

PERSPECTIVES

Editor in chief: Jack Clifford
 Managing Editor: Jessica Blanchard
 Newsroom: (541) 346-5511
 Room 300, Erb Memorial Union
 P.O. box 3159, Eugene, OR 97403
 E-mail: ode@oregon.uoregon.edu

EDITORIAL EDITOR: MICHAEL J. KLECKNER opeditor@journalist.com

A poor excuse for pettiness

A small furor is brewing on campus over absolutely nothing. Here's the quick rundown: The College Republicans and Justice For All, the student group opposed to abortion rights that brought the Genocide Awareness Project to the University last year, are planning a fundraiser for Womenspace, a local domestic violence clinic. The College Republicans asked the College Democrats and Students For Choice, a student group working for abortion rights, to cross ideological lines and join the effort. The two groups have said they will not help.

In short, this is nonsense. Of course the College Democrats and Students For Choice should help raise money to combat domestic violence and offer support to women who have been abused. Jed McGuire of the College Democrats suggested Monday ("Groups conflict over fundraiser," ODE, Jan. 29) that the Republicans were trying to force the Democrats into participating in order to make them look bad. "I'm a little confused as to what [their] motives are," McGuire said.

If the College Republicans' motives are shaky, then why not participate, help out a very worthy

cause and give the Republicans no ammunition? It would be petty of the Republicans to use the Democrats' non-participation as partisan baiting, as they have said the fundraiser isn't about politics. It would be even more petty of the Democrats to refuse simply because of politics.

All of this hubbub is silly and seems like a media stunt. Maybe that's a good thing, because it will make members of student groups aware of the fundraiser. The College Republicans have said they will contact every student group and ask them to participate. Why doesn't every group, including the College Democrats and Students For Choice, join in the effort and eliminate the "controversy" entirely? Imagine the goodwill if every student group made at least one phone call on behalf of abused women.

Womenspace has said that it hasn't been contacted about the fundraiser and that it has to decide whether to accept donations. Margo Schaefer, community outreach director for Womenspace, said Monday that there is a limit to how far across ideological boundaries

the organization can stretch. It would be terribly petty of the group not to accept donations solicited by hard-working students simply because of those students' personal beliefs or politics. Domestic violence victims need support, and Womenspace wouldn't be endorsing Justice For All's op-

position to abortion rights by accepting the group's help.

We urge everyone involved to get their wits about them and stop this immature behavior. We strongly encourage every group on campus to make a few phone calls and help raise money for Womenspace. Finally, we hope that no one

has to read about this issue again, except to find out how much money was raised for a worthy cause.

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



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

Virginia schools can't pledge their way to patriotism

Do you remember reciting the "Pledge of Allegiance" in school? Some students might have done this, and others may not have. The practice has fallen out of favor in the last 20 years. Many people who did recite the pledge remember doing so fondly. Others of us remember it as drudgery, another piece of boredom in the school day.

Students in Virginia may soon get to experience the pledge for themselves. On Friday, Jan. 26, the Virginia State Senate moved closer to requiring the pledge to be recited

every day in every school in the state. Ordinarily, the Emerald editorial board wouldn't speak out about a local issue across the country, but the forcing of this ritual seems like an interesting educational question.

What leads the Virginia Senate to think that making children engage in mindless recitals will increase their patriotism? That goal would be better accomplished with some actual curriculum; many students today had very little real civics education in grade school.

This case is interesting because

the cause is being promoted specifically to nurture patriotism. The pledge's main supporter, State Sen. Warren E. Barry, an ex-Marine, was quoted in the Washington Post on Tuesday discussing Virginia's students. "What I'd really like to do is have them all go to Marine Corps boot camp for 10 weeks," he said.

Wait one minute. Won't mandatory rituals make the patriotism hollow? Actually, that was exactly the finding of the U.S. Supreme Court in 1943, when it decided that no American could be forced to recite the pledge or to stand during the ritual. Patriotism is truly

served, the court found, when it is genuine and voluntary. And a genuine love of country was certainly the intent behind the Pledge of Allegiance.

For the unfamiliar, here's a short history lesson. The pledge was written in 1892 by Francis Bellamy, a Baptist minister and a Christian Socialist. Bellamy was chairman of a committee organizing American schools' celebration of the 400th anniversary of Columbus Day, and he proposed flying the American flag over every school and teaching civics and patriotism to every student.

The original pledge read: "I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands, one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." Dr. John W. Baer, an author and historian, writes that Bellamy's purpose was to celebrate our freedom, guaranteed to us by our country. Bellamy himself explained the idea in his notes from 1892, as quoted by Dr. Baer: "The true reason for allegiance to the Flag is the 'republic for which it stands.'"

Note that the author of the pledge *did not* say the reason for pledging allegiance is because a teacher requires it. The pledge was amended in 1924 to change "my Flag" to "the Flag of the United States of America," and in 1954 to add "under God." Bellamy protest-

ed the first change, and Dr. Baer writes that Bellamy's granddaughter said he would have resented the second change.

The Virginia Senate's bill allows students with a religious or philosophical objection to forgo saying the pledge. That reduces the sting of the religious language. And as long as students are allowed to sit out if they object, we don't have a huge problem with requiring the pledge. It just seems like another government mandate on schools that has nothing to do with actual learning. Virginia currently requires a moment of silence every school morning, and the state is working on a bill requiring the motto, "In God We Trust," to be posted prominently in every school. On the flip side, the state only requires one year of civics classes during the entirety of a child's 12 years of schooling.

Requiring the Pledge of Allegiance every day accomplishes nothing. Teaching children the sentiment behind the pledge and the operation of our country to ensure freedom would do a lot more to inspire patriotism and duty to one's country. Perhaps Virginia and every other state should work to require civics education instead of empty rhetoric.

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Letters to the editor

New name won't bring change

I want to express my appreciation for the excellent and comprehensive article published in your paper concerning the protest on Jan. 17 urging the closure of the Army School of the Americas (SOA). On that day, there were protests in 35 cities on three continents. Countries included Germany, Austria, Canada, Honduras and Chile, as well as many actions in the United States. We were protesting the reopening of the SOA under a new name, Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.

Numerous human rights groups, including United Nations truth commissions, Amnesty International and Americas Watch, have documented the involvement and leadership of SOA graduates in atrocities, from the assassination of Archbishop Romero, six Jesuit priests and four Catholic reli-

gious in El Salvador in the 1980s, to the current relationship between the military, including SOA graduates, and paramilitary atrocities in Colombia. SOA troops have used their skills against their own people. Hundreds of thousands of Latin Americans have been tortured, raped, assassinated, "disappeared," massacred and forced into refuge. Yet the Army School of the Americas has never admitted to its legacy of torture and oppression nor taken responsibility for the actions of its notorious graduates.

Will there be dramatic changes with this new name? The late Sen. Paul Coverdell, an SOA supporter, said that the changes would be "cosmetic." Rep. Maxine Waters said, "Cold War, Drug War, whatever they call it, it is still a war against the poor."

Peg Morton
Eugene