.

Do you think I could go to Lehman Brothers or AIG and get a job and benefits to keep me afloat? Do you think they'd be willing to hire an unemployed middle-aged mother who doesn't know how she's going to pay her mortgage and bills this winter? Where's my resume? I think I'll send it to them.

I totally agree with House Oversight Committee Chairman Henry Waxman, D-Calif. that average Americans are suffering economically; losing their jobs, their homes and their health insurance.

Is anyone concerned about what happens to us?

The small retirement fund that I had is slowly slipping away as the stock market continues to fall. How about yours? Is it safe? Perhaps under your mattress?

Can you tell that I'm just tired of getting trampled on? I'm angry, frustrated and appalled at this situation. It's time to wake up, shake up and speak out.

R. Lawrence
Northeast Portland



We've Seen These Attacks Before

Politics of intimidation

By JULIAN BOND
The Voting Rights Act of 1965 dramatically changed American politics. Until then, racial minorities were routinely



excluded from the political process by fraud, terror and intimidation. This was particularly true in the American South. This was almost exclusively activity by the Democratic Party, then the dominant party in the region. As large numbers of newly enfranchised black voters flocked to the Democrats so did large numbers of white voters join or switch to the Republicans, and the Republicans discovered the utility of finding ways to discourage and prevent blacks from registering and voting.

Republicans have practiced an assortment of subtle and overt methods to suppress and smother voter registration and turnout. The targets are low-income families, minorities, senior citizens and citizens for whom English is a second language.

Their tactics are armed guards and real and make-believe policemen at the polls; telling voters they could cast their votes on alternative days, even after the actual election was over; demanding forms of identification not required by law; telling voters outstanding warrants or utility bills would prevent them from voting; saying immigration officials would haunt the polls, checking on voters' immigration status; constructing phony voter purge lists which included names of long-time legitimate voters; losing the FBI and State Police on elderly voters; videotaping voters approaching polling places; setting up so called "bal-

lot security" and "ballot integrity" programs based on the racist presumption that minority voters are inveterate cheaters; and threatening legitimate and honorable organizations - like ACORN and the NAACP - for exercising their rights and helping other Americans to exercise theirs.

In 2008, Republican operatives already have tried to prevent Ohio from registering voters at its early voting sites; admitted plans to use foreclosure notices to challenge thousands of vot-

elled "Voter Fraud!" There is almost no evidence of fraud in today's American politics, and it is nearly impossible to find a single proven case of anyone, anywhere, casting an illegal vote as a result of a fraudulent voter registration application.

This latest attack on ACORN follows a sorry pattern, played out in election after election. The NAACP has been the victim of these partisan attacks too, including one from the United States government itself, threatening our tax exemption on scur-

rilous grounds. They said we had "criticized" President Bush and his policies; today three-quarters of the country would be guilty if criticizing officials was a crime instead of every citizen's right.

No one believes registration authorities will let Mickey Mouse or Elvis Presley vote. But surely some partisans believe that they can prevent qualified voters from registering or casting their legitimate votes, that they can frighten voters away from the polls, and that they can win elections through their own fraud and deceit and trickery.

We think the American people are too smart for that. Julian Bond is board chairman of the NAACP.

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Portland Observer Endorsements

Nov. 4 General Election

• U.S. President: Barack Obama

• U.S. Senator: Jeff Merkley

- Measure 54: Yes**
Allows 18-year-old voters in school board elections.
- Measure 55: Yes**
Allows legislators to finish term in original district after redistricting.
- Measure 56: Yes**
Eliminates double-majority election requirement
- Measure 57: No**
Doesn't address root cause of crime. Costly, but better alternative to Measure 61.
- Measure 58: No**
Unwise mandate on bilingual education.
- Measure 59: No**
Unlimited federal tax deduction would reduce state budget by \$1.2 billion.
- Measure 60: No**
Unfair to teachers.
- Measure 61: No**
Way too costly. Doesn't address root cause of crime.
- Measure 62: No**
Takes away money from schools.
- Measure 63: No**
Sacrifices safety in building permit process.
- Measure 64: No**
Limits political rights of public employees.
- Measure 65: No**
Limits rights of political parties to nominate candidates.