

PERSPECTIVES

Pandora's BOX

The ASUO and the Constitution Court are setting a dangerous precedent for special elections

Dead chickens, Gardenburgers, OSPIRG and the ASUO Constitution: it is hard to make sense of it all and grasp the bigger picture of what the special election will mean to future University students.

The Constitution Court made a sound decision in forbidding funding issues to be decided by the expected 2 to 5 percent voter turnout. But even allowing the special election to continue at all is a mistake and sets a dangerous precedent.

The last special election in 1994 centered around restructuring how incidental fees were distributed. Before the election, the fee distribution was handled only by the Incidental Fee Committee, which was not held accountable to another body of student government. The fees are the lifeblood of student government and the way in which they were being handled was jeopardizing student control of student fees.

All eight measures on the special election ballot in 1994 covered the restructuring of student government and fee distribution. The measures were vital to sustaining student government and could not wait until the April general elections.

Had they waited, the IFC problems would have jeopardized student government itself. In addition, once student government was restructured, more elected students and committees had a role in distributing incidental fees.

Because of the immediate need to restructure the IFC, a special election was necessary.

This year the special election hinges on the elections grievance process. The process only affects a small piece of the inner workings of the ASUO and the Constitution Court.

This is such a small part of what the ASUO does and has virtually no effect on students whatsoever. Reforming the grievance process would not affect the outcome of the spring elections, just the speed with which the appointments and measures are



Ryan Dizon/Emerald

made official.

The ASUO Executive has argued that it does not wish to go through another general election with the current grievance process.

Although this is a legitimate concern, it is not an emergency situation that warrants a special election. A special election for this benign reason invites the possibility that future special elections may be held every time the ASUO Executive wants to tweak the ASUO Constitution.

It is ironic that this special election designed to streamline the grievance process will have adverse effects that may be as detrimental to the general election as the clunky grievance process was last year.

Because of the time crunch created by special election on Wednesday and Thursday, proposed general election ballot measures that are rejected by the Constitution Court will have little chance of being resubmitted in time. Should any measures fall victim to the time crunch, the democratic process that the elections stand for would be thwarted.

Time also prevents the ASUO from setting up

special election voting boxes except in one location: in front of the ASUO office. Little advertising, last-minute decisions and one ballot box will ensure that a small percentage of students will vote.

Future ASUO officials should take plenty of notes from this year's process.

Special elections should only be called for emergency issues or for vacancies in the ASUO Executive.

This year is a perfect example of the wrong reason to call a special election that circumvents the democratic process by allowing 2 to 5 percent of the student body to change the ASUO Constitution when students could wait two months to vote on the same measure.

Improving the grievance process is not so important that the ASUO needs a special election to decide it immediately.

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

Letters to the Editor

Duck rooters

The picture in today's sports section (ODE, Feb. 22) of those people standing was probably when the Oregon Fight Song was being played or the players were coming off the court during a timeout. I would like to see the University designate the stands across the way from the Oregon bench as "For Rooters Only." I define a rooter as a person who stands during the game and constantly claps and cheers for the Ducks. The loudest I have heard the crowd was when the lady Ducks played UCLA and maybe for three minutes it was really electric.

Enthusiasm by the fans is what motivates the players to play harder. We had Arizona on the ropes, and the fans could have provided the knockout punch but they just wanted to watch the game. Sure there have been a lot of fans at the games, but they have been a real headache to the students that occupy the front row across from the Duck bench.

The students get their three or more hours early so they can get those front row seats and display their signs like "Jody Runge, Show Me The Money" and can stand and cheer for their team. The people behind them are constantly yelling at them to sit down.

The administrators, or whatever they are, who sit in the chairs in front of the students rarely get out

of their chairs. It is time to bring excitement to McArthur Court and help our future lady Ducks to propel themselves even higher in the standings. The lady Ducks need a rooting section. I would encourage the University to designate those seats for rooters only. This might encourage more students to come to the game. Aren't those seats occupied by students for the men's games? Then why not for the women's games? Help the lady Ducks, give the rooters that section.

I am 52 years old and am proud to say I am a Duck rooter. I would prefer to sit with the students. The theater-goers are just that, quiet theater-goers.

Bruce MacGibbon
Gresham

Special elections upset

I am outraged at what I read in your paper this morning (ODE, Feb. 15.) I was planning to vote in the elections next week, but thanks to the bias of a few people my democratic right has been taken away. One student, Scott Austin, files a grievance and suddenly the student body no longer has a voice. How can one person stop an election? Thousands of people have pledged to vote in the special election and now they no longer have that right.

Vote no for everything (ODE, Feb. 11)? What kind

of paper has the Emerald turned into? Thank you, Emerald, for spreading apathy. Many people have invested a great deal of energy into this election and you are making a mockery of everything that they have done. Has The Commentator infiltrated your staff? Has the anti-everything right wing taken over our campus? You have left behind all journalistic principles.

Alexandra Kerl
Freshman

Nike takeover

Is it not amazing how, when you are such a terrible writer, everything starts to look like a conspiracy? On Feb. 23, Emerald community editor Michael Hines wrote a most provocative tale of corporate and state conspiracy happening here on the University campus "Getting cozy with Nike." Is it not amazing the lengths the Emerald staff will reach? Everyone on campus is not happy with Nike's involvement with the University. But the sad truth is, after the state of Oregon twice cut its taxes over the last decade, the University needed to find another form of financial help: mainly Alumni donations.

Paul Horsell
Junior
Journalism/ Business

Thumbs



THUMBS UP

To remembering:
A park to honor University track star Steve Prefontaine is one step closer to becoming a reality. Friends of the legendary runner have bought the land next to the rock where Prefontaine met his untimely death in 1975.

To safety:

President Clinton proposed legislation that will unify car maker regulations in terms of car seat compatibility. Car manufacturers, car seat makers and consumers came together to build an easier, safer system.



THUMBS DOWN

To poor taste:
A 24-hour fitness billboard in San Francisco read "When they come, they will eat the fat ones first." Organizations have since requested the fitness corporation take down the billboard that many find offensive.

To government theft:

New York has implemented a new policy on DUIs: any driver caught with an .08 or greater blood alcohol content will get their car taken away, even if they are not convicted of a DUI.