

# OPINION PAGES

## Our VIEW

### Another hoop

*Runoff elections unfair, too costly*

If the election for the president of the United States were run the same way as the ASUN election, we may never have had a Bill Clinton/Monica Lewinsky scandal. That's because Bill Clinton may not have been the president.

In 1992, Clinton won 43 percent of the popular vote across the United States, while George Bush won 41 percent of the vote. Why no majority? Ross Perot had something to do with it.

Had it been run like an ASUN election, there would have had to be a runoff election, because there was no majority of votes. And Bush might have won.

Now consider that the Voice party won almost 49 percent of the vote last week, while Focus won almost 43 percent of the vote. Voice won by a 6 percent margin, yet must be part of a runoff election. That means a bigger cost to the parties running and fewer students who will vote in the runoff.

But here's the question: What if Focus wins? Does that party deserve to? Does a party that got out-distanced the first time deserve another shot at it? Isn't that a little like extending a football game because one team didn't play well enough?

The Daily Nebraskan thinks so. We can't support the current election rules, which force a party to have a majority of the vote or win by at least 10 percent if the party did not have a majority of the vote. So, for example, Voice or Focus could have won the election 51 percent to 49 percent, but could not win it at 49 percent to 40 percent.

Before 1981, the 10 percent rule wasn't even a viable option. That's when NU Medical Center student regent Michael Schmidt said that it wasn't fair to force parties to win at least 50 percent of the vote. It was forcing runoff elections almost every year, he said then, which was costly to all.

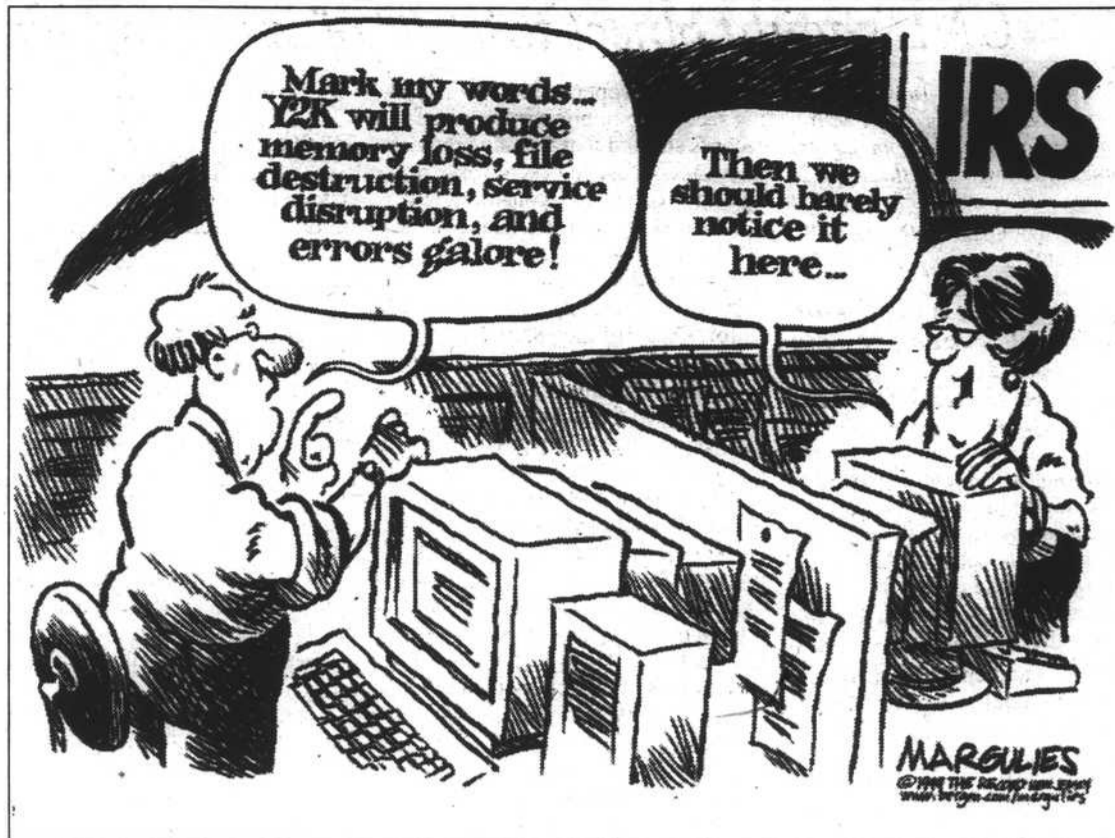
In a sense, he's correct. There should be nothing wrong with crowning whichever party has the most votes the winner. Why does it have to be 50 percent? On average, only 10 percent of the students at UNL vote anyway. Is there really a difference between getting 4.9 percent of the students' support or 5.1 percent?

We advocate that ASUN lobby to the NU Board of Regents to eliminate the majority-and-10-percent rule altogether. Let the party with the most votes win.

It would help viable third parties and eliminate the possibility of messy runoffs. It would cost less to the parties themselves, which already spend a lot.

Best of all, it'd completely prevent what might happen Wednesday. Focus might turn a loss into a win. We are not advocating one party or the other to win, but if Focus does win, there isn't much question that Voice might cry unfair. And actually, they'd be right. If they've already won once, do they need to win again?

## Margulies' VIEW



## DN LETTERS

### No big deal

There are some serious issues that we need to clear up on this university. First, throwing snowballs is not an act of racism. I feel no sympathy for either party in this big fiasco. I would never throw snowballs at a perfect stranger, out of respect for a fellow human being. I would also not cry like a baby for days and drag all sorts of groups, and consequently, the entire university, in on it. With that out of the way I can tell you what I really believe.

The big deal is that the victim of a joke was a minority student. So what! You don't think anything like that has ever happened to me? Of course, I can't rant and rave about it, because I'm a white male. I almost had my pickup run into and off the road the other day in front of the Devaney Center. Four guys, who were of darker skin color than I, ran the red light before the tracks while the arms were coming down because a train was coming. Was this racially motivated? I seriously doubt it. Did I make a huge deal about it? No. I was extremely mad about it, though. I also got over it. Would a minority have made a big deal about it, had it happened the other way around? In the light of this snowball fiasco, you can bet all your tuition money they would.

All I can say is, grow up and take some responsibility in your life. While we can't control the actions of immature pranksters, we can still stop crying about it and move on. Why are some people so eager to cry "racism," anyway? The Vietnamese student was the unfortunate victim of a dumb prank, that's all. Nothing more. He brought the racial discrimination part on himself by calling just that. You will always be discriminated against, if you consider everything that happens to you, discrimination.

As for Jasmine Bach Tang, I'm sure you mean well, but your state of mind is exactly what's wrong with some people. You think that everybody is out to get you - they're not. You need some tolerance in today's society. Just like a little kid in grade school who is being made fun of by other kids, don't go to the teacher and the school board and propose some sanctions against the bullies. Tell those kids to go fly a kite and move on with your life knowing you're in charge!

As for punishment for the fraternity members - how about calling Duc Tran up and saying you're sorry and mean it? That's it. Making those guys go through all this other hogwash ... get real! How is that going to make them think twice about throw-

ing snowballs at strangers? Sending them back to kindergarten to learn how to play with others would be more effective than all this diversity stuff. Why do people have to dress blatant stupidity up as discrimination all the time? And UNL falls for it every time.

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### A big deal

Unfortunately, Sarah Baker's column, "The snowball effect" (3/3) left out a few details that would have made a more credible argument to the question: Why are snowballs such a big deal? For one, there was no mention that the Phi Gamma Delta members attempted to throw the snowballs not just once, but a total of five times at the Vietnamese student. (Only one actually hit.) If their attempts had been just by chance (an accident), all five members should go out and purchase lottery tickets, if they can beat odds, not to mention physics. Also, the members were throwing snowballs not only at the Vietnamese student, but also at a parking meter attendant and at a city bus. I don't know if it was Ms. Baker's intention to leave out these crucial details, or an inability to find out the "truth."

Whatever the case, it is obvious that she, and a lot of other students at UNL, do not realize the effects that incidents like this can have on people, especially minority students attending the university. UNL is made up of 95 percent white students. Of course, knowing this fact is not important, unless you use it to understand the perceptions and feelings of students who are in the minority. (Key word: minority.)

From the side of the fraternity members, "playing" as they called it, resulted in actually hitting a few innocent

bystanders. From the side of the minority student, no matter what the intention of the fraternity members, the result was a fear for his personal safety, and the confirmation that again there are people around him who just don't get it. They don't know what being, looking like and feeling like a visibly different minority is, nor will they ever.

No, snowballs in and of themselves are nothing of note. But couple them with the effects they have when thrown by someone from the majority at someone who is in the minority, and it is easy to imagine the fear, the helplessness and the powerlessness that the person feels. I agree that the open forum held to address the concerns minority student have about these differences could have led to better communication. Instead, the fraternity representatives felt defensive; the audience walked away with few answers; and Sarah Baker presented a one-sided account of how this is just another story about the university "overreacting" to something "minor," and the "poor frat boys are once again targeted."

There is nothing minor about the negative feelings produced by this incident and how these could lead to further tensions in our university environment. If Ms. Baker doesn't get this point, she does not represent the voices of the many university students who do.

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