

## The political process needs your stand

BY NATHAN HILMO  
OPINION STAFF WRITER

Well, election '96 is upon us. And, as always it is difficult during elections to separate propaganda from fact.

Instead of listening to all the hype of mass media campaigns I thought it was about time to learn something of the American political process.

I had three more credits to take to maintain my full-time status, and underwater basket weaving was full.

While looking through the spring semester course catalog I noticed the Honorable State Senator Dina Titus was teaching Political Science 101.

Who better to learn from than an actual participant in our own state Senate? No, in case you are wondering, I'm not trying to brown nose my prof by addressing her as the "Honorable." It is one of the

correct ways to address a legislative representative (learned that on my first day).

Titus started her first lecture by assessing our political knowledge. She asked a series of basic questions in an informal quiz.

Based on her quiz, let's see how well you know your own government.

1. How long is a Senatorial term?
2. How many Supreme Court Justices are there?
3. Who is the Supreme Court Chief Justice?
4. What does G.O.P. stand for?
5. What is the significance of Roe vs. Wade?
6. Who is third in line to the President?
7. What are the symbols of the Democratic and Republican parties?
8. Who is the speaker of the House?
9. What does it take to over-

ride a presidential veto?

When I took the quiz I was glad to see I knew the majority of information, while at the same time embarrassed that I didn't know the answers to all the questions.

Titus walked us through the quiz, enlightening the class with her expertise.

When she asked us how we did, there was a groan from the crowd. Fellow classmates squirmed in their seats.

Titus, after noticing our response, queried as to why, for the most part, students don't know the most basic information? Further, she wanted to know why our generation doesn't vote in elections?

I knew my reason: lack of time. With school, work and a limited social life, what goes on in Washington D. C. seems abstract and not important. But I've recently come to the

realization politicians in Washington have a direct impact on daily life.

One seemingly small change brought national politics into focus. On my way to school I noticed new road signs on the freeway. Instead of breaking the law by driving 65, I was now operating within the law. A year ago, while driving 65 on the same street I received a speeding ticket.

This may seem insignificant, but it shows the power of the federal government in our lives.

How are you going to judge the issues put before Congress if you don't understand how our political process functions? And how can you complain about decisions made that affect your life, if you don't play an active role in the decision-making process?

Titus' lecture raised many questions. Her quiz pointed

out a lack of basic understanding and knowledge of our governmental process by most typical college students.

Apathy and lack of interest is allowing only a few people make decisions for the rest of us.

What will it take for us to become interested? Maybe a cut in the Federal Student Loan Program slashing resources available to students, in an attempt to shore up social security.

It's a possibility, the baby boomers are reaching the retirement age. They tend to vote more than we do and they want to protect that program.

Think about that when you say you are too busy, that governmental decisions don't affect you or you're not interested in what they do.

### Letters to the editor

#### Grad student sad to see Lujan leave

To the editor:

I read with extreme sadness that John Lujan had left UNLV. Mr. Lujan was an advocate of all students, both minority and non-minority. He showed an interest in students and was a genuine person. The priorities of UNLV will always be the same: SPORTS.

Academics and fair treatment of students is secondary to this endeavor. In fact, resources for academics is at the bottom of the priority list and this is quite apparent in the quality of professors hired and the resources given to various colleges on campus.

I know Mr. Lujan to be a man of character and a person with integrity and I am happy to know that he refused to compromise his integrity by staying at UNLV.

Good luck, Mr. Lujan and I'm sure you are on a journey of better things to come.

Vic Hutchings  
Graduate Student  
School of Social Work

#### Where, oh where, is the integrity?

To the editor:

Why does it seem that the actions and arguments people make anymore are devoid of any real ideas, or integrity?

I'm not only talking about politicians here. What needs to happen is this: everyone needs to take a class in logic. Specifically, I mean Philosophy 102. And then commit the principles taught in that class to memory.

I get so disgusted when I hear arguments about nothing but empty rhetoric. We hear arguments about how budgets need to be balanced. School lunches are going to be cut. Actually, it's not a cut, it's a 4 percent increase over the present funding levels. (Excuse me, but weren't the funding levels supposed to be raised 6 percent?) Six minus 4 equals 2 percent cut in the projected funding by the math I was taught. So, is that a cut or not?

Last year, Dan Rostenkowski ran for re-election in Illinois. He was well on his way to being indicted on charges of using government funds illegally. Yet, he still ran for office. If you knew that you had done something illegal, could you in good conscience think that you could boondoggle the public? Thank goodness the voters saw fit to elect someone else.

Last semester, I became aware of an incident here at UNLV where a certain individual used a loophole in the CSUN constitution to make a back door entry into the Sen-

ate. He even admitted that he took advantage of the loophole in front of the whole Senate. Now, I must ask myself, is that integrity? Does this mean we are free to do anything we want so long as there is not a law prohibiting that action? I think not.

Recently the federal government was shut down due to the Congress not having done their job of completing the 13 budget spending bills. Mr. Newt [Gingrich], knew well in advance—April even—that he would use the "Power of the Purse" to force his agenda on the American People in November.

He then said that part of the reason for creating the budget grid lock was that he had to exit Air Force One out of the back of the plane. What we have here is someone whining that they were treated unfairly (true or not), and because of it he would close down the federal government and have the American People pay for his action to the tune of \$1 billion dollars, a fine example of integrity.

Or how about Sen. Bob Dole appearing on the "This Week with David Brinkley" show, to talk about the budget impasse? Mr. Dole said the impasse was President Clinton's fault. And that he, with cellular in one hand was waiting

for a call from Clinton so they could discuss a solution to the budget crisis. Sam Donaldson pointed to the telephone and asked Dole, "Shouldn't you have a battery in it?" (New Yorker, November 27, 1995). A disgusting lack of ethic!

Are people totally without conscience? Where is integrity? Does this word "ethical" mean anything to anyone?

The ills in the American psyche show a disparaging lack of character or decency. It makes no difference whether someone is liberal or conservative in issues at this level.

What matters is whether we, as a society, hold honesty and integrity as virtue. And then implement these virtues in our day-to-day lives.

These are not matters of religious preaching. Someone need not be religious to recognize these principles, these tenets are common sense. Too bad they are so uncommon.

Perhaps we can renew our commitment (if you have one) to be ethical and honest in everything we do. With this year being an election year we could use all the integrity we can find.

Tod Story  
Senior  
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# THE REBEL YELL

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Letters should be typed, double-spaced, and include the author's name, address and telephone number. Writers affiliated with UNLV must include class and major, or faculty or staff position.

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Letters are subject to edit for length and clarity.

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