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Posted on Sat, Nov. 11, 2006

## Send touch-screen machines into orbit

I went to the polls Tuesday, eager to try out touch-screen voting. Since I'm an experienced computer user, I anticipated no problems. Boy, was I wrong. It's a disaster. The navigation was tough for me to understand, so it must be incomprehensible to non-computer users. Once I had finished, I expected a button that said VOTE, but no dice: it's "Print Your Ballot and Review Choices." Unfortunately, the printout is behind a piece of semi-transparent vinyl, unreadable. I suppose the machine got it right, but who knows? Can we not do better? If we can put a man on the moon, why can't we put these infernal machines up there, too? Let's go back to the old-fashioned way: the paper ballots and the little punch stylus. That method works. This one doesn't.

*Ed Morgan  
Mountain View*

## Voting in California simply unmanageable

I am sure I am not alone when I say that the California ballot is far too long and too complicated. I spent five hours reading, studying and digesting all the campaign brochures, fliers and Mercury News editorials that I had saved over the past month. I am retired and have time to do this. The average person does not have that much time to invest. The problem lies in the system. The Legislature is afraid to do its job. Most of the propositions we were asked to vote on should have been debated and decided upon by legislators -- not us. They are afraid to act because of accountability. The system must change.

*Craig Northrup  
Los Gatos*

## Pelosi moves closer to the Oval Office

I seem to recall that the line of succession if the president dies is first the vice president and then the speaker of the House. With the current appeal of President Bush and the health of Vice President Cheney, could we be in line for President Pelosi?

*Tom Haines  
Boulder Creek*

## Pelosi suddenly ready to work with GOP

It was interesting to see Rep. Nancy Pelosi extend an olive branch to the Republican Party after the Democrats' Election Day victory. I can still remember her press conference two years ago after the Republicans were victorious. Usually, the defeated gives the obligatory "congratulations to my opponent, he ran a good campaign, and I look forward to working with him on the issues." Instead she was venomous and displayed only sour grapes to her opposition. Hopefully, now she can work with the other side of the aisle to get things done. Maybe she just needed to hold all the cards in order to "negotiate."

*Dave Benton  
Saratoga*

## Generous friends wrongly described

Most of the donations to my campaign came from retired Santa Clara Unified School District employees with whom I worked for over 40 years. Your story (Page 1B, Nov. 4) incorrectly labeled these as donations from a special-interest group. Most of the donations came from former custodians, counselors, teachers, administrators, clerks, secretaries, cafeteria workers. From friends. To call these people a special-interest group is to denigrate their generosity and their intent. Special-interest money may be part of some campaigns; it was not part of mine.

*Joe Kornder, newly elected Santa Clara City Council member  
Santa Clara*

## Election over -- time for gas prices to rise

Isn't it amazing that just as the political campaigns have ceased, there are reports that retail gas prices have started jumping? (Page 2A, Nov. 9.) Must be just a coincidence. We had better prepare for \$3-plus gas prices once again, with perhaps the next respite coming just before the 2008 elections.

*Chandran Cheriyan  
Saratoga*

## Media no longer even pretend objectivity

The Republican and Democratic parties have politicized the elections. This is standard procedure. What has changed are increasingly partisan media who tend to stump more for the like-minded candidates than before. Although it is unrealistic to expect reporters not to have opinions, it would be nice to not always know what they are. It is time for the electorate to politicize all elections by voting third-party candidates exclusively until we run the elephants and the jackasses back to the days of public servants actually serving the public.

*Ric Gerrits  
San Jose*

## Students excellent as poll workers

Having read the Read This! article (Page 8E, Nov. 7) regarding student poll workers, I definitely agree this is a valuable lesson in the election process. However, on the other side of the coin, the precincts clearly benefit from their services. I was a precinct inspector in Tuesday's election, which had three students from Lynbrook High augmenting my staff. They quickly mastered the technical and procedural issues and were extremely courteous to the voters. Since we're always short of poll workers, my recommendation is that every precinct have one or more student volunteers.

*Dave Small  
San Jose*

## Election Day's lesson for the people of Iraq

I hope the people of Iraq are paying attention to this most recent U.S. election. In a great democracy, you get to replace the truly evil with the merely incompetent.

*Ramesh Gopalan  
Fremont*

## Mercury News ignores local happenings

What has happened to the Mercury News? On average, three out of 16 front section stories are written by outside sources, letters to the editor discuss the status of television programs, and there are day-old stories. The very day that a Halloween mask graced nearly the entire front page of the LifeStyle section, four local Campbell high school juniors were flying home with second-place honors from an international NASA-sponsored competition. These kids crushed international professional and university-level competitors with their solar-powered space elevator design. "Nova," PBS, BBC, L.A. Times, Campbell Reporter and many others were there; where was the Mercury News?

*Elaine Johnson  
Campbell*

### Big day for soccer went by unnoticed

Nov. 8, in a way, marks the start of the effort of the Oakland A's to bring back professional soccer to the South Bay with the grand opening of the new Earthquakes office at the Fairmont Hotel in San Jose. I am just disappointed that the Merc did not make any mention of the event leading up to this day. You would think someone wanting to spend \$100 million to build a modern outdoor multi-use sports stadium in the city would generate some interest from a paper that supposedly is serious about covering local news. I guess not.

*Jim Basic*  
San Jose

### War veterans still deserve recognition

When Congress in 1926 officially established Nov. 11 as a national day of remembrance of the end of World War I, it recommended "that the recurring anniversary of this date should be commemorated with thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations." Four score years later, Armistice Day has become Veterans Day. Prayers for peace seem futile in today's explosive world, but at least we can give thanks to those of our citizens who have endured the horror of battle, and have carried on in life despite their traumatic memories.

*Roger Bonilla*  
Sunnyvale

### Opinions one thing, but facts are another

Regarding Steve M. Zientek's opinion (Letters, Nov. 9), a fact check seems in order. Bill Clinton was not impeached because he had consensual sex. It was because he lied in a deposition in a sexual-harassment lawsuit. You are entitled to your own opinion, but not your own facts.

*Dave Moberg*  
San Jose

### Rumsfeld-Saddam handshake ignored

When President Bush was recounting the distinguished public service of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld this week, he left out Rumsfeld's handshake with Saddam Hussein on Dec. 20, 1983, and subsequent restoration of diplomatic ties. That handshake occurred two years after the 1982 massacre for which Saddam has just been sentenced to hang.

*Jerry Krinock*  
San Jose

### Flooding problems unsolved for many

A number of property owners who are no longer in the mapped 100-year-flood zone of the Guadalupe River will still have to buy mandatory flood insurance because they are in areas prone to interior flooding (Page 1B, Nov. 7). San Jose's outdated storm drain systems in these areas can handle only 2-, 3-, or 5-year events. Flap-gate outlet structures on the storm drains that lead to the Guadalupe will close during 100-year events, causing additional backup. One possible solution is to build pump stations to relieve storm drain backup. Unfortunately, the city of San Jose has yet to offer a glimmer of hope that this interior flooding problem, which affects a number of downtown neighborhoods, including Japantown and Hyde Park, will ever be solved.

*Mark Wheeler, vice president, Hyde Park Neighborhood Association*  
San Jose

### Not everyone supports trade with Vietnam

"U.S.-Vietnam Ties Deepen" (Page 3A, Nov. 8) gave the impression that Vietnamese-Americans support unconditional trade with communist Vietnam. On the contrary, an Open Letter signed by noteworthy ethnic Vietnamese groups and Vietnamese dissidents called for the preconditions of releasing all political and religious prisoners, ending house arrests of dissidents, allowing independent trade unions and two-way exchange of cultural products. Proponents of the 1994 lifting of economic embargo, the 1995 diplomatic recognition and the 2000 U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement said signed papers would bring freedom. Instead, the results have all been relentless persecutions by Hanoi. The Vietnam Human Rights Act should be passed before the Vietnamese communists, who generally vote against the United States at the United Nations, are allowed more benefits of trade with America.

*Scott Pham*  
San Jose

### Let U.S. workers chase their jobs overseas

Giora Tarnopolsky had a tongue-in-cheek idea (Letters, Nov. 9) about outsourcing our children to better and cheaper schools and health care in foreign lands, but she forgot to mention that we could also send their fathers along to find their old jobs. They could then send their income home for us to live on. We are quickly approaching the point when this will be a viable alternative to our workforce.

*George Somorjai*  
San Jose

### A's move to Fremont? Thanks, but no thanks

What is Fremont thinking when it comes to baseball stadiums (Page 1A, Nov. 9)? Our freeways are clogged, and there is no public transportation close to the area proposed west of Interstate 880. Where would the children in those proposed condominiums go to school? And more hotels? Why build more hotels when there are numerous hotels along the I-880 corridor with gaping vacancy rates? What about commute gridlock?

These are just a few of the potential problems that can arise from this "addition" to Fremont. I don't think Fremont's city council is ready to take on this challenge when they can't even attract an upscale grocery store to the area. Thanks, but no thanks, Lew Wolff. Fremont, keep an eye on this one.

*Stephanie Vlahov*  
Fremont