

# OPINION PACKAGES

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## Our VIEW

### The votes are in *Americans show they're tired of name-calling*

Some political pundits predicted that in Tuesday's election American voters would overwhelmingly choose Republican candidates.

They didn't.

The pundits said the American people were tired of President Clinton's shenanigans in the Monica Lewinsky case and would not elect his Democratic cohorts to Congress.

They were wrong.

Republicans were hoping the supposed dissatisfaction with the White House scandal they had been trumpeting for months would pay off in Tuesday's election.

It didn't.

Instead, American voters spoke a clear message: The Clinton and Lewinsky affair didn't matter in the election. Americans were sick of hearing about it. And they were sick of Republicans riding a wave of self-righteousness against Clinton.

Though Republicans did not lose their majorities in the House of Representatives or the Senate, they did lose key seats with the defeat of U.S. Sens. Alfonse D'Amato of New York and Lauch Faircloth of North Carolina.

Regardless of which political party lost or gained seats, Americans let it be known that — although they did not support Clinton's perhaps immoral actions in the White House — they would not be fooled by political spin doctoring and grandstanding.

Too much has been made of Clinton's impropriety — especially at a time when the country is mainly doing well.

We now must hope Congress will work across party lines, using this time of great economic strength to better more lacking parts of the nation.

Too often during the time since the last election, both Republicans and Democrats have been unwilling to compromise and have been ruled by the opinion poll.

Most of these newly elected, or re-elected, candidates must realize they were not chosen by a mandate, and they must stay true to their constituents' beliefs and interests. They must not cave to special interests.

They will be charged with executing perhaps one of the most important decisions that has faced the United States in decades: whether to impeach the president.

Republicans and Democrats can use this election to realize the voting public is not interested in name-calling, moral preaching or partisanship, but instead is interested in continuing the country's relative success.

With the votes counted, plans foiled and conclusions drawn, our nation's representatives must now transcend the party lines and petty politics.

That's what voters did Tuesday.

## Mook's VIEW



## Mercy killing

*Deshler man ended his wife's life out of love*



**JOSH WIMMER is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.**

So, folks, right now a Nebraska man is in jail for performing probably the most courageous act of his life.

Does that sound stupid to you too?

Let me back up and break it down.

Last week Bob Ohlrich of Deshler was charged with shooting his wife to death.

He even confessed to the crime, mere minutes after it happened. So it sounds like it'd be an open-and-shut case.

But there are complications.

For one thing, Ohlrich is 76 years old. His wife, Phyllis Ohlrich, was 74.

For another, they'd been married 56 years.

And most notably, when Ohlrich said he had

killed his wife, she was at Thayer County Hospital, dying slowly of cancer. Hospital officials said she didn't have long to live.

According to reports, Phyllis Ohlrich had told at least one friend: "I just wish I could die. I'm ready to go."

Her husband of more than half a century granted her wish.

And for that, he's being charged with first-degree murder.

Am I the only person who thinks this is ridiculous?

OK, people, we are not dealing with another Ted Bundy or Robert Bjorklund here. Ohlrich is a retired farmer.

He was married to his wife for, I say again, more than 50 years.

He must have known her better than just about anyone.

According to county deputies, when they showed up at the hospital after Phyllis Ohlrich died, her husband shouted to be locked up because he'd killed his wife.

And he has wept throughout public legal proceedings.

Clearly, Ohlrich loved his wife.

I don't think he would have made the decision to kill her lightly. I think he knew her as well as anyone could have.

And if he killed her, I don't think he would have

done it unless he knew she wanted her suffering to end.

And I think it probably hurt and scared him more than anything else he'd ever done.

Think about how painful it'd be, knowing the only way to comfort someone you loved would be to kill her.

And think about how much courage it'd take to do it.

In a story in the Lincoln Journal Star,

Thayer County Attorney Dan Werner said "mercy killing" was a contradiction in terms. He asked, "Is any killing merciful?"

Yes, some killing is.

I don't know if County Attorney Werner has a dog. But if he does, I'd bet \$100 that if the dog was in pain and dying, Werner's veterinarian would recommend putting it to sleep. And I bet Werner wouldn't hesitate to do that, either.

It'd be the merciful thing to do. It'd be cruel to let the pet hurt.

For whatever insane reason, though, when a human being like Phyllis Ohlrich is dying painfully, doctors try to keep her alive as long as possible, even if her life is nothing but suffering.

And putting an end to that suffering isn't considered merciful. Instead, it's called murder.

Why do we treat dogs better than our own species?

And why is Ohlrich being charged as a criminal for loving his wife so much, he had to give her up?

To add insult to injury, he almost didn't get to attend his wife's funeral.

His attorney had to battle Werner, who said, "It is in the best interest of the public that (Ohlrich) not be allowed to attend."

Oh, yeah. A grieving 76-year-old man flanked by sheriff's deputies poses a serious threat.

Fortunately, a sensible judge let Ohlrich attend his wife's services. I hope the judge who presides over his case will be that clearheaded.

That judge should see Ohlrich for who he is: a man who was so in love, he was willing to risk his remaining years, as well as a broken heart, to save his wife from pain.

As for the jury who'll decide the case — no one should have to go through what Ohlrich did. He had to make a terrible decision, and, with no time to grieve, he was swept into a legal battle. His 12 peers should see he's suffered enough.

They must acquit him.

Werner has said the prosecution will not be seeking the death penalty in Ohlrich's case. That should be a relief.

But the truth is, if Ohlrich were convicted, if for some ungodly reason he were punished in any way for his wife's death — then maybe the most merciful thing we could do would be to kill him.

He's too good for this world.



MATT HANEY/DN

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