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PERSPECTIVES

What election?

Low voter turnout enables the ASUO to pass a new grievance policy that may not have students' best interests in mind

In a sweeping victory the ASUO's new elections grievance process was voted in, earning an overwhelming 75 percent of the vote.

The problem?

Only 308 students voted in last week's special election that passed the new grievance process. The 1.8 percent voter turnout sinks even lower than our meager predictions.

It can be argued

that given only five days to prepare, the ASUO did the best it could to get students to the ballot box — but that argument makes no sense.

A few posters scattered around the University one day before the election and two ads in the Emerald does not constitute a viable educational campaign.

Exactly how many of the 308 voters actually work in the ASUO office? We bet there are at least

30 people who work in the ASUO office, which makes up more than 15 percent of the votes in favor of the revised grievance process. This percentage could not have swayed the election, but it was large enough to cause worry about the validity of the results of the policy-based special election.

But voter turnout is only the first bone the editorial board has to pick with the outcome of the special election.

Next, the grievance process voted in by the ASUO with help from the 200 other students is suspect.

The grievance process is set up to handle election concerns and violations. Before this year's changes, the Constitution Court was the first government body to hear the grievances. After last year's general election, the court received so many grievances it could not hear them all in a timely manner.

Fixing this problem was the ASUO Executive's main concern when it called a special election this year. The ASUO's answer (i.e. the ballot measure) fixes that problem but also creates a new one.

The grievance process measure, which amended the ASUO Constitution, allows the ASUO elections board to create a committee that hears grievances instead of having students go to the Constitution Court.

A conflict of interest oc-

curs when you consider that most grievances are filed against the ASUO, the elections process or candidates.

The committee, hand picked and employed by the ASUO, will decide grievances against the ASUO and the election process. In effect, the ASUO will be able to interpret the election rules whichever way benefits it directly.

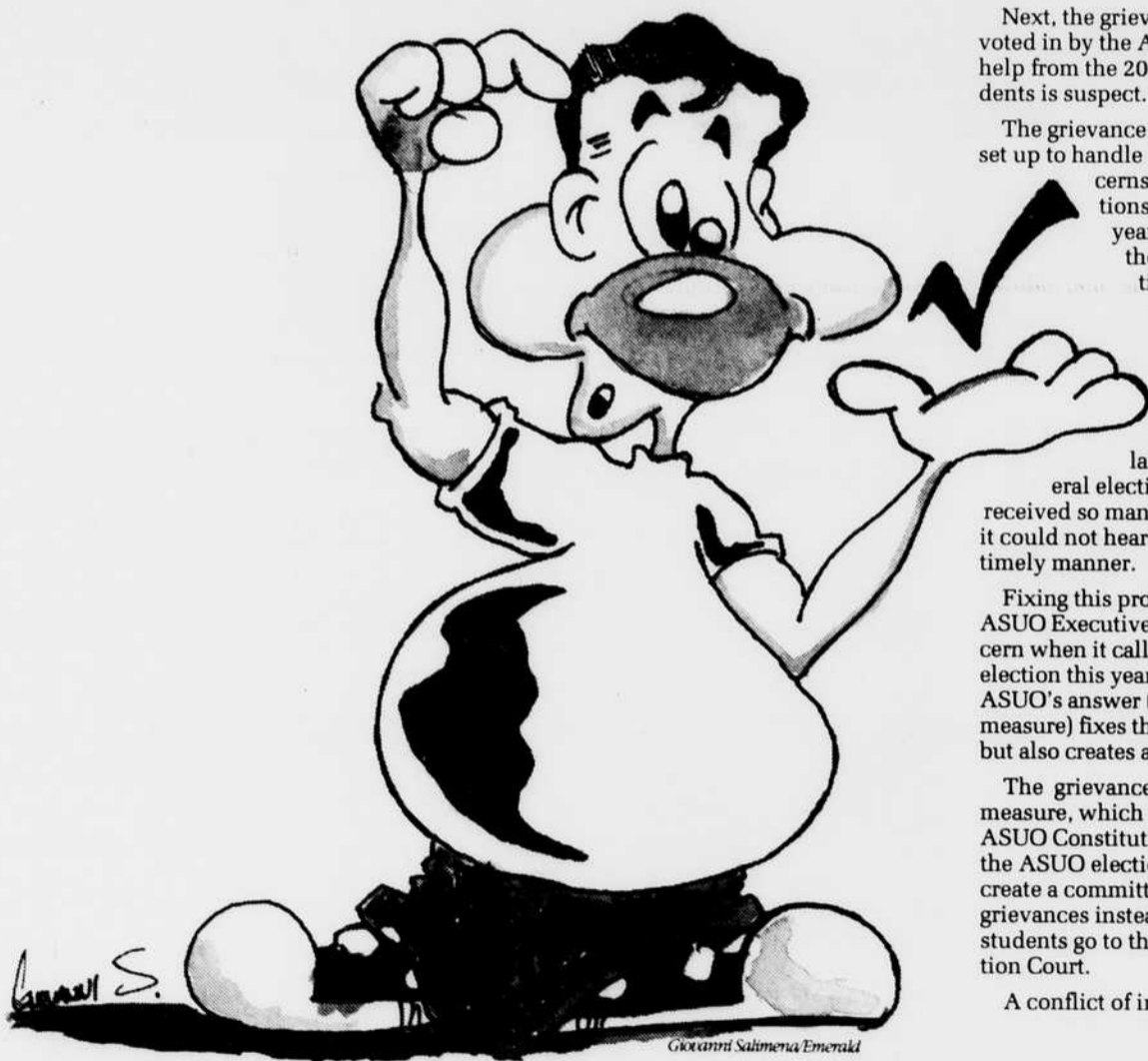
What if a grievance is filed against the ASUO Executive? How would a committee that serves directly under the president decide the issue without a conflict of interest arising?

In addition, this new process takes election power away from the judicial branch and concentrates it in the executive branch. Students are allowed to appeal the committee's decisions to the Constitution Court, but the process will have to go through the ASUO-appointed committee first. The result will be a drawn out process that is more complicated, confusing and time consuming than the last grievance process.

Instead of giving the ASUO the freedom to have full election reign, the Constitution Court should appoint the committee members to ensure autonomy and justice.

If the revised grievance process is to provide any productive changes, a branch of the ASUO Executive cannot be responsible for reviewing the grievances.

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



Giovanni Salimena/Emerald

Thumbs



THUMBS UP

To the sunshine: Spring is coming and Eugene residents enjoyed an uncharacteristic, sunny March weekend. We may not get many more this month, so we hope you had time to get outside and enjoy it.

To Pac-10 titles: The Oregon women's basketball team beat California Saturday to clinch a shared Pac-10 championship. This elusive title has never been attained by a women's or men's Oregon basketball team.



THUMBS DOWN

To lack of accountability: Acquittal of the U.S. pilot who was involved in the gondola accident, killing 20 people in Italy last year, has led many to demand accountability from the United States. President Clinton, offering little more than apologies, has not changed regulations in foreign training missions similar to the one that resulted in the accident.

To trailing children: Oregon fourth-graders test below the national average in reading, according to recent test results. Although eighth-graders scored above average in Oregon, reading readiness in elementary school is essential to success in future grades. One state actually determines the number of prison beds it will need in 12 to 15 years by how many third-graders are unable to read.

