

Campaign finance examined

■ The ASUO presidential candidates explain their spending during their executive race campaigns

By Emily Gust
Oregon Daily Emerald

If the ASUO Executive election result is any indication, money may not necessarily equal power.

Despite a highly visible campaign including posters, volunteers with fliers, a Web page and a giant balloon rainbow hung over 13th Avenue, candidates C.J. Gabbe and Peter Larson were unable to grasp hold of the presidency this year after winning the primary election.

Gabbe and Larson spent roughly \$1,500 of the \$2,136 they raised through donations; Jay Breslow and Holly Magner spent only \$530. Large amounts of money are not entirely unique to this year's campaign, however; years past have seen candidates with similar spending habits, ASUO Elections Coordinator Ken Best said.

"There is no cap on how much you can spend," he said. "The only money value we say is that you can't get more than \$500 from one source."

The issue of campaign spending came to light at the beginning of the election when primary presidential candidates Autumn

Expenditures

Total amount spent by ASUO Executive candidates in the general election:

Jay Breslow and Holly Magner: \$530*

C.J. Gabbe and Peter Larson: \$1,500*

*Amounts are rounded to the nearest 10

SOURCE: ASUO Elections Board

De Poe and Caitlin Upshaw pledged to spend no more than \$20 on their campaign. In the end, the two candidates spent only an estimated \$5.02 on their campaign.

"A student who has a thousand dollars to spend on a campaign probably isn't in financial need," De Poe said. "I don't feel they could possibly represent me as a student who has to struggle to pay rent."

Breslow and Magner said that while they spent a lot of money on their campaign, they kept their posters and fliers from becoming excessive.

"I talked to a lot of people who said they didn't want to be harassed," Magner said. "We didn't over-campaign."

Breslow agreed.

"We spent a lot ... but it takes integrity, honesty and a good campaign," he said. Larson would not comment whether he thought he and Gabbe's campaign spending backfired on them. However, in an earlier interview with the Emerald, he defended the amount of money he and Gabbe spent and said it was done according to realistic standards. Talking to every person on the street was simply too time-consuming, he said; placing visible materials on campus was the next best thing.

"We wanted to reach out to as many voters as we possibly could," Larson said.

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son to lose the election with less votes than they received in the primary.

"I thought it would be much closer," Nisser said.

Breslow said he believes many of the people who voted for other candidates in the primaries chose him and Magner in the generals and that helped turn the election to their favor.

"It wasn't a huge amount of votes, but it was enough to make a difference," he said.

Breslow and Magner also said they think the controversy surrounding the Gabbe and Larson campaign turned voters to their side as well.

Gabbe and Larson were kicked off the primary ballot after they bought refreshments for a Feb. 4 International Student Coffee Hour. While the court agreed with the elections board's decision that the pair broke elections rules by offering a "thing of value" along with campaign posters and information, the court also put them back on the ballot based on a technicality.

Similar grievances and appeals followed throughout the election, and the court decided to withhold the result until they resolved all of them.

Wednesday night, the court decided the final grievance appeal, which kept the result sealed through winter term and spring break. Former presidential candidate Autumn DePoe filed a grievance against Gabbe and Larson, which added more allegations to one filed by Student Sen. Jennifer Greenough. While the elections board agreed with Greenough's, they rejected DePoe's, and the court agreed.

"The smell of impropriety fills the air whenever this case, in all its parts, is mentioned," Justice Ahsan Awan wrote in the court's opinion. "However, the will of the ASUO must not be set aside any longer. An election took place, ballots were cast, and the people had their say."

Breslow said he thinks voters realized that what Gabbe and Larson did wasn't right and voted accordingly.

This proved "you can't buy an election, you can't cheat and win and you can't get off on technicalities," Breslow said. The result "is good for the University and for student government."

Gabbe could not be reached for comment, and Larson, after being reached by phone, declined to comment on any part of the election or the result.

Breslow said his campaign responded well to the Gabbe/Larson controversy by generally staying out of it.

"In the end, we did make the 'Got Ethics?' ads and wrote an [opinion-editorial] in the Emerald, but I stand behind those decisions," Breslow said. "I don't think it was dirty politics. We could have really gotten dirty if we wanted to."

Magner said their staff also helped students know what they stood for.

"They are an amazing staff. They were willing to take all that time," she said.

Breslow and Magner will transition into their new jobs immediately. They will spend the next few months working with current ASUO Executive Wylie Chen and Mitra Anoushiravani and take office at the end of spring term.

"This is so overwhelming to me," Magner said. "I'm just going to get myself as ready as I can. I'm just glad the waiting is over."

Breslow said they will start working with new student senators and student programs, training them how to lead and where to go when they need resources.

"We want everyone to know who Jay and Holly are and what the ASUO can do for them," Breslow said.






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