

# OPINION

Opinion articles do not necessarily represent the views of the Portland Observer. We welcome reader essays, photos and story ideas. Submit to [news@portlandobserver.com](mailto:news@portlandobserver.com).

## Support Voter-Owned Elections

### Put public before special interests

BY JANICE THOMPSON

In a special interest power grab by lobbyists, big businesses and downtown developers, the Portland Business Alliance tried to kill

Voter-Owned Elections and deny Portland voters the right to vote on this important campaign reform.

Voter-Owned Elections is reducing campaign spending and special interest influence. Before Voter-Owned Elections, the Business Alliance and its corporate members made major campaign contributions - much larger than any regular Portland family

could afford - to guarantee their access to City Hall.

The PBA has made their interests abundantly clear. In 2005, they opposed Voter-Owned Elections reform claiming that it should only be enacted with a vote of the people. The City Council adopted the reform and pledged a popular vote in five years. They honored that commitment last month by referring the reform program to a vote of the people in the upcoming November General Election.

Voter-Owned Elections gives everyday Portlanders a genuine voice in choosing their leaders in stark contrast to the past when campaign contributions were routinely \$1,000 or even \$10,000 or more. Because of the reform program, overall campaign spending is lower while voters

benefit from increased discussion of city issues due to more candidates.

Special interest influence is reduced, even for nonparticipating candidates, because their contributions are now typically \$500 or less.

agreed to cap their campaign spending and limit the size of the contributions they accept even if they didn't participate in the reform program.

With Voter-Owned Elections, candidates like Amanda Fritz can run and win

to have access to deep-pocketed donors, and candidates had to spend more time courting large contributors than talking to actual voters.

As the opposite experiences of Amanda Fritz and Jesse Cornett demonstrate, Voter-Owned Elections doesn't guarantee any outcome. It just frees candidates to make their case directly to real people instead of spending all their time courting powerful inside interests.

Democracy is better served when citizens have a voice in who can run and when candidates have the ability to spend their time talking directly with voters rather than raising money from big donors.

Janice Thompson is executive director of Common Cause Oregon.

*Moving forward, Voter-Owned Elections will mean that the candidates with the best experience, values, and ideas can actually run and win.*

Due to Voter-Owned Elections, we haven't seen a repeat of the record spending such as the \$1 million dollar mayoral race in 2004. Since the reform took effect, many of the city's candidates and elected officials have

with grassroots support from everyday Portlanders. Moving forward, Voter-Owned Elections will mean that the candidates with the best experience, values, and ideas can actually run and win. Before the way to win was

## Racial Bias in Police Shootings

### Perceptions follow officers to work

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

For years, there have been news reports about and protests



against racially charged police violence against citizens. Racial bias - conscious and unconscious - also seems to

play a role in police on police shootings.

According to a recent study, 26 police officers over the past 30 years were mistaken for criminals and killed by their colleagues; the officers killed were almost always black or Latino and male.

Indeed, it is difficult for an officer, full of adrenaline, to distinguish who the criminals are at a crime scene.

To be fair, many of the officers killed were either off duty or working in plain clothes. They would happen upon a crime and offer their assistance. The officers called to the scene, unsure of who was a good guy and who was a bad guy would go on to mistakenly shoot one of their own. In 24 of the 26 cases, the officer killed was holding his weapon.

However, the study, conducted by a task force formed

by New York Gov. David A. Patterson, revealed that an officer's view on whether or not a particular person presents a danger - and his decision to shoot - is based on personal racial biases.

It's not just white officers who make their decisions to shoot based on racially-based perceptions of who is dangerous; cops of all ethnicities do. Unfortunately, Black and Latino men fall into that dangerous category.

The task force made a series of recommendations for local and federal governments, hoping to reduce or even eliminate racial bias in officers to avoid these police on police shootings. Among them is a proposal to test officers for unconscious racial bias, something the NYPD began doing recently.

Hopefully, police departments

across the country will follow New York's lead and begin testing their officers for racial bias. The idea behind this testing is not to get officers fired. Rather, we want to surface any biases they may have and work to address them.

Whether an officer acknowledges or believes they view minorities in a different - and dangerous - light or not, the reality is that these perceptions follow that officer to work each day.

We don't want race to play a role in the officer's decision to open fire on the perceived perpetrator. By bringing these biases to light, we could potentially save lives and restore the community's faith in the police department.

Greg Mathis is a retired Michigan District Court Judge and syndicated television judge.

**Subscribe!** 503-288-0033

Fill Out & Send To:

The Portland Observer

Attn: Subscriptions, PO Box 3137, Portland OR 97208

subscriptions are just \$60 per year  
(please include check with this subscription form)

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

or email [subscriptions@portlandobserver.com](mailto:subscriptions@portlandobserver.com)

The Portland Observer Established 1970

USPS 959-680

4747 NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Portland, OR 97211

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, PUBLISHER: Charles H. Washington

EDITOR: Michael Leighton

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER: Mark Washington

CREATIVE DIRECTOR: Paul Neufeldt

The Portland Observer welcomes freelance submissions. Manuscripts and photographs should be clearly labeled and will be returned if accompanied by a self addressed envelope. All created design display ads become the sole property of the newspaper and cannot be used in other publications or personal usage without the written consent of the general manager, unless the client has purchased the composition of such ad. © 2008 THE PORTLAND OBSERVER. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. REPRODUCTION IN WHOLE OR IN PART WITHOUT PERMISSION IS PROHIBITED. The Portland Observer - Oregon's Oldest Multicultural Publication - is a member of the National Newspaper Association - Founded in 1885, and The National Advertising Representative Amalgamated Publishers, Inc, New York, NY, and The West Coast Black Publishers Association

CALL 503-288-0033 FAX 503-288-0015

[news@portlandobserver.com](mailto:news@portlandobserver.com)

[ads@portlandobserver.com](mailto:ads@portlandobserver.com)

[subscription@portlandobserver.com](mailto:subscription@portlandobserver.com)

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Portland Observer, PO Box 3137, Portland, OR 97208