

Politicians should avoid special-interest funding

There has been a growing national concern over political campaign contributions from special-interest political action committees.

During the '80s, the number of special-interest groups, small and large, increased tremendously. Groups such as Mothers Against Drunk Driving, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, and National Abortion Rights Action League have gained membership and greater clout.

We have seen the same trend here on campus. There are now more than 100 student groups on campus, many with special interests, and quite a few of these groups are active in campus elections.

This year the ASUO is trying to play more of a watchdog role in the election process. Candidates running for elected positions in this year's race will be required to report information on all campaign contributions, how much they were, where the funds came from and how they were spent.

Candidates also will have to report "in kind" contributions, such as supplies, copying and donated resources. This is an addition to the past rules, and will help ensure honest and open elections.

It is good to see the ASUO making stringent efforts to keep an eye on the who, what, where, when, how and why of campus campaign contributions. All candidates' contribution information is open to the public, so interested students can find out who and what the candidates are affiliated with.

Student groups have long been active in political races here on campus and in the community. There are no limits on the amount of funds a student group can donate to a candidate, but groups that receive IFC funding can only donate money from their own fundraising accounts, thus ensuring that student fees are used within the group.

There are many problems with special-interest groups donating money to political candidates, whether they are campus, local, state or national politicians.

When a politician accepts money from a PAC, they are affiliating themselves with that group and its ideology. That group will most likely expect the politician to support its causes through word and action. Hence the politician is pressured into supporting, or introducing any legislation or actions that the group is backing because if he or she doesn't, the group might stop contributing to the campaign fund.

And what if a politician finds that he or she disagrees with a particular piece of legislation that the group supports? What happens then?

What about politicians that receive contributions from numerous different PACs? These elected officials could be selling themselves out and taking on the ideas and causes of their supporters.

The power of these groups is growing. People are finding that by joining a PAC they can have an impact on the people in power. The media is giving more coverage to PACs, and in some cases forcing politicians to become manipulated by the groups and their causes.

There has been enough concern in Oregon alone to warrant a ballot initiative limiting the amount of campaign contributions politicians can accept from special-interest groups. This is not the first time this has come up.

Rep. Mike Burton, D-Portland, introduced legislation in Oregon last year to try and get the state government to watchdog itself and limit PAC contributions. His legislation was not well-received in Congress and never got close to passing. So he vowed to take it to the ballot this year.

Norma Paulus, former secretary of state, believes that if the measure goes to the voters it will pass. Hopefully it will.

PAC funds are making up an ever increasing portion of campaign contributions, and because of this, the cost of running a campaign is increasing every year.

Oregon voters could set a nationwide precedent by approving the initiative. Politicians should be supported by their constituents at the ballot box, not by PAC dollars.

Perhaps if the initiative passes, the ASUO should consider limiting the amount of funds each student organization or special-interest group can contribute to an ASUO candidate's campaign. It would help to ensure the intent and integrity of our student officers.



Letters

Real issues

Doesn't the *Oregon Daily Emerald* have anything better to put on the front page than the "in depth" piece of Feb. 26 which uncovers — surprise — the Republican party is donating money to Dave Frohnmayer's campaign for governor.

So what if the national parties and associated campaign funds give money to candidates they deem worthy. That is the purpose of organizations like the Republican National Committee and the Republican Governor's Association. The Democrats do the same thing with their party organizations, just not as well.

If the *Emerald* sees the issue as campaign finance abuses, why doesn't it uncover the hundreds of thousands of dollars raised and spent by Neil Goldschmidt, who decided not even to run after all. Why doesn't it come down hard on David Dix (who represents the district the University is located in) whose committees violated campaign reporting rules and have been assessed record fines for the abuses. These fines were levied by Secretary of State Barbara Roberts, now raising millions to take on Frohnmayer. Everything Frohnmayer's campaign is doing is perfectly legal.

The issue here is not campaign finance, but rather the *Emerald's* desire to slam Frohnmayer and other Republicans. If the *Emerald* wants to do that, put it on the editorial or make it an op-ed piece. Passing the story off as investigative reporting is deceptive. The cartoon accompanying the article is worthy of the tabloids and nothing better. The editor obviously can't slam Frohnmayer's character or find a real issue to attack him on.

Eric Stinemates
Student

Abolish

For Steven Weidman (*ODE*, Feb. 27) to accuse the "communist-dominated African National Congress" of not having renounced "necklacing" and

murdering of thousands of "innocent black Africans" is a statement conceived in ignorance of the political reality in South Africa.

The fact is the ANC has never endorsed "necklacing." More importantly, the ANC has pursued a policy of strict nonviolence for almost 50 years, with the sole reward of escalated government brutality and more apartheid laws. When in 1960 the ANC was simply outlawed, Nelson Mandela and others formed a guerilla organization to engage in anti-government sabotage.

The ANC never killed thousands of "innocent black Africans;" this statement of Weidman springs of pure fantasy.

"Bloodshed" in South Africa has not been caused by the ANC, but by a white supremacist government's policy of apartheid, which today still oppresses and humiliates millions of blacks with dozens of apartheid laws.

Moreover, to say that the ANC is "communist-dominated" is not only factually wrong, but also completely misses the point. The point is that the ANC is against apartheid, so is the South African Communist Party, and so are many more organizations, liberals, communists and capitalists. Also true is that the ruling white "capitalist" National Party, in power since 1948, is responsible and "accountable" for apartheid and all of its violence, brutality and disgrace.

Be honest: the issue is not communism, capitalism, or anything-ism; the issue is that apartheid is not something to be reformed by South Africa's ruling National Party. It has to be abolished.

Thomas Unold
Graduate student

Delinquents

The *Oregon Daily Emerald* once printed an article on its front page that lamented the Bush administration for its hypocritical rhetoric on education, saying that it is wrong for "the Education President" to not devote more and more tax dollars to funds that, among other things, would provide for more student loans. But how much more money should be appropriated for such loans when 9 percent of them in Oregon become delinquent each year? (*Register-Guard*, Mar. 3)

Bush, unlike the authors of the article, seems to realize that more money is not the end-all solution to better education. We must get a certain commitment from the beneficiaries.

The grassroots answer to better education doesn't start with more money. It starts in the classroom with professors who know the value of teaching and involvement versus lecturing and passivity. It starts in the classroom with higher attendance rates, even on sunny days.

I often wonder if at the University issues — such as animal rights and gay rights — and even writing personals in the *Emerald*, overshadow academics to such a degree that classrooms and books are nearly superfluous.

It is correct and traditional and even desirable that universities are forums for progressive, enlightened expression. But after four, five, or even six years at a university, many students cannot synthesize information and write coherent paragraphs. Mindlessness in those who are enlightened is still just that. So let's start there.

Michael Jordan
International studies

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