

November 2, 2004 General Election — Opinion — Pages 13, 14, 15 and 16

State Ballot Measures

Measure 31 (Constitutional amendment)

Would authorize postponing an election when one of the nominees dies. This has happened, most recently when Attorney General Ashcroft was seeking a U.S. Senate seat from Missouri and his opponent was killed in a plane crash and Ashcroft still lost. The measure may be reasonable, but amending the constitution to allow postponing an election is dangerous. What would the next reason be? If a dead candidate is elected, there will have to be either another election or an appointment, but don't create reasons to postpone any election.

Recommend a NO vote on Measure 31.

Measure 32 (Constitutional amendment)

Would delete references to mobile homes from provisions dealing with taxes and fees on motor vehicles.

Recommend a YES vote on Measure 32.

Measure 33

Would amend the Medical Marijuana Act to allow the sale of marijuana by state licensed and registered dealers to authorized patients. The primary reason given for the change is that many qualified patients cannot grow their own marijuana and are unable to buy it elsewhere. Objections are that it will be difficult for authorities to know who is growing and selling legally and who is illegal. Both arguments are correct, but what isn't dealt with is the need for real reform of the state's drug policy.

Recommend a NO vote on Measure 33.

Measure 34

Would change the way the Tillamook and Clatsop Forests are managed to require the state Board of Forestry to give equal weight to both timber production and conservation. This is strenuously opposed by the counties and other taxing districts that have been waiting many years for much-needed income from the timber. It is also opposed by most of the timber industry. Proponents include sportsmen and commercial fishing interests, some (though not all) conservationists, and many people who disagree with the increased cutting in those forests, or with how decisions are made.

That is where it's necessary to chime in. The City of Vernonia found out a week before cutting started that part of the Rock Creek watershed would be clear cut. They had no chance to review the plan even though the city's water source could be compromised. The Selders Creek cut totaled 11.3 million board feet from 216 acres. Hopefully, no harm has been done to the water supply, but that won't be known for some time.

Procedures of this sort — ignoring legitimate concerns — make people nervous even when they want to be cooperative. What will make the Board of Forestry consider those concerns?

Recommend a YES vote on Measure 34.

Elect John Kerry president

This presidential campaign has been interesting but has frequently lacked valid information. The charges thrown back and forth by the "independent" 527 groups have only muddied the waters.

The arguments about who did what during the Vietnam era are campaign sidelines. President George W. Bush and Sen. John F. Kerry both came from privileged backgrounds and both graduated from Yale, but there were differences:

Kerry was a serious student who volunteered for service in the U.S. Navy, went through officer training, served for a year on a ship in Vietnamese waters, then as commander of a swift boat. He served honorably — as did Presidents Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Carter and G.H.W. Bush — then spoke out loudly about what he felt was the country's mishandling of Vietnam, which offended many people.

Bush was a less-than-serious student who served in the Texas Air National Guard. Ben Barnes, then the lieutenant governor of Texas, was unethical in placing Bush ahead of others who were waiting for a spot in the Guard, but Bush accepted it. There was nothing unusual about young men trying to avoid the draft and Vietnam; many did so, including Vice-President Cheney (five deferments), Attorney General Ashcroft (seven deferments) and President Clinton. Whether or not Bush completed all of his agreed-upon Guard duty, he was honorably discharged.

That is all in the past. Of importance, now, are the past four years and the next four years.

The *Lone Star Iconoclast*, the newspaper in Bush's hometown of Crawford, Texas, said:

Few Americans would have voted for George W. Bush four years ago if he had promised that, as President, he would:

- Empty the Social Security trust fund by \$507 billion to help offset fiscal irresponsibility

and at the same time slash Social Security benefits.

- Cut Medicare by 17 percent and reduce veterans' benefits and military pay.
- Eliminate overtime pay for millions of Americans and raise oil prices by 50 percent.
- Give tax cuts to businesses that sent American jobs overseas, and, in fact, by policy encourage their departure.
- Give away billions of tax dollars in government contracts without competitive bids.
- Involve this country in a deadly and highly questionable war, and
- Take a budget surplus and turn it into the worst deficit in the history of the United States, creating a debt in just four years that will take generations to repay.

President Bush regularly reminds us that the U.S. is the richest country in the world, but he has turned a great surplus into a get richer quicker economy for the already very wealthy.

For the rest of us, health care costs are up 64 percent, prescription drugs are up 12 percent, Medicare premiums are up 17 percent and, at the same time, the income of working people fell an average of \$1,535 per year, after adjusting for inflation. Nearly 1.7 million U.S. veterans had no health care coverage in 2003 — no access to private insurance, to Medicare or Medicaid or to the Veterans Affairs health program. Successful bipartisan programs to promote affordable housing are being dismantled under cover — with rules changes.

America cannot afford four more years of economic disaster. We need to return to a balanced, bipartisan effort to make our nation healthy again. That won't happen under George W. Bush.

It is time to elect John F. Kerry as president.

Measure 35 (Constitutional amendment)

Would limit non-economic damages resulting from medical malpractice. The INDEPENDENT has already recommended a No vote on this measure, but one element should be mentioned. Proponents say this would help lower medical costs by reducing malpractice premiums, but that isn't true. Nothing in this measure addresses premiums. Still recommend a NO vote on Measure 35.

Measure 36 (Constitutional amendment)

Would change the constitution to make official policy that would accept marriage as only between one man and one woman. This is an emotional response by many people who are appalled at the idea of homosexual marriage. Others frame it as a religious consideration. Still others say "civil unions" would be acceptable substitutes for marriage. Realistically, marriage in most of western society has always been a civil union. It was designed to codify how property, including inheritance, should be handled. Even today, a marriage license is a civil legal document that has no religious significance. The religious element is added when the marriage ceremony is performed in a church or by a clergyman, but it is not a legal requirement. Looked at in that way, does the gender of people involved in a legal arrangement really make a difference? This measure is neither wise nor necessary.

Recommend a NO vote on Measure 36.