

OSPIRG

It's election day, so this will be short, sweet and to the point.

Vote yes for OSPIRG. Here's why you should vote yes: OSPIRG gets things done.

For example: Tuition is rising (it's up 90 percent since 1990). OSPIRG worked to defend \$30 billion in financial aid, we defended the student-interest loan exemption and increased the maximum Pell Grant allocation by \$300. Now students can graduate from school without declaring bankruptcy.

Our waterways are becoming toxic sewerways (2.5 million pounds of toxic chemicals were dumped in the Willamette in 1996 alone). OSPIRG defended Eugene's right to know about the toxic chemicals that are going into our water and helped Gov. Kitzhaber make the right to know about pesticide use one of the biggest environmental issues in the state.

Air quality is dropping, asthma rates are skyrocketing. OSPIRG pushed the Environmental Protection Agency to enact tough new clean-air standards.

Banks just keep getting bigger. The bigger the bank, the more outrageous the bank fees. OSPIRG research, led by Consumer Advocate John Valley, helped save us all money by finding the best banks.

Why should students be working statewide to save Oregon from toxic chemical overload and to fight for better student financial aid? Because we can.

Students have the opportunity to find the problems and make the solutions.

We have the time, we have the structure and we have the power. To not work on these issues in the

YES

Commentary

Merriah Fairchild

most serious way we can would be to tie our own hands behind our back.

Here's how I see it: With so many problems out there, a few people (like 17,000 University students) can be a strong voice by contributing a couple of dollars each term to hire professional staff to go straight to the problem and tackle it head on. When pollution washes up on Oregon beaches and ruins our rivers, we have the advocates to stand up for better pesticide protections and a system to hold industry accountable for the cleanup.

Without statewide staff reaching the four corners of the state, we would end up cleaning up their mess with our taxes alone.

A long list of student groups that work to make a difference have endorsed: Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano De Aztlan (MEChA), the Black Student Union (BSU), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Alliance (LGBTGA), Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation (GTFF), the Women's Center, the International Student Association (ISA), Students for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (SETA) and the Survival Center.

And to tell you the truth, if they were on the ballot we would endorse them, too. Here's the thing: The more issues that students work on and the more victories we have the better

this state gets.

A small group of people on campus (and some powerful special interests off campus) that just don't like students working on saving the environment and student aid have tried to feed this campus a line. They'll say anything.

You've heard it all by now. We've done our best to rise to the challenge and provide you with the information you need. We have budgets and financial breakdowns that say the same things that we've always said. We hire staff to work for students and get things done.

Ralph Nader was on campus Tuesday for Earthweek, and by the way he talks we have a lot to do. He put everything in perspective. When a laborer wakes up to work 12 hours in the field, they are forced to think only about how they are going to make enough money to survive. They want something more but they lack opportunity.

If there's one thing we've got it's opportunity. Students work hard too, but Ralph said we have a different challenge and I think he's right. If we don't stand up and fight for justice, cleaner air, accessible colleges and universities, who will? Think of how many people wish they could be in our shoes. We have to take advantage and raise a stink.

You pay \$2.88 each term and you get a shot at cleaner water, cleaner air, more student aid. Now that's a bargain.

Vote yes for OSPIRG.

Merriah Fairchild is OSPIRG's state board chairwoman. Responses may be sent via e-mail to mfair@gladstone.uoregon.edu.

Without funding, OSPIRG has been more visible this year than in any of my four as a University student. That should say something about their "need" for \$128,000 — funding that would make them the third highest-funded student organization, behind only student government itself and the Emerald.

When students get together to raise awareness and effect change on campus, they need little or no money. And this is shown by the fact that many of OSPIRG's most popular activities, namely stream walks and canned-food drives, cost little to organize.

So, logically, most of OSPIRG's "projected" budget will not fund those types of things.

Nearly 80 percent will leave the UO campus and pay the salaries of professional lobbyists to influence local, state, and federal policies.

That's taken from their own projections. Eighty percent, baby. The rest pays bureaucratic and administrative expenses.

Student incidental fees should not fund partisan political causes, they should certainly not pay lobbyists' salaries and, as much as possible, our student fees should stay on campus.

OSPIRG violates all three points. This is why students should again deny funding it in today's election. Although you may agree with some of OSPIRG's politics, you are probably opposed to their funding on principle. Why?

Imagine the formation of a student gun-rights group at the University,

No

Commentary

Jonathan Collegio

one that would bring speakers to campus, sponsor some gun-safety seminars and a few internships. But 80 percent of their \$128,000 budget would fund the salaries of National Rifle Association (NRA) lobbyists to do pro-gun research while they weren't lobbying.

Meanwhile, campus gun-control advocates are forced to pay the fee, regardless of their beliefs.

If you are opposed to this in principle, you oppose OSPIRG's funding because they do the exact same thing — albeit for a cause more palatable to college students than guns. Left, Right, conservative, liberal: It is wrong to fund political causes with student fees. Someone with a minority opinion always gets the short end of the stick.

OSPIRG tries to skirt this issue by calling themselves "nonpartisan." Yeah. OSPIRG is about as nonpartisan as a neutered dog is. Well, you get the point.

Politics means taking sides. OSPIRG can't have it both ways. Gun-rights advocates believe they're working in the "public interest," too. OSPIRG is partisan indeed, and that means that students who disagree with their goals are forced to fund a political cause antithetical to their own.

So what about The Commentator and the Survival Center? Don't they

take sides?

The Commentator and Survival Center do not hire lobbyists to promote their politics in government. This is a vital difference. Promoting and bringing awareness to a viewpoint on campus is entirely different than lobbying for a cause in Washington, D.C.

OSPIRG is zealous about regaining its funding, not because of the student and campus aspects of their program, (which students here showed would be accomplished anyway) but because they're a political lobbying machine that wants a \$128,000 truckload of our cash.

Proving my point? Expect to see a lot of unfamiliar faces here on election day. Those are the state OSPIRG employees taking sick leave to make sure their cash cow gets funding this time around.

Do you really think Ralph Nader would travel thousands of miles to promote a simple campus group before election day? Really. It's about money, politics and little else.

Last year, students tested the waters to see what cutting OSPIRG's gargantuan budget would do. This year, students showed they could bring awareness to OSPIRG's issues without all of that money.

We've been doing fine without funding OSPIRG for a year. Let's make a tradition out of it by voting no on OSPIRG today and Thursday.

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Vote for human rights, vote for the Gardenburger boycott

NORPAC is the largest growers' cooperative west of the Mississippi with a distribution network that reaches Japan and earns annual sales of \$300 million. Farmworkers make their earnings through piece rates. Their wages are based on the number of pounds, sacks or buckets of crops they pick in a day. Sound reasonable?

We must understand that 1. piece rates fall well below subsistence levels, 2. farmworkers work with substances that destroy life and 3. farmworkers are excluded from employee rights guaranteed under the National Labor Relations Act of 1934.

Farmworkers who pick strawberries have been paid at a rate between 12 and 15 cents per pound for the last 15 years while the relative supermarket price of strawberries has gone up exponentially during the same period.

Farmworkers are the largest workforce in the United States who work, live and get sprayed with substances intended to kill life. Pesticides, herbicides and fungicides have been shown to cause cancer, tumors, death and physical deformities in

newborns. Annually there are 300,000 related pesticide injuries to farmworkers.

The NLRA guarantees employee collective bargaining rights, the rights to paid breaks and a safe work environment, among other things.

Farmworkers are completely excluded from these provisions and growers don't see a need to provide them.

Child labor is allowed in the agricultural industry.

Gardenburger plays a very important role in the boycott of NORPAC Food Inc., and its product line, Flav-R-Pac, by continuing to have its products sold through the distributions network of NORPAC Food Sales. In essence, Gardenburger is breaking the boycott of NORPAC Food Sales.

This relationship is why Gardenburger's earning in sales are increasing. This is why Gardenburger refuses to honor the request of farmworkers to support the NORPAC boycott called by PCUN.

We ask that you support the boycott campaign to discontinue the purchasing of Gardenburger and NORPAC products on

this campus. You can do so by choosing the alternative patty in the dining halls, telling friends and family to stop purchasing Gardenburger and NORPAC products and urging the University administration to select alternatives.

Farmworkers voted in the fields to improve their situation. The explanation of the consumer and market demands given by the University administration and housing administration allegedly provides the justification for Gardenburger and NORPAC products' presence on this campus.

What it actually does, contrary to what we may think, is make a political statement in support of this market relationship. What about the students on this campus whose parents and families are currently working in the fields?

The leadership of the University is forcing these students to take part in their own families' exploitation. This is not something the University wants you to hear.

Children of farmworkers are trying to be a model to their parents by obtaining an education. How does one feel safe and

welcome when the University is partaking in their own exploitation?

When the University decided to join the movement to boycott South African investments because of apartheid's oppressive and exploitative nature on black South Africans, it was the ethical thing to do. Why should support for farmworkers be any different? Oppression and exploitation similar to South Africa is occurring in the fields of the Willamette Valley.

Should we not uphold democracy for farmworkers who experienced it and are asking us to do the same? Is it democratic when year after year racist policy is created and implemented that pits us as U.S. citizens against farmworkers over issues of wage, working conditions, police brutality and housing?

Democracy apparently is not allowing us to have a place at the table.

This commentary was submitted by the Committee to Boycott Gardenburger and Flav-R-Pac.