

Friday, March 5, 2004

UO groups need funds from events

I would like to take a moment to address the Editorial Board's commentary on the issue of student programs charging for events. Indeed, it is a complex dilemma, a prototypical example of the opposing forces that drive the PFC's decisions every year.

GUEST COMMENTARY

On the one hand, as the Board so charmingly put it, you are being "ripped off." Indisputably, students pay an extraordinary amount in incidental fees, and are rightly entitled to reap the benefits that fee supports. On the contrary, when it comes to programming and event organization, the amount of incidental fees allocated to most programs is grossly inadequate. As author of Senate Rule 13.7, I feel safe in saying that the rule represents the former way of looking at our dilemma.

However, it ignores the fact that if a significant number of students decided they no longer were able to afford paying for admission to events, the result would be one of two equally unattractive options. One, the incidental fee would increase by the same amount ticket revenues decreased (a not-so-insignificant number), or two, the size, quality and accessibility of programs' events would diminish to the point of irrelevance. Neither of those had yet occurred, because students were in large part unaware of the option Rule 13.7 provided, but that is not so true now that the Emerald has begun covering the topic.

Since your first article, numerous program representatives and the ASUO Executive have contacted me with worries about the impact giving out tickets has on their event budgets. Thus, the Student Senate Rules Committee has the revision of this rule as its first item of business. The current suggestion is to allow student programs to charge admission to events, but to require that any revenue generated through those ticket sales be used for the next year's programming. The reasoning behind this is that it strikes a balance between funding sources for programs' events and holding increases in your incidental fee to a minimum, while maintaining the quality and integrity of student programming.

Before I finish, I would like to address the only one of the Board's allegations that I find to be entirely unfounded. "Attention students: You are currently being screwed ... The ASUO Student Senate doesn't care." I am more than receptive to criticisms of my decisions, my demeanors, handling of Senate matters, et cetera, but I am honestly offended by the suggestion that I or any of my colleagues does not care.

I would venture to say that we all do, but I am obviously only one, and will speak for only one when I say that I care a great deal. Still, as much as we care, we don't often hear from others of you that do, and it is terribly hard to set policy in a vacuum.

For their assistance in getting the word out, I thank the Emerald, but I would prefer to find myself thanking you for having come in to ask about something, or to tell me that you think I'm wrong and you're vehemently pissed off about it. So in closing, I join the Emerald in asking you to stop by EMU Suite 4 and see us about any of your concerns, or better yet, to run for an office in the upcoming ASUO elections.

Ben Strawn, a junior majoring in economics, is president of the ASUO Student Senate.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Vegetarianism promotes animal rights

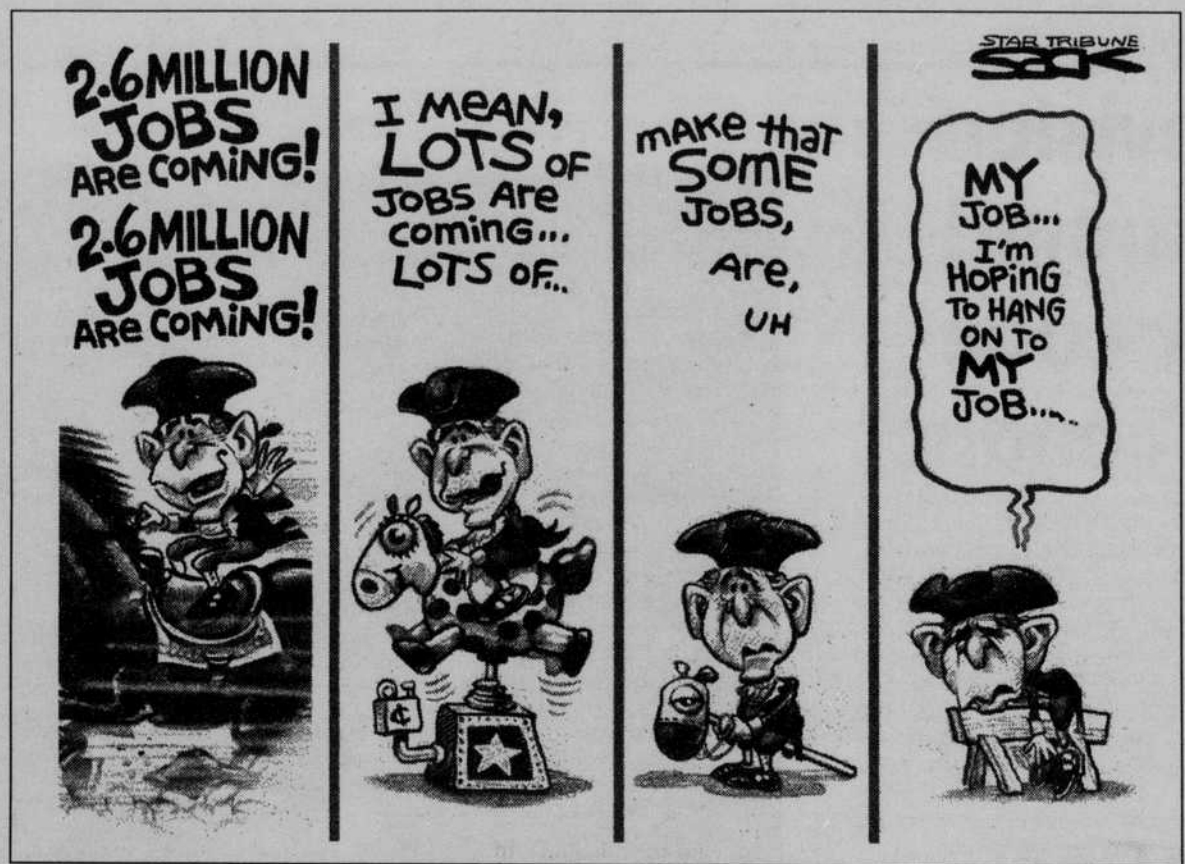
I agreed with Lin Ching Shywan ("Choice of eating meat or not guided by taste, values, diet," ODE, Feb. 25) when she stated that she feels that we should show mercy to those who are weaker. Eating vegetarian fare is a great way to follow this belief and oppose animal cruelty.

Chickens raised for meat are forced to grow so quickly that their heart, lungs and legs can't keep up with their unnaturally rapid growth. Pigs have their tails cut off and ears sliced, while cows suffer branding and crude castration, all without painkillers. Even worse is the intensive confinement that egg-laying hens undergo in modern agriculture, never even able to flap their wings inside tiny wire cages.

More and more people are choosing the vegetarian option to protect their health and the animals. It seems timelier than ever to start today.

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 Compassion Over Killing

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Steve Sack KRT

Pointless primaries

If American democracy is a picnic, presidential election year politics are certainly the lemonade, and the primaries are the lemons. Refreshing, they cleanse the palate, even if they're a bit acidic.

In the winter and spring primaries, voters around the nation take turns voting by state for which candidates they'd like to see each party front in the fall. Incumbents' nominations, including President Bush's, are faits accomplis as soon as they're sworn in. It's the challenger nominations, then, that are supposed to reflect the vibrant, empowering process that is democracy at work. But, now that Super Tuesday bumped Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., up to 1,541 of the 2,162 delegates needed to secure the Democratic nomination, and with Sen. John Edwards', D-S.C., withdrawal from the race, a Bush-Kerry face-off is all but inevitable. (The only other candidates in the race, the Rev. Al Sharpton and Rep. Dennis Kucinich, D-Ohio, are trailing with a meager 24 and 18 delegates, respectively.)

This leaves states (including seventh-to-last Oregon) dead in the political water close to the end of the nearly six-month process. What should be an important opportunity for Oregonians to voice their political will is instead an empty and nearly pointless political rehearsal. My would-be vote is reduced from an important political statement to an exercise in futility.

In the roughly zero-sum game that is political power, the winners are the early primary voters. Before the Jan. 19 Iowa open caucus and the Jan. 27 New Hampshire modified closed primary, former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean was the undeniable come-from-behind, outside-the-Beltway leader. But, despite these two states carrying only 83 delegates between them — and just 67 tied to their primaries, less than 2 percent of the total available — Dean's deserved descent was already evident. (Certainly, his "I Have a Scream" speech didn't help level the field, either.)

Kerry's dramatic wins in those two states (38 percent and 20 of 45 delegates in Iowa; 29 percent and 13 of 22 delegates in New Hampshire) paved the way for later successes — voters in states during the next

series of primaries defied pre-Iowa polls and followed suit, handing Kerry solid victories in all but a handful of states (in each of the exceptions, a regional candidate garnered the most votes).



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Certainly, the current primary system falls short of the egalitarian vision for democracy that this nation's founding fathers established. In response, many states, particularly those with later primaries, have made efforts to elevate their voters' primary intentions from irrelevance. In 2001 and 2002, 26 bills in 14 states proposed changes to the dates of those state's respective presidential primaries. Only Kentucky's HB 31 passed, moving its primary up a week. In 2003, 23 bills (of which seven had passed, as of the end of January) in 15 states proposed the same — all but two aimed to move the primary date earlier.

But, save when more subtle mitigating considerations are in play, it's seemingly in each state's interest to move their primary earlier, away from the meaninglessness of the Oregon vote and toward the prestige and influence of New Hampshire's and Iowa's primaries. Over the years, such state legislative efforts have compressed the bulk of the (relevant) primary process toward its beginning — an effect called 'frontloading.' In 2000, 42 percent of Republican delegates and 39 percent of Democratic delegates were selected by March 7, the date when Bush and former Vice President Al Gore had essentially secured their respective parties' nominations.

Responding presumably in part to the above futility, and moreover to recent economic troubles, legislatures in six

states have taken more drastic measures and cut their presidential primaries altogether. Colorado passed SB 188, canceling its primary with expected savings of \$2.2 million. Observing that "It's senseless to waste taxpayer money on an election that serves no practical purpose," Democratic Washington Gov. Gary Locke signed HB 2297, canceling the state's presidential primary and saving the state an estimated \$6 million.

Several more states have tried and failed — had Missouri's HB 387 or SB 531 passed, the state would have saved some \$3.7 million. Both houses of Arizona's Legislature approved SB 1012, which would have saved taxpayers \$3.9 million. But, invoking the philosophical crux of this dilemma, Democratic Gov. Janet Napolitano vetoed the bill, writing that "Arizona can well afford the price of democracy." (Arizona's Feb. 3 primary was one of the season's first.)

But why, in this state with a late primary and state services cannibalizing themselves to get out of the red (so much so that this University stands to suffer \$880,000 in budget cuts), is the Legislature continuing to indulge a costly and evidently purposeless political exercise?

The solution to this problem is simple: Hold a synchronized primary day in March, wherein every state holds its primary simultaneously. There would be little argument that any state could not "well afford the price of democracy." Better yet, voters would have every incentive to vote for whichever candidate best immediately fits their needs, rather than succumbing to the cascade effect that places so much emphasis on the first few primaries.

And not only would millions of voting (or would-be voting) Americans be free of the yoke of de facto disenfranchisement, but the countless taxpayer dollars dumped into the fiduciary drink that is end-of-season primaries would finally be put to good use.

Contact the editorial editor at traviswillse@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.