

Revise inept ASUO election process

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Of the Emerald

For the second year in a row the winner of the ASUO's presidential runoff election was undecided until many days after the election. For the second year in a row the ASUO's Constitution Committee was asked to interpret the constitution's rules concerning elections. And for the second year in a row the Constitution Committee ruled in favor of the ASUO Executive's position.

The fact that this has happened two years in a row illustrates the need for some revision and definition of ASUO election procedures.

There are those who complain that the students are apathetic about student government on this campus. Who can blame them when the rules governing the elections are so vague and contradictory that everyone involved, including the Constitution Committee is unsure which rules apply where.

You can't blame the committee for denying election challenges by Craig Geary last year and Jeff Warren this year. Their job is to interpret the constitution's election rules. They did the best they could with what they had to work with. But you know how it is, you can't make chicken salad out of chicken shit.

The confusion arises out of the existence of two somewhat contradictory sets of rules concerning ASUO elections. Section 10 of the Constitution has 12 paragraphs dealing with election rules. But there also exists a second, separate document entitled ASUO Election Rules. Which document takes precedent in elections remains unclear. A look at the two controversial elections shows the problems.

Last spring Craig Geary ran for ASUO president in the Executive

election and finished third behind Gary Feldman and Dave Tyler. Geary decided to mount a write-in campaign in the runoff election between Feldman and Tyler a week later. But ASUO vice-president Jamie Burns ruled Geary's campaign illegal. Burns cited section 10.2 of the ASUO constitution in making his decision. The section states: "A majority of votes cast in the ASUO Executive election shall be necessary to elect. If no candidate receives a majority, a runoff election shall be held within one week between the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes."

Nowhere in the constitution does it state that write-in campaigns are not allowed in the runoff election. But section 4.2 of the ASUO Election Rules states:

"Candidates polling more than 50 percent of the votes for any one position shall be automatically elected. The two candidates polling the highest number of votes in the general election, in the absence of a majority, shall be put on the ballot of the run-off election. The candidate receiving the highest number of votes in the runoff election shall be the winner."

Geary appealed Burns' ruling before the Constitution Committee and it decided that section 10.2 implies that the runoff vote should be between the top two finishers in the Executive election and write-ins shouldn't be allowed. The committee accepted the ASUO's argument that if write-ins were allowed in the runoff, it might take countless elections before someone attained 50 percent of the vote. Feldman attempted to rectify the

constitution's ambiguity last November by placing an amendment to the constitution on the fall election ballot. The amendment would have disallowed write-in campaigns in the runoff election. The electorate soundly defeated Feldman's proposal. Apparently they saw nothing wrong with write-ins.

A year later Jeff Warren is tasting Geary's frustration.

The question placed before the Constitution Committee this time was essentially, "What the hell is a vote." The committee decided that ballots marked "no response" were not votes. Thus Ramon Herrera was able to gain the required 50 percent majority. Had the committee ruled "no response" as votes, then neither Herrera nor Warren would have received a majority of the votes cast and a new election would have been required.

Warren's and Geary's frustrations arise from the fact that they tried to apply the standard American election process to the ASUO election process. They discovered that what applies in the Real World doesn't necessarily apply in ASUO-world.

It becomes obvious that the Constitution Committee might be deciding all future elections if the ASUO continues to operate its elections according to the existing

rules. Herrera promises to compile a handbook listing the election rules and regulations. If the ASUO wants to avoid any future election messes, some changes have to be made.

Write-in campaigns are legal in nearly every type of election in the United States, so why not in the ASUO elections? The argument that many elections would have to be held at the students' expense is shaky at best. If a majority isn't attained in U.S. Presidential elections, then the House of Representatives decides who is president. Student University Affairs Board members are elected representatives of the students. They should decide the winner when a majority isn't attained, not a Constitution Committee made up of members appointed by the ASUO president.

No response designations may be convenient for computer tabulations, but the voters should have been made aware of what they were doing when they marked no response. The fact that they marked no response rather than leaving the presidential

column blank implies that they were voting. Many people participate in elections to vote against a candidate rather than for one. No matter the intent, no response should have been counted in the final total.

It should be decided what rules are going to be followed in ASUO elections. Either the section dealing with elections in the ASUO constitution or the ASUO Election Rules should be junked and the other revised to clear up the ambiguities.

The ASUO's credibility is fading fast. Fewer and fewer students are voting in student body elections each year. The present election rules deny them the freedom of choice to vote for whomever they desire. Herrera should take immediate steps to review the election process. A committee appointed now could have revisions ready for a vote in the ASUO elections next November.

A problem definitely exists; and immediate action is needed to clear it up.

Analysis

county assessor?

- The only candidate with field experience in appraising property for tax purposes.
- Independent of lumber and real estate interest groups; endorsed by the Lane County Labor Council.
- Actively supports reform of outdated marijuana laws.

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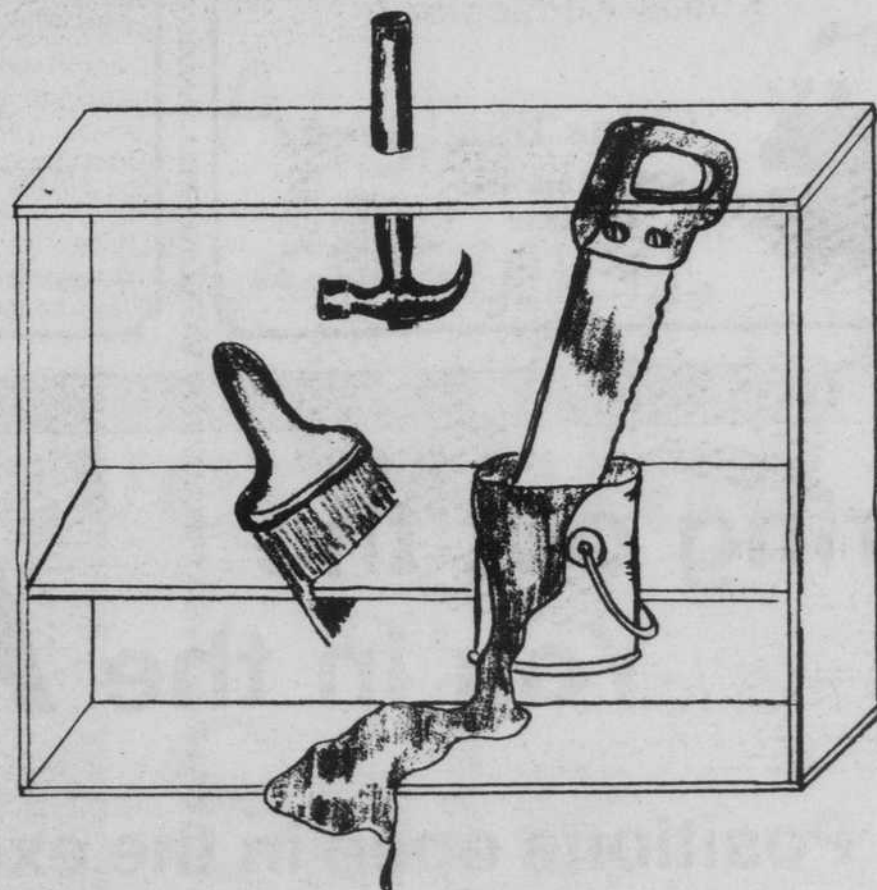
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