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PERSPECTIVES

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JUST SAY NO

Students may not be able to stop the special election, but we can blunt its impact

A famous bit of political graffiti reads: If voting changed anything, they'd make it illegal.

We here at the University know that voting does in fact change things. It was proved to us when the Oregon Students Public Interest Research Group was denied \$147,390 of funding last spring.

Now that we've cleared that up, it's time to turn our attention to another question: What do we do when the election itself is illegal?

The special election that was to be held on Feb. 17-18 was mired so deep in controversy that it's difficult to know what the issues are supposed to be.

It started out simply enough. The election was supposed to be the first step in altering the elections process that led to the filing of 36 grievances after the last general election.

The ballot measure that attempts to restore funding to OSPIRG, however, has reignited a controversy that has smoldered for several months.

Several student leaders are claiming the entire election is a sham, nothing more than a way for OSPIRG to sneak back onto campus.

As evidence, they offer the ASUO elections coordinator's decision to allow supporters to rewrite OSPIRG measure wording that the ASUO Constitution Court had rejected.

Also, many people have pointed out that special elections are notorious for their low voter turnout. If this one garnered the usual 2 to 5 percent,

it would be easy for one side of an issue to manipulate the results.

It would seem this is exactly what OSPIRG is doing. Unless they have been living underground for the past few weeks, students are aware that OSPIRG supporters have been out in force. On a given afternoon, a small army stations themselves on the high-traffic path between the residence halls and the bookstore, urging passersby to pledge their support for the organization.

There is also the issue of ASUO President Geneva Wortman's association with OSPIRG. She was an active member of OSPIRG for three years.

Wortman's assertion she has "been getting a lot of requests to put OSPIRG on the ballot" doesn't help their case. If OSPIRG is so popular, it

should have no problem regaining its funding in the regular election.

The outcry over these alleged shady tactics and the Constitution Court's decision have aroused more interest in the special election than would have been expressed otherwise, so it could be a lot more difficult for any one group to sway a significant portion of the electorate.

Whether the election is really about grievances, DuckWeb or OSPIRG, there are enough unanswered questions lingering to mar the entire process.

Perhaps the Constitution Court will simply decide that OSPIRG and the other disputed measures should not be on the ballot.

Maybe OSPIRG will realize that holding a vote in such a loaded atmosphere will only validate the criti-

cism that has been levied at them in the past year, as well as open them up to more challenges in the future.

In the event that neither of these come to pass, though, the Emerald has prepared an alternative course of action.

We encourage each and every student to head to the polls and vote. Against OSPIRG. Against everything, actually.

We may never truly know what the OSPIRG supporters hoped to achieve by acting as they did, but at the very least we can negate the impact of an election that shouldn't even be happening.

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



Thumbs



TO THURSTON HIGH SCHOOL:

The school is receiving national attention once again: this time it's praised for the play, "Bang, Bang, You're Dead."

TO WOMEN'S HOOPS:

As the men falter, the women's basketball team is ranked No. 24 in the nation by USA Today/ESPN.



TO DENYING ACCESS:

Several bills being considered by the Oregon Legislature would put severe restrictions on certain types of public records.

TO "TITANIC SYNDROME":

Salvage officials claimed the tanker that ran aground near Coos Bay last week would be easily pulled out of the sand, but it has leaked fuel oil along six miles of coastline.



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