

Ballot box better for OSPIRG debate

The OSPIRG funding debate has reached a new level. The ASUO Programs Finance Committee rejected OSPIRG's goal statement last term. Now a lawsuit is going to be filed to ensure that the group is never funded.

The Individual Rights Foundation, which describes itself as a "non-profit, public-interest law firm" in Los Angeles, has decided to sue the University in an effort to cut the funding of OSPIRG. The president of the group described the upcoming suit as a message to universities against "backdoor political funding drive[s]."

Backdoor? In the case of OSPIRG and a number of student-run programs at the University, the truth is that the students did have a say. An election is held every two years in which students are asked whether OSPIRG should be funded.

Unfortunately, few students choose to participate in campus elections. In fact, fewer than 1,700 students even voted on the OSPIRG question in the 1994 election. But among those who did, the measure passed by about 200 votes. It's disheartening to realize that students choose to have so little say in how their money is spent when their voice truly counts — at the ballot box.

But that doesn't negate the fact that students did, and continue to have, a say in the system. Just because few chose to vote shouldn't invalidate the views of those students or the integrity of the electoral system.

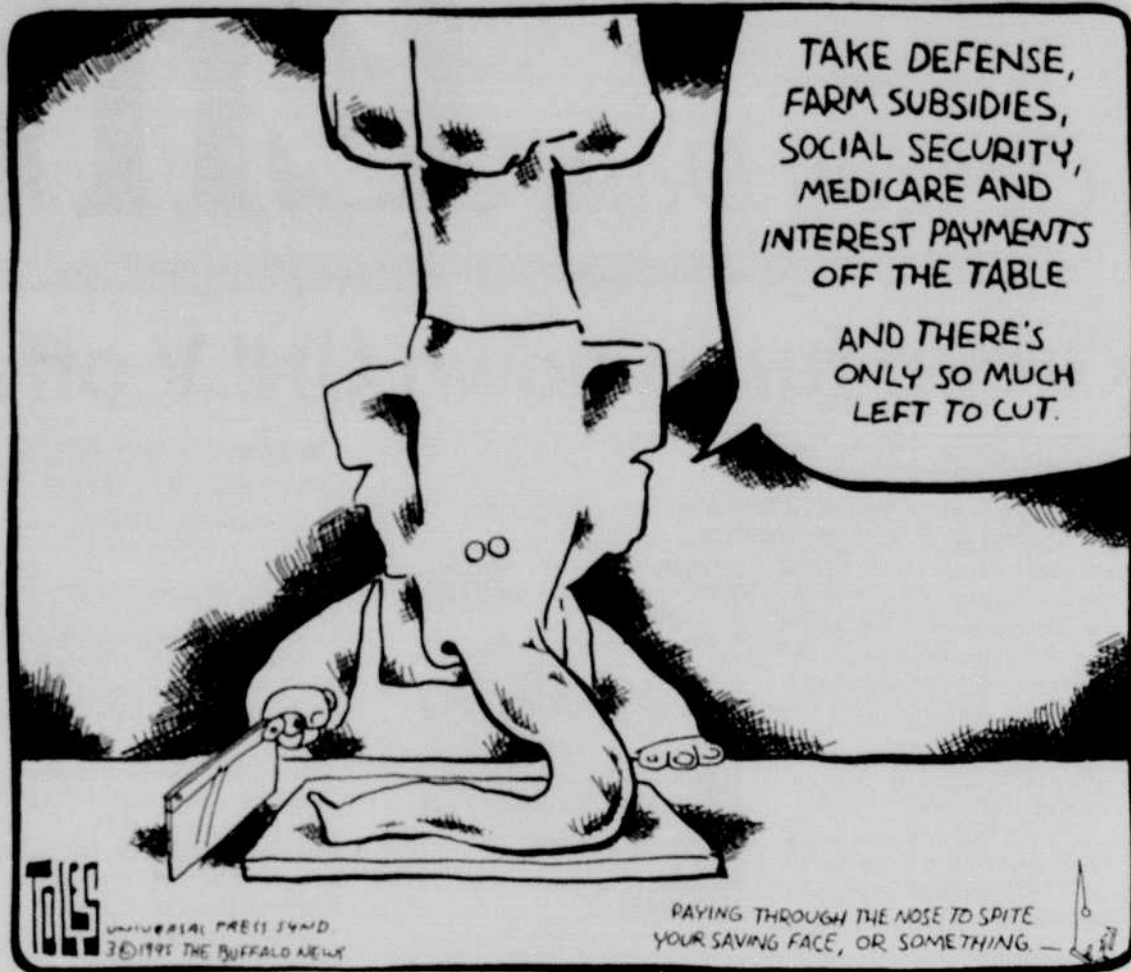
Students should solve debates like the OSPIRG funding question at the ballot box during the regular campus elections in the spring. It's the reason why time is spent conducting an election. Student government and student organizations want to know what students think about certain issues. When only 1,700 students vote, it gives the distinct impression that no one cares if OSPIRG is funded or not.

As has been the oft-repeated slogan of many who support funding OSPIRG, the University is a true marketplace of ideas. Financially supporting OSPIRG helps to contribute another viewpoint to the others on campus.

With the lawsuit, the debate over OSPIRG will be leaving the jurisdiction of students and entering that of the legal system. What was a student debate over funding policy will become a protracted lawsuit that will be appealed regardless of the outcome. The suit, which could set precedent for many campus groups, would not be settled for many months and almost certainly not by September.

Suing the University isn't the way to resolve the debate of funding OSPIRG. Students must vote during campus elections and express their opinions instead of being apathetic and letting the few decide for the many. Students had their chance to decide whether OSPIRG should be funded and they voted to fund the group.

To paraphrase an old saying: if you don't vote, don't complain later.



COMMENTARY

Anti-abortion ad inaccurate, misleading

Wendy Dame

A few weeks ago, this publication included a 12-page advertising insert brandishing the words "She's a child, not a choice" across the cover (ODE Mar. 10). The campus and the community were outraged and rightfully so.

This has, however, provided Planned Parenthood with an opportunity to clear up a portion of the misinformation printed in this anti-choice insert and provide abortion facts left out.

Although our local Planned Parenthood does not perform abortions, we do offer reproductive health care, pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection counseling and educational programs. We have access to a number of resources concerning pregnancy and abortion and feel it is critical to clear up at least some of the misinformation printed in the insert.

Misinformation #1—What's wrong with this picture?!

The stages of development of the fetuses were incorrect. The insert used the medical date, the first day of the last menstrual cycle, rather than gestation, allowing them to describe and picture fetuses at least two weeks more developed than the developmental stage printed.

Misinformation #2—So-called Post Abortion Syndrome

This condition described by the insert as women suffering mental and emotional anguish following an abortion is a non-condition completely refuted by Surgeon General C. Everett Koop years ago. In fact, according to an article in *Science* (Apr. 6, 1995), the most prominent emotional response of most women to first-trimester abortions is relief. Neither the American Psychological Association nor the American Psychiatric Association recognize the existence of this condition. Another study entitled "Postpartum and Postabortion Psychiatric Reac-

tions" shows that serious psychiatric disturbances are less frequent after abortion than after childbirth.

Misinformation #3—When are abortions typically performed?

In more than one article in the insert, readers are led to believe there are a great number of abortions performed in the second and even the third trimester. Only 11 percent of abortions are performed after 12 weeks. Fewer than 1 percent of abortions are provided after 20 weeks. In practice, women have access to abortion in the third trimester only when their lives are in danger or when the fetuses are severely deformed.

Facts the anti-abortion insert left out:

Fact #1—When abortion is illegal, women die.

Between 1845 and 1970, desperation forced millions of women to turn to dangerous back-alley abortions. Thousands of women died — at least 100 a year. Thousands more suffered mutilation, long-term illness and even sterility. Many women inserted hangers and other sharp objects into their uteruses, threw themselves down staircases, or swallowed lye, bleach, or turpentine. In 1969, 18 women a day were admitted to hospitals in New York City alone for treatment of incomplete abortions.

Approximately 1.5 million safe and legal abortions are provided each year in the United States. If abortions were made illegal once again, the number of illegal abortions would probably soar from the current 20,000 to more than 1,000,000 per year. The heaviest burden would fall on young, poor and minority women who would be forced to rely on unqualified practitioners, attempt self-induced abortion, or bear unwanted children.

Fact #2—In a single year, more than a million U.S. teenagers become pregnant.

Many of these young women have little understanding of

Between 1845 and 1970, desperation forced millions of women to turn to dangerous back-alley abortions.

their bodies and have begun having sexual intercourse before receiving information or counseling about ways to prevent pregnancy. Some have been raped or sexually abused.

Fact #3—Forty percent of teenage women who become pregnant choose to have an abortion rather than bear a child at that time.

Teenagers with unplanned pregnancies face difficult choices. If they carry to term and keep the baby they will be more likely than other young women to drop out of school, develop health problems, have their marriages end in divorce and live in poverty the rest of their lives.

Since 1979 (Planned Parenthood opened its teen birth control clinic in 1978), teen pregnancy in Lane County has declined 46 percent and teen abortions have declined 71 percent.

Prevention is the key.

Although abortion as an option must always be available for women, prevention is the best alternative. It is crucial that education programs are made available for everyone. These programs should include prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection, as well as decision making skills to delay sexual activity.

Silence and ignorance can be deadly. Misinformation, such as that presented in the anti-abortion insert, does nothing but mislead, discriminate against and degrade women.

Wendy Dame is the board president for Planned Parenthood Health Services of Southwestern Oregon.

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3159, EUGENE, OREGON 97403

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

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Business Office: 346-5512 **Classified Advertising:** 346-4343