

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

On voting and democracy

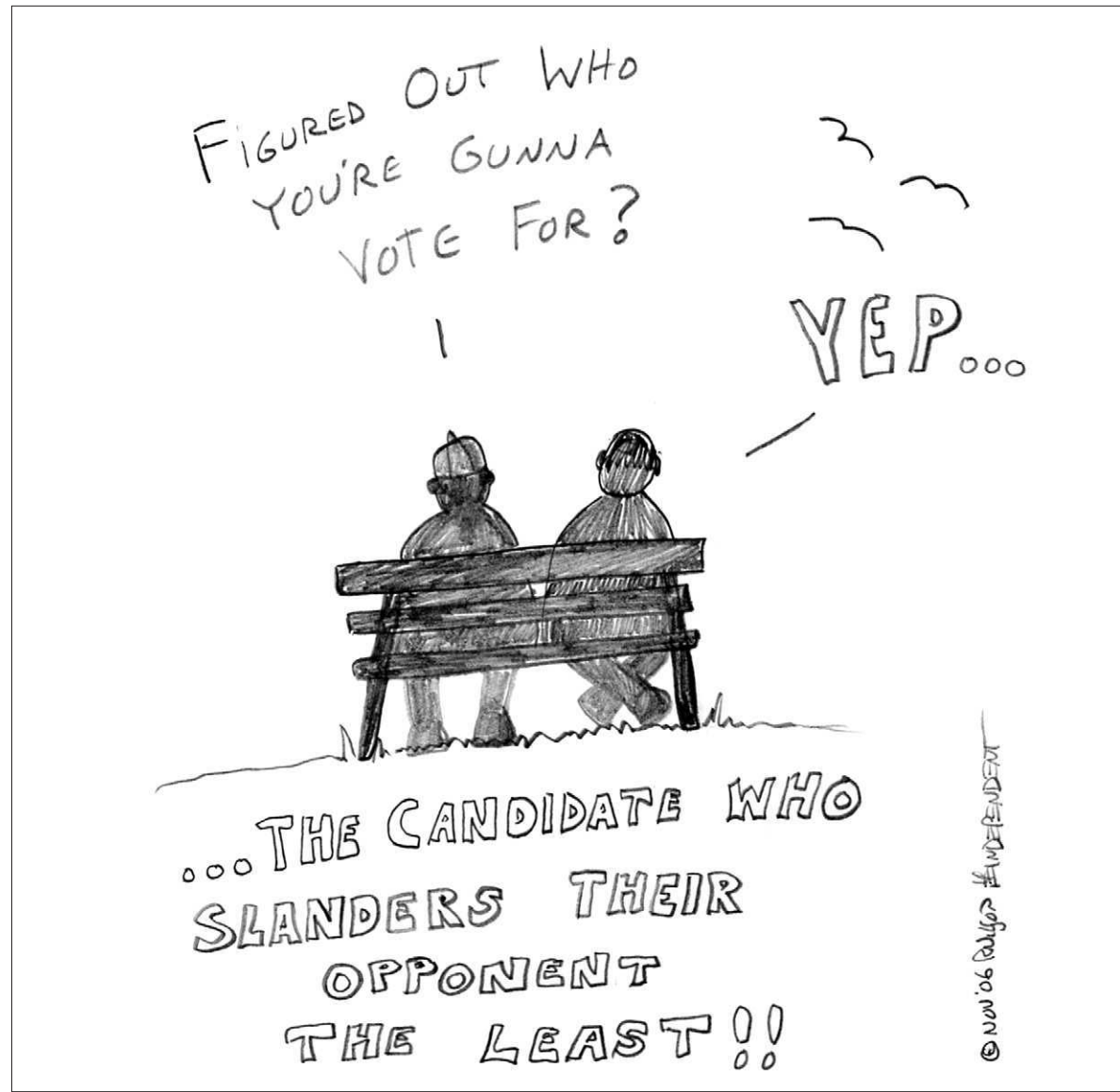
In 1996, only 54.2 percent of eligible United States voters cast a ballot. Only 70 percent of eligible citizens are even registered to vote. Yet, the others, both unregistered and those who don't vote, expect to live in a democracy. If so, they should probably move to India, the world's largest democracy where 380 million people voted in 2004 (that's 80 million more people than live here).

In the U.S., only white male landowners voted before 1830. African Americans couldn't really vote until 1870, even then road blocks were put in their way. Women couldn't vote until 1920. Native Americans weren't recognized as citizens (and therefore eligible to vote) until 1947. It wasn't until 1971 that the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18. 1993 was the year when voting rights started to lessen rather than broaden, and the right to vote has been eroding since that time (More on that at another time.).

Why is it important to vote? Our system was designed so there would be no taxation without representation, this was a major issue that resulted in the ratification of the U.S. Constitution in 1788. Voting determines who represents you – at city, county, state and federal levels. Of five people shown in the picture below, two are the only members of the public (the other three are related to candidates) who attended a Candidate Forum at Vernonia City Hall, October 20, to become informed voters. That's a shame!

Perhaps more people would become informed and vote if we had a system like ancient Greece; every year their election determined which politician was disliked enough to be exiled for ten years.

Voting is important. Informed voters are vital.



Ike Says . . .

By Dale Webb, member Izaak Walton League, Nehalem Valley Chapter



Hunting seasons are in full swing, the weather is nice and the scenery is just beautiful! It is a great country we live in and I don't think a lot of us fully understand that. Make time to pull on the boots and at least go on a hike, the fresh air will clear your

head and the exercise will refresh your body.

I made it over East again this year for our Mule deer hunt. We did not go for the opening weekend, there are just too many people to make it enjoyable, so we waited until Wednesday of the first week. This worked out fine for us, we got into our usual camping spot and I would say over 50 percent of the hunters had already gone home. Of course, the only drawback to this late arrival is that 50 percent of the bucks had gone home with some of those hunters, too. That's ok, I'd rather hunt in less crowded conditions.

Right after we got the tent up, the weather turned and we had a few showers and more rain during the night. When we woke up, the day was cloudy and threatened more rain, so we geared up for cool, wet conditions. We could have used a weatherman! By noon the weather had broken and was sunny and warm again. Needless to say, a little sweat was involved before we got back to camp. Dad had even put on his long

johns! The next day we stayed with the hammer jeans and sweatshirts for clothes, even though the day again looked like rain. My hunting partner, Ken, and I had my brother-in-law and nephew drop us off up on the mountain so we could hunt back down hill towards camp. The terrain where we were hunting is an old burn that is now growing up with jack pine and buck brush; it is getting tall enough now that hunting is becoming harder each year.

I started wandering around through the small trees following deer and elk trails. I don't know why I go where I do sometimes, I just let the conditions (wind) and signs (tracks) lead me along. I had planned to go down a long ridge that drops off into a creek, then cut up through a saddle in a ridge and back towards camp. In a straight line of distance this would be about three miles; traveling the contours, who knows? I had worked towards the North, then got on the particular ridge I wanted. It traveled back southwest, then I started jumping deer, one of which moved straight south. I decided to follow along since there was a good game trail and soon I jumped the deer again, it was a Doe. I figured it was, but liked the direction it was headed. Soon I found a neat little pocket in the sea of small trees, with several springs, tall grass and willows where I could see game animals had been bedding down. I took extra time as I dissected this small pocket and, of course, there was a nice set of deer tracks. They looked like buck tracks to me, unfortunately, they seemed to be going towards