

Lawsuit: OSPIRG claims innocence

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student organization and time are going to fight this," Krishnamurthy said. "All of this is extra time and extra bullshit that students shouldn't have to deal with."

It's an issue that is not new to Krishnamurthy. Last May, 18 University students filed a similar lawsuit. She said the University's case is currently at a legal standstill, with lawyers trading information and OSPIRG having to produce copies of all incidental fee expenditures for the past five years.

Of the 18 students, many of them are involved or have ties to the Commentator staff, the University's conservative journal of opinion. Krishnamurthy said she's disappointed that the issue has gotten to a point where she can't answer any questions they may have about OSPIRG.

"Now it's come down to a process that has been taken out of my hands as a student and into a courtroom that I don't understand," she said.

And now it's the same situation at LCC.

Krishnamurthy said the implications of both lawsuits, if passed, will affect more than just OSPIRG but groups like Students for Choice and the ethnic student unions.

One of the plaintiffs in the LCC lawsuit, Bill Hollingsworth, is a former student government president.

"I'm not out to kill OSPIRG," he said according to an Associated Press article. "They have a legitimate right to exist. They just don't have a legitimate right to use my money to do their politicking."

Ellen Huffaker, the University's OSPIRG campus organizer, said she finds this argument to be null and void according to a 1985 Attorney General opinion.

"Actually, it's not illegal to use student money for lobbying," she said. But she stressed that OSPIRG chooses not to use money for lobbying.

She said the LCC administration, also a defendant in the case, supports OSPIRG. Likewise, the University administration and the ASUO have both backed the student group.

Sixty-five percent of the University's student body voted to support OSPIRG in 1994. Every two years the environmental organization's funding comes to a student vote and for the past twenty-five years it has received a majority vote.

OSPIRG has also been supported by the student body at LCC.

Krishnamurthy said one good thing to come out of the lawsuit was the broad-based support for OSPIRG that has come from other student groups, professors, staff and community members.

Trend: Fraternity slump similar to one in the 60s

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we're selling by increasing the value of the product." There is, he said, a lot of work to be done.

Greek adviser Jason Ashley said increasing the value of the system includes reminding fraternities and the rest of the community there is "more to being in a fraternity than going to a party on Friday night."

"We need to get back to what fraternities were founded on," Ashley said. "The principles of honesty, service and scholarship are sometimes lost."

Ashley said though some fraternity members fit the stereotype of the drunk, irresponsible party-goer, it is a very small percentage. The system is an easy target because it is under greater scrutiny than the rest of the community.

Koehorst agreed.

"It's not easy to change those misconceptions," he said, noting that the fraternity system is not close-knit, making it hard to combat issues of stereotype.

Those issues, including academics and drinking, are priorities with the Alumni Interfraternity Council. They report the average GPA of incoming freshmen at 3.3, while the average fraternity GPA lags at 2.75.

The council also reports that although the Interfraternity Council voted for a dry Rush this fall, many of the houses did not abide by the rule, which shows a "lack of continuity and professionalism."

ATO President Marc Passetti said in a time when lawsuits are common, "it's in everybody's best interest to abide by the rules."

In addition to following the

rules, the alumni council urges fraternity members to become leaders.

"The leadership on campus in years past came from the greek community," reads a letter from Janney to alumni and current fraternity members. "It can happen again."

Koehorst said in order for the system to succeed, it needs help from the University — help that has dwindled over the last few years.

"The University needs to recognize we're an entity they need," Koehorst said.

In a time when some students are housed in hotels due to dorm over-crowding, the University should promote fraternities as a positive living option, he said.

Serving as advisors and mediators between the fraternities and the administration,

Janney and the council have been working with University Vice President Dan Williams to improve communication and find out what the University wants from the fraternity system.

"[The fraternities] need to live up to the founding principles," Janney said. "They'll survive if they do, they won't survive if they don't."

Koehorst said although increased alumni involvement will have positive effects through advising and donations, the fate of the system is dependent on students' attitudes toward fraternities.

If the cycle follows the trend of previous ruts like the one experienced in the late 60s and early 70s, Koehorst said, "it's going to get worse before it gets better."



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