

PERSPECTIVES

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Party fines: deterring or discriminatory?

GUEST COMMENTARIES

On Monday, Nov. 13, the Eugene City Council is scheduled to vote on the Eugene Police Department's proposed response fee for multiple "out-of-control" parties at the same residence. Today, the Emerald presents two guest commentaries about the issue, and we urge students to make their opinions heard at the City Council meeting.

The question is not whether the new ordinance proposed to the Eugene City Council is just or necessary, for it is indeed both. Rather, the true question is whether we as a University community live in a vacuum or in a larger community with other individuals and other needs that stretch beyond our petty, self-centered compulsions and habits.

College students are notoriously greedy and are infamous for failing to look beyond the snot at the end of their collective nose, and this controversy is hardly an exception to the rule. Instead of asking why the community as a whole and respective leaders therein find the issue of "party-ing" so troubling, student government leaders seem bent on whining and complaining about the "oppression" of those "mean-spirited" bullies in city government. OK, so I'll be the one to beg the question: Why the concern?

To answer the question, let us examine the problem as it really stands. University students love to drink and party, and very seldom do they take into consideration the schedules and needs of their working, non-student neighbors. For that matter, they seldom take into consideration the manifest needs of their working student neighbors either, and in both cases noise violations — which, oddly enough, take place statistically in this city when loud and obnoxious parties are held — often lead to police officers being called to the scene. This costs the community money, in many cases money that really ought to be used for other purposes. Ought the entire community pay the cost for the irresponsibility of a few, or ought the irresponsible themselves pay that cost?

Consider for a moment the implications of this statute in pragmatic application. One apartment

could conceivably hold a loud and obnoxious party every 31 days — once every month — and still avoid any citation under the law. In my mind that is in essence uncivilized and at the very least rude behavior, and yet a few would say that this is still unacceptable. Well, why not? I mean, ought we not be allowed to annoy our neighbors and act like three-year-olds once a week? And people wonder why college students receive such a terrible reputation. It's our own fault, really.

It comes down to a basic question of equity and consideration. In a state and era where dollars are few and resources limited for government at the local and state level, we ought to be utilizing our resources responsibly. Covering the inconsiderate, irresponsible actions of a few drunk college students simply is not acting in such a manner.

Scott Austin is a member of Future Lawyers of America and a student at the University.

A proposed city ordinance unfairly targeting students will soon be voted on by Eugene City Council. This ordinance, written by members of the Eugene Police Department, would impose new fees in addition to already existing fines for party-related penalties in certain instances.

These fees are unlike fines one would receive for a minor-in-possession or a noise violation; they are intended to "recover costs involving criminal violations requiring frequent and significant police response." Rather than being paid back to the City of Eugene, the new fees would be given directly to EPD. The word "frequent" in the above quote is misleading. As the ordinance is written, a group of 10 people could be fined for gathering on the same premises twice in a 90-day period.

If this ordinance passes, a resident would

be required to pay the costs of breaking up their own party — including from \$35 to \$45 per hour for police officers' wages and any equipment used. The city manager determines what equipment, but it can include gas for police cars, tear gas and batteries for flashlights. This is in addition to what the resident is required to pay for a noise violation, MIP, etc.

This ordinance is not a proactive approach to the

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problem, and the deterrent effect that the police are hoping for will only deepen the wounded relations between students and police. In the multiple meetings members of the ASUO have had with police, never once was safety mentioned as a motive for writing the ordinance; it seems only to be an issue of monetary compensation for their

zero tolerance policy. New tactics being used by the party patrol are putting students in danger.

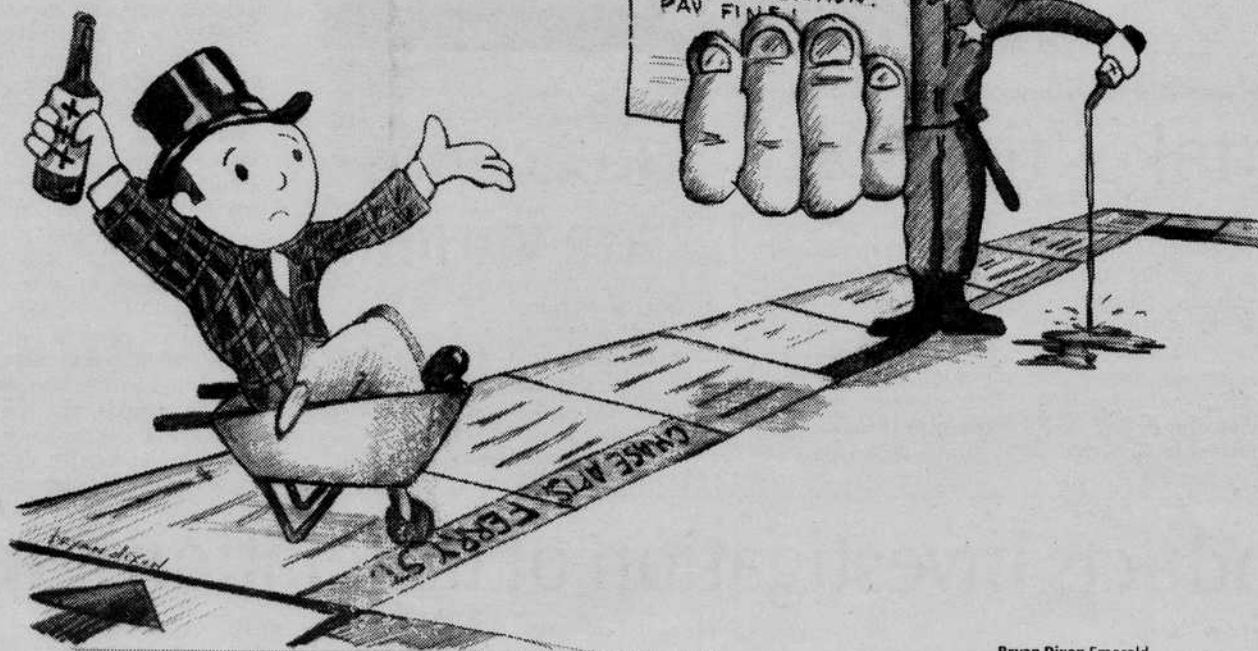
Officers have recently refused to let women call for rides and threatened to issue "Interfering with a Peace Officer" citations if people are "caught" waiting for a friend to walk home with after a party has been broken up.

Yes, students party and sometimes consume alcohol in large quantities, but using reactive, destructive tactics such as this ordinance, as it is currently written by the EPD, will not produce anything beneficial for this community.

The ASUO has written and presented an alternative ordinance to the City Council, which is drastically different from the EPD version. Student leaders have met individually with city councilors to discuss the ordinance and possible changes that could be made. However, we need students' help.

The City Council will vote on the ordinance Nov. 13, and we need people to come and voice their concerns. If you don't know anything about the ordinance, the ASUO is having an informational meeting and open discussion on the ordinance today at 5 p.m. in Room 123 Pacific. I would encourage all concerned students to attend this meeting, whether or not they approve of student partying, because this ordinance will affect all of us.

Christa Shively is the ASUO community outreach director and Mike Barnhill is an ASUO intern.



Bryan Dixon Emerald

Letters to the editor

Lifestyles of the Geographically Challenged

I find it quite ironic that in Monday's column by Eric Pfeiffer, he criticizes "Heaton Seeker," who sent him an anonymous death threat. Isn't Pfeiffer the same person who wrote a column ("Hey Jay: Activism doesn't stop with

WRC," ODE, Oct. 10) criticizing the ASUO and how it is run when he was on the other side of the country?

Writing an anonymous death threat is the act of a coward, but so too is one who mocks a community in which he isn't currently involved. It's fine if you want to tell us all about the inner politics of Washington, D.C., because you may have experienced it firsthand, but it is absurd for you to

judge the current politics here at the University. You say that Breslow's leadership methods on this campus are flawed, but you are not even here to see these methods. You continue by stating, "Anyone who even remotely follows the ASUO knows this is the truth."

How can you logistically follow the ASUO from Washington, D.C., though? Breslow has led the ASUO Executive staff and other students to unthinkable goals this

fall highlighted by an amazing voter registration drive. Yes, you could read about the voter registration drive on the Internet, but the ASUO has done so much more on this campus that you, Mr. Pfeiffer, simply cannot see.

If you ask me, Pfeiffer, you and Seeker are both cowards.

Jeff Oliver
 political science & journalism
 ASUO housing advocate

Editor's note: Eric Pfeiffer was on campus, not in Washington, D.C., during the WRC protests and the campaign and election of Jay Breslow and Holly Magner. Pfeiffer's column, available in our online archives at www.dailyemerald.com, focused on those early aspects of Breslow's rise to power.