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Special election

Continued from Page 1

had to wait for grievances to be heard by the Constitution Court before their victory was official.

"This election is about changing the elections grievance process," Wortman said. "Last year there were 36 grievances filed and we [the ASUO president and vice president] were unofficial for a month."

One area of contention is Wortman's affiliation with OSPIRG. Prior to her presidency, she was a member of the group for three years and served on the board.

Wortman insists that allowing other groups to participate in the election, including OSPIRG, was a constitutional imperative.

"It is clear in the constitution that if we have an election, we have to give other groups the opportunity to participate in the election," she added.

The controversy about Wortman's affiliation with OSPIRG is not easily dismissed by her critics — she submitted the language for the OSPIRG ballot measure to the Constitution Court. The court, which approves ballot measure wording, will decide this week if it will be eligible to appear on the ballot.

"The entire point of the special election is to get OSPIRG back on the ballot," Austin said. "It is not about the constitutional amendment."

Austin, a former congressional candidate, has filed two injunctions with the Constitution Court, hoping that the special election will be found unconstitutional.

Wortman defended her actions. "I think that OSPIRG is important and was a vital part of the campus community," she said. "The organization has gone through a lot of changes this year and I have been getting a lot of

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Geneva Wortman
ASUO president

requests to put it back on the ballot."

Funding for the election has also become a topic of debate because of the potential effect that it could have on voter turnout.

Money allocated by the ASUO for the special election is a scant \$1400 compared to the \$7500 normally spent on spring elections. Vice President Cowling points out that the funding does not represent the real discrepancy between this election and the normal spring election.

For example, she said, this election will not have the labor costs associated with the normal election because elections board members are already on the ASUO payroll. "The only significant difference between this election and the general election is the absence of a voter's guide in the Emerald," Wortman said.

She added that the ASUO will be printing and distributing a voter's guide to fill the void. The guide is scheduled for release on Monday.

Low turnout resulting from less advertising could help boost the effectiveness of campaigning for votes.

For every vote a group can secure for the election, that vote will represent a greater percentage of a low total number of votes.

OSPIRG members were out in

full force Tuesday, gathering signatures of support and telling voters about OSPIRG's "potential" appearance on the ballot.

The last special election was held in 1994 to reorganize the ASUO student government and had a turnout of less than 3 percent.

"It is possible for an election to not count," said Student Senator Tamir Krieger. "If the outcome only represents a few hundred votes, then it shouldn't be considered a mandate for change."

Austin worries about the potential impact of low voter turnout.

"Voter turnout will probably be 2 percent to 5 percent, where last year it was close to 20%," said Austin. "If 800 people show up to vote, that is less votes than the total that OSPIRG received in their favor last year."

Austin filed the first injunction Friday, asking the court to stop the election until a hearing determines its legality.

The second injunction, filed Monday, argues against extension of the deadline to turn in ballot measure wordings.

ASUO Elections Coordinator Taylor Sturges authorized the extension from Friday Feb. 5 to Monday Feb. 8 for measures that would, if passed by students, revive funding for OSPIRG and allow voting by Duck Web for student elections.

OSPIRG and Duck Web voting measures were earlier rejected by the Constitution Court because of wording that violated the criteria which proposed measures must meet prior to appearing on the ballot.

The Constitution Court is expected to release decisions on the injunctions and the wordings for the two remaining ballot measures this week. They are scheduled to meet Wednesday.



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