

CAMPAIGN CHRONICLES

No photo ID, no democracy

Election season strikes again.

"I lose sleep over voter suppression," U.S. Representative Steve Israel, D-NY, told ABC News. "I lose sleep over the fact that the Republicans have said they are embarked on a strategy that could deny millions of voters their right to go to the polls and actually vote for a candidate."

In an attempt to disenfranchise minorities, laws have been passed in Georgia, Arizona, Virginia, and beyond requiring voters to provide photo identification at the polls. Seven other states are scheduled to pass this legislation within the year.

While the claim of disenfranchisement is an extremely bold allegation, it is also an extremely disturbing reality.

The United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of the new legislation and, by extension, eliminated millions of Americans' role in the U.S. democratic process. As the law transcends borders, the United States' glow withers to a dim bulb.

Too often politicians observe the fall of their own communities without fighting injustices, unfortunately, at the expense of their constituents. Formally immaculate images of GOP candidates are now tarnished by their support of voter photo ID laws.

No person of good character can support a law like this that snuffs the voices of racial minorities, the elderly, college students, and low-income Americans.

Israel, who serves as chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, disclosed that plans to combat photo ID-related injustices are in motion.

His optimism might stem from America's rich history of civil action. When faced with a blatant discriminatory law intended to weaken the democratic infrastructure of our nation, there is only one option: joining together in unified opposition to end the Republicans' siphoning of American voices.

All of this nonsensical prejudice is reminiscent of the Jim Crow days when blacks had to pass unreasonably difficult literary tests in order to vote. The motives behind Crow voting laws were to limit the power of a minority race and to control the outcome of elections.

Sadly, the motives for the photo identification laws are eerily similar.

Exit polls conducted in states with photo ID requirements, such as Washington, Florida, and New Mexico, revealed that the majority of voters rejected at polls were black, Latino, and Asian.

Photo ID laws have far too many damaging repercussions to ignore. The Republican party is attempting to diminish as many Democratic voices as possible.

President Obama's victory in 2008 proved the importance of the minority voice. Political participation amongst racial minorities has remained at a record high since '08. The increase in voter turnout poses a threat so large to the Republicans that they've resorted to desperately stripping voters of their power and rights as U.S. citizens.

GOP motivations for this law are entirely selfish.

If it were you who was challenged to prove your a registered voter, worthy of voting that day.

Imagine it's election day, the day you've been awaiting for months. The footage of brutal candidate debates replays in your head as you stand in line prepared to select the weakest link. You've been an avid viewer of the debates and kept a keen eye on the primary polls thus far. This is your opportunity, your time, to be an American citizen.

Participating in government process and selection of your nation's leader is a powerful privilege that you value greatly. And now it's time. You enter the local public school where polls are set up and calling your name. You've got on your bright red pin flashing the name Bachmann, Romney, Cain, or whatever mediocre candidate the GOP selects by then. You strut to the polls with pride, wearing your leather cowboy boots and rocking your "NOBAMA" tee shirt. Picture a table with little old ladies from your community, pencils and check-in books before them. Suddenly, it's your turn to have your status challenged.

"Excuse me, sir ... Can we see a formal photo identification card, please."



By Catherine Schurz
STAFF WRITER

The holidays are eating your wallet



By Emily Cooper
STAFF WRITER

You cannot escape it — the catchy melodies, flamboyant decorations and, of course, advertisements galore. The holiday season has begun and your wallet is about to get a lot lighter. 'Tis the season to be jolly? More like 'tis the season to go into debt as you blow your hard-earned cash on unnecessary indulgences.

What is on your wish list this year? Better yet, how many people are on your gift list? Chances are you want to do fun things for the holiday season. When shopping for presents and food, you will more than likely end up spending more than you planned because the stores have "prices you can't beat," "the best prices of the holiday season" and "buy five, get one half off."

It's all about the wording. Stores these days have gotten really good at getting us to buy stuff by making their holiday specials sound like a deal, when in reality you end up spending more than you planned and that really great deal you got, really was not that great.

So let's be blunt here, how much money are you planning on spending this year? Write that number down and add \$100 to that. According to Time Magazine, the average shopper spent \$811 last holiday season, which was \$112 more than they had planned. Additionally, Time Magazine reported, 13.6 million Americans still have not paid off last year's holiday season bills.

It is the holiday season and of course, we are all in the clutches of commercialism. You will inevitably end up spending more than you planned you would, could and should.

The holiday season is supposed to be a joyous time. Spending money in excess in this economy is painful. The emphasis we have put on commercialism and the need to spend during the holiday season almost seems like an oxymoron.

Think about some of the gifts you have given and received

over the past few years. Did you actually enjoy that heinous sweater your aunt got you from Anthropologie?

No. Your aunt wasted \$75 on a piece of crap when you would have been just as happy with a card with a nice crisp bill inside of it.

Which brings me to my next point: stop giving people gift cards.

It is stupid and a waste of your money. According to Time Magazine, 27 percent of people who received gift cards in 2009 have still not used them.

Now think about your experience when shopping for gifts for those dear to you.

Do you sincerely think your best friend is going to wear that monogrammed necklace you bought her last year? Just because you saw a table with a big red sign that said "sale" does not mean you should get it for her.

Most importantly, material objects seem to be getting in the way of what we should truly be holding close to us: our family and friends. Spending time with your aunt and best friend should be more important than what they buy you, and what you bought them.

Black Friday: shoppers gone wild — like usual



By Travis Linville
STAFF WRITER

Black Friday. Holiday sales. Complete madness.

As a Target employee, I worked this year's Black Friday. I witnessed the anxious, the jolly, and the downright rude.

As I see people engage in a tug-of-war match over a five-dollar savings, I wonder what goes on in their head. They want to buy something for someone in order to show their generosity and caring. But if they only looked at themselves and their actions, they would see how ungenerous and uncaring this season has made them.

Black Friday continues to bring out old-fashioned human nastiness.

A little game of tug-of-war may not seem too serious. But what about the completely inhuman acts that have occurred?

The media popularized the story of the woman who pepper-sprayed 20 people in Wal-Mart. Less reported but more severe, were two shootings — one in San Leandro, Calif., and one in Myrtle Beach, S.C.

Let's not forget past Black Fridays when herds of shoppers knocked over and trampled people to death for a TV — or rather the chance to get a TV.

How can anyone justify that? A commodity is

never worth more than a human life. Somewhere along the line, our desire to buy gifts, our desire to show each other that we care, mutated into an arduous necessity.

When the pressure to buy turns fellow human beings into obstacles, we need to step back and look at this problem we have created. How have we come to let things dictate our behavior?

Perhaps economic hardships force frugality on shoppers. Regardless, no sale, no savings, no item can ever outweigh the value of a life.

With so many people shopping at one time, many of whom apparently cannot act human while shopping, businesses must ensure their customers' safety. Target, for example, took steps to ease some of the expected Black Friday madness and risks this year.

For one, the doors opened for only 30 shoppers at a time — no more sweeping mass of locusts. Also, a line of carts directed shoppers in single file partway into the store before they could go their own way, branching traffic off inside instead of allowing the crowd to flood through the entrance.

Restrictions like these should not be necessary to ensure everyone's safety, but they apparently are. Because this seems the case, I would like to see other stores take safety precautions against the inevitable rush for holiday sales.

As long as there are sales, there will be people lining up. As long as people line up, businesses must protect their customers' safety.

The customers have responsibilities too. We need to rediscover the good-spirited nature of behaving courteously to others.

Still, if we really cannot keep our humanity in the face of a sale, maybe we should do away with the practice all-together and find another way to show we care.