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Absurd elections are serious problem

AN EMERALD EDITORIAL

The high number of grievances indicates problems with the ASUO elections rules

Recently, Disney opened yet another theme park, this one dedicated to showcasing (and occasionally killing) animals. While this is all fine and good (except for the animals and the poor public planners trying to deal with still more traffic in central Florida), there's no good reason why animals should get so much attention.

We've got a better idea. Disney should open a theme park based upon the ASUO elections — let's call it Grievance World. As you wander from a realistic simulation of the infamous Progressive table to animatronic renditions of stressed-out Constitution Court justices, you too could slowly go insane.

Viewed as petty amusement, the piles of grievances filed during the elections are more funny than frightening. Viewed as an example of public activism and student handling of civil affairs, the elections are a bit more alarming.

Many of the grievances filed were based on legitimate complaints that need to be addressed. Some were not. The sheer number of complaints raises issues beyond the alleged rules violations, however.

This year, like last year, the final outcome of the elections will not officially be determined until the Constitution Court meets to consider the vast number of complaints. That meeting won't happen until mid-May, after law school finals are done.

Such delays are inexcusable, but they are hardly the fault of the court. Rather, it is the elections complaint process that deserves blame.

If the elections board were given the power to consider and act upon grievances, and if that power were clearly

defined and included action beyond rerunning the elections, the entire elections process could be made to run faster.

Appeals could still go to the Constitution Court, which should also have the ability to hand down decisions that don't require redoing the entire election portion of the election in question.

Additionally, the rules that govern elections need to be clarified to reduce the number of violations that apparently emerged from ignorance or misunderstanding of those rules. Candidates should receive a listing of relevant rules, and those rules should be simple enough for that listing to be useful.

Many complaints occurred when candidates either were not aware of publicity opportunities or thought opportunities existed when they did not. Simplifying, clarifying and publicizing the rules would improve that situation. Such action would also help justify leveling punishment against campaigns that still clearly violated elections codes.

This process is one the Constitution Court, the current and future ASUO Executive and the elections board should all address by meeting and formulating a proposal for rules changes. At the very least, they could reach a clear understanding of how the current rules affect candidates and should be enforced.

Until efforts to achieve clarity and efficiency take place, we can look forward to an elections process that mirrors the Magic Kingdom rather than the magic of democracy.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Elections sad

I am extremely saddened and disheartened by a number of incidents and comments that have occurred during this year's elections.

First off, Claudia Villena forgot to tell the readers in her letter (ODE, April 23) that she is the campaign manager for the Progressive slate.

And secondly, Michael Olson, another Progressive slate candidate, was not truthful when he stated in his letter (ODE, April 23) that all of the Progressive slate winners had to go back to the ballot. Olson certainly did not have to go back to the ballot, so I do not know why he thinks that all Progressives were forced to go back to the ballot. Olson also implied in his letter (ODE, April 23) that my grievance was "politically biased." I am disturbed that any student leader would have the audacity to judge another person and label them politically without ever speaking to them about their political views. I think that all of us need to get rid of this "us" and "them" attitude that is making everyone talk nonsense.

These types of actions seem to be anything but progressive. To me, being progressive means that you believe that every student, whether they are involved with a program or not, should have the chance to run for office and that you will do your best to recruit all students into student government and student programs.

Progressive also means that you will not run for office or endorse those running for office in a write-in campaign simply because you do not like the opposing candidates. I wish that students would campaign for office because they care about and want to listen to all students, whether they are conservative or liberal, black or white, tall or short, dumb or intelligent. You should represent all students, period.

Progressive means that you understand that basic campaign rules and local and state laws are there to protect you and all students from harm.

Progressive means that you would like to listen to all student concerns, no matter what their political views may be. By doing this, you also believe that the grievance process is an important means for students to have their voices and concerns heard and that you will do nothing to discourage students from using this process.

Progressive means that you believe that every student campaigning for office should be given an equal chance no matter how much money they have or do not have in their pockets.

I'd also agree with Olson that my grievance was asinine, but it was only asinine because the Progressive slate's violation was asinine. If you plan to work for the government, doesn't it only make sense that you are familiar with and follow the laws? I do not think that this is a very difficult concept to understand.

Now that all of this seems to be nearing an end, I can only point out the good that will come out of all of this. Everyone will finally know whether they won or lost by their merits and not by cheating, and hopefully the grievance and elections rules processes may finally be updated to serve all candidates and students equally.

Lastly, I feel the need to give props out to the only Progressive slate candidate who has shown exemplary

behavior towards me and every other candidate. His name is Matt Swanson, and I think that all of us could benefit from watching his selfless behavior.

Autumn De Poe
 Candidate for Student Senate Seat 7
 Grievance Filer

Prosecute Unger

Last Wednesday I filed a grievance to the ASUO Executive office asking for a halt to the elections, reimbursement for now-illegal campaign fliers and prosecution of ASUO Vice President Ben Unger.

According to Unger (ODE, April 23): "[Unger] was with election board member Jennifer Wilson and OSPIRG director Carolyn Whipple during the disputed incident. He saw campaign leaflets had been distributed in a classroom, which is against University rules, and wanted to take action.

"I saw [the fliers]," Unger explained. "I asked her, 'Jennifer, can I remove these?' She said, 'Yeah.'"

"Wilson supported Unger's story, saying she authorized him as the ASUO Vice President to remove the pamphlets."

As Unger claimed, he had permission to collect leaflets that were against the rules, and thus is not in violation of sabotage rule 2.3. However, acting on this granted permission is acting on behalf of the elections board. 1998 ASUO Elections rule 6.8 reads: "People employed by, or acting on behalf of, the elections board shall not in any way attempt to influence the opinions of the voters concerning candidates or issues on the ballot. The elections board considers violations of this rule to be extremely serious and may prosecute anyone accused of a violation."

Unger, who identified himself at the time he was acting on the permission from the elections board as Geneva Wortman and Morgan Cowling's campaign manager, violated this rule. Moreover, by concurrently participating on Wortman and Cowling's campaign and acting on behalf of the elections board, he takes on more than the responsibility of enforcing the rules of the campaign; he must also comply with the codes of conduct that the elections board itself stands by.

I would say that there are several issues that are debatable in this situation, but the crux of the problems rests on the integrity of Unger. I do not intend to attack Unger personally, but I am calling into question his actions as vice president. Unger has simply been confronted with a conflict of interest. His desire to see Wortman and Cowling in the presidential and vice presidential seats has dictated his actions as vice president, a position possessing vast potential for corruption and abuses of power.

Unger needs to understand that his position as vice president has inherent responsibilities that need to be recognized. The most important realization that Unger needs to acknowledge is that everything he does will be viewed and critiqued by all members of the University community. He is our elected leader and our representative. He needs to live up to the standard that we demand from anyone in that position. Acting in his own self-interest is not acceptable. Unger broke the rules. It influenced the election. These allegations are not "weird." He needs to be prosecuted.

Matt Gross
 Economics/Japanese