

# COMMENTARY

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## Editorial

### ASUO individuals should have right to political cause, personal action

This past week, Rachel Pilliod, ASUO president and chairwoman of the Oregon Students Association, weathered a recall challenge by Bridget Burns, student body president at Oregon State University. Burns argued that Pilliod had violated OSA rules by sending more than one representative to an OSA meeting, by changing a scheduled meeting abruptly — for which she later apologized — and, most egregiously according to Burns, attending and actively participating in the Oct. 31 McArthur Court rally in support of democrat Bill Bradbury's senatorial campaign.

While the first two were easily explained away, her appearance at the rally could have proved problematic. Not because of her own political leanings, but instead because of a semantic question in the OSA bylaws.

It all stems from Article I, Statement of Purpose, which reads: "The purposes of this corporation are to represent, advocate and further the interests and welfare of students in public higher education . . . provided that this corporation does not participate or intervene in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office."

On the face of it, this paragraph says nothing about the individual officers of the organization. By the letter of the law, unless Pilliod asserted herself as being at the rally in an official capacity as an OSA director, she had done nothing wrong.

Yet, by virtue of being ASUO president — and she was identified as such at the rally — she may have inadvertently tied OSA to a partisan political cause. Or she may have not.

The problem is, the rules are somewhat vague on what "this corporation" entails. We are heartened that the directors of the OSA have put together an ad-hoc committee to study the rules that concern participation in political events. Although the non-partisan nature of the organization must be preserved, to forbid any officerholder from ever espousing a personal cause is asinine.

We find it ridiculous to expect anyone — especially on a campus with as much of a reputation for vibrant political life as the University has — to stay completely divorced from politics 24 hours a day, seven days a week while holding such a position.

Certainly, as long as he is not doing it in his official capacity as University president, Dave Frohnmayer can insert himself into political debates. The same should hold for the head of student government.

## Editorial policy

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

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## Child abuse beyond television?

When Madelyne Toogood was taped beating her daughter in an Indiana parking lot in September, the recording was played on heavy rotation on news shows across the country. The tape was disturbing, no question about it. It showed a 29-year-old woman savagely beating a four-year-old in a public place.



Kathryn Petersen  
In other words

The tape showed no one interfering. It showed a child defenseless against the violent actions of her mother in a public shopping area in America.

Because the situation was made public, questions were raised about child abuse in America and how it is handled. Experts were asked, people were interested and seemed to ponder the issue. That lasted for about a week. Then, the media directed the public's attention to another story that was more timely or deemed more important.

People forgot and moved on.

Fast forward to this week. A seven-year-old boy's remains were found mummified in a plastic storage container in the basement of a Newark, N.J., home. The boy's two brothers were also found in the basement. They were starving and living in an environment not fit for any living being. New Jersey's Division of Youth and Family Services had received 10 complaints about the family during the past 10 years, yet nothing changed. The children were burned, starved and abused.

The media jumped all over the story. CNN, NBC, CBS, any and every news channel had the story included in its broadcast. Much like in September, child abuse is brought to light. The public is shocked, lines of communication are opened and people are seemingly doing things to change the way "the system" works.

New Jersey Gov. James E.



Steve Baggs Emerald

McGreevey is proposing steps that could help limit a situation like this from happening again. Fantastic! Things need to be changed. It's just sad that things are being inspected and changed in New Jersey when all 50 states, including Oregon, have problems with this issue.

The Child Welfare League of America has statistics from state to state on child abuse. When comparing New Jersey and Oregon on the issue of child abuse, some interesting figures are produced. In 1999, 13.6 per every 1,000 children in the state of Oregon were identified as abused or neglected. The same year in New Jersey, 4.6 per 1,000 children were identified as abused or neglected. What does that mean? It means that Oregon's child abuse problem is

larger than New Jersey's. Thanks to the media attention, the main difference is that New Jersey is getting a re-evaluation on how abuse cases are handled, and things will maybe improve.

Too bad for Florida, the home state of the man who was recently convicted for locking his 8-year-old stepdaughter in the closet and starving her until she weighed only 25 pounds. Too bad for most states that don't have the funding to cover the costs associated with hiring and maintaining social workers to check that individual cases of abuse are fully realized and corrected. Too bad federal funding of social programs isn't a priority for our government. Until the country comes to the realization that the system that let down thousands of abused children needs to be changed nation-

ally as well as locally, horror stories like these will continue to roll out of towns across America. Until fixing this problem becomes a national priority, the fact will remain that child abuse continues to be a problem that our society mostly ignores.

America needs to realize that horrible acts of child abuse and neglect occur everyday in every city in the country. They're not rare events and they don't just occur in places like New Jersey and Indiana. Child abuse in America is a problem. If people need to be shocked into realizing that, they need to look at the statistics, not their televisions.

Contact the columnist at kathrynpetersen@dailyemerald.com. Her views do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

## Letter to the editor

### 'Voice of the Ducks' not sporting

I have been following the KUGN debate with interest. A few days ago, I turned on my car radio to the "voice of the Ducks" station to hear someone I don't usually hear, Michael Savage.

He was saying (in fervent, angry tones) that all actors were whores, and, I think, prostitutes (though I am not sure of the difference, and I may have this wrong). He was angered because a group of Hollywood actors were asking the president to get U.N. approval before a war. Then he continued on to say that Joe McCarthy was right when he said they were a fifth column. He continued by saying that in case we missed hearing him clear-

ly, he would repeat it and did so, even more intensely.

So this is the voice of the Ducks? Go Ducks? Hardly sporting comments.

Barbara Nicholls  
former English instructor  
Eugene

Editor's note: This piece was submitted before KUGN's decision to stop carrying Michael Savage.