

The people vote; the doctor calls

It seems that Americans have had enough of Miss Lewinsky. Instead they voted in the last election for middle of the road candidates and sound government, and against right and left wing extremists and puritans. In local elections they likewise chose moderate candidates. In Minnesota, however, they made an unusual choice in electing the Reform Party candidate, who trounced other candidates for governor on a platform of lower taxes and less spending, but also legal recognition of gay relationships, looser gun laws, and possibly legalizing prostitution.

Also of interest were the outcomes of some 235 state or local ballots: Washington state joined California in banning affirmative action programmes based on gender or race. Three states approved medical use of marijuana; two approved gambling on boats or Indian reservations; two rejected bans on late, so called "partial abortion;" and three rejected same sex marriage.

Several states rejected tax raising measures, but two approved building new stadiums. Proanimal or environment measures included restrictions on expanding hog farms, using cyanide in some forms of gold mining, using steel traps to catch fur bearing animals, and exporting out of state horses intended to be slaughtered for human consumption. But Alaska rejected banning wolf snares, and other states voted against imposing various restrictions on hunting and fishing. Two states formally acknowledged women's equality, but New Hampshire retained male pronouns in its constitution, even though its governor is a she.

In Cook County voters approved by a large majority an amendment declaring health care a "basic human right." Initiated by supporters of a single payer system, this proposition is advisory and non-binding, to be considered by the state legislature. Meanwhile we read that the house call is back, as more doctors visit their sick patients, many of whom are elderly (mean age 78) with chronic or even terminal illnesses. But now the black leather bag has given way to high tech equipment in the doctor's car. Less expensive than hospital care and vastly preferable for debilitated patients who cannot get around easily, a house call is certainly nicer and more convenient than waiting for hours in an unfriendly, overcrowded emergency room.