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COMMENTARY

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EDITORIAL

Delayed ASUO elections lead to rushed race for candidates

Judging from the scattered murmurs of campaign goals and students donning witty, multicolored shirts to spread the word, the ASUO elections season has officially kicked off.

Let the grievances begin!

This year's process has already started off on the wrong foot. The ASUO Constitution Court rejected the elections packet not once but twice, because ASUO Elections Coordinator Stephanie Day wanted to schedule the vote during the Law School's Dead Week twice. This delayed the packet's distribution and kept officials from filing or even knowing the rules governing campaign procedures, since the packet contains the campaign regulations and the necessary forms for filing for candidacy. The whole affair ended with ASUO being forced to schedule the primary and general elections during weekends when many students are traditionally getting sloshed at the local dives.

The whole controversy could have easily been avoided with a little foresight and organization. Elections officials could have seen this coming, given the grievances filed last year by three law students when the Elections Board attempted to do the exact same thing. The election could have started in February, as it was done in 2000, 2001 and 2002, thus avoiding both the conflicts with Dead Week and the influx of students using DuckWeb for class registration purposes. This election schedule would have also been constitutionally sound, as the GreenTape Notebook dictates the elections be held between Feb. 1 and April 30.

Then again, the Constitution Court could have been more clear in last year's ruling when it said the ASUO Constitution didn't actually require that voting dates fall out of Dead Week (this year the court ruled that, in fact, it does).

Shoulda, coulda, woulda. Now the current student body is facing an election like it has never seen before. In recent years, a full month has been allowed between the filing deadline for candidates and the primary election. This gap had a two-fold purpose: To allow candidates more time to campaign and get their message out, and to allow students more time to familiarize themselves with the candidates and issues (although it should be noted that there is no rule against starting a campaign, say, in September). Furthermore, the rushed — and late — elections will only give the new administration a little over a month for transition (i.e. appointing a staff and getting ready for a year of bitter student politics).

Not that student government elections at this University have been a walk in the park in the past. Prior elections have often amounted to little more than a series of bitter and often petty squabbles, one ticket getting elected by a gross minority of the total student body, and the winners subsequently getting little done during their tenure. Rinse and repeat.

Last year, student leaders publicly endorsed students by using their official ASUO titles and a University listserv to campaign, nearly triggering grievances, while the election-dates dispute and a candidate campaigning within 50 feet of a voting booth resulted in two grievances.

In 2002, Bret Jacobson, then-publisher of the Oregon Commentator, filed a grievance after the Elections Board refused to allow campus media, including the Emerald, to witness a primary vote tally. Then-Elections Coordinator Courtney Hight told the Emerald in 2002 that she denied Jacobson's request because he was rude to her and other board members. She added that his affiliation with former presidential candidate Timothy Dreier, who worked at the Commentator and is currently the magazine's editor in chief, also presented some kind of problem.

On March 21, 2001, the Constitution Court heard four back-to-back grievances, a few against ASUO Executive candidates. To kick it off, candidates Jacobson and Matt Cook appealed a decision by the Elections Board to disqualify them because they campaigned in the residence halls, which halted the general election (they were eventually added back on the ballot by the Constitution Court). Another grievance accused eventual ASUO Exec Nilda Brooklyn and Joy Nair of campaigning using ASUO phones, and another alleged the Elections Board printed an error in the elections packet.

And in a hilarious example of just how seriously some candidates take these elections, former Oregon Commentator Editor in Chief Ed Madrid petitioned the Elections Board in 2000 to run for the Executive under the name "All these people are idiots," telling officials that he was legally changing it. Unfortunately, the Board told him he had to use his "real" name. We can only hope for such comic relief this season.

With that, the Emerald Editorial Board urges students to analyze, question and pester candidates, find the best ones for the job, and vote!

If you have time in the next week, that is.



Eric Layton Illustration

Negotiating improvement

Mexican immigrants, many illegal, have flooded over America's southern border in recent years. They came in search of jobs, a better life and, well, jobs.

The effects of this immigration wave — 217,000 legal immigrants in 2002 alone and about 300,000 illegal immigrants annually — can be seen everywhere, from bilingual business signs to the faces on the street to Eugene's recently named Cesar Chavez Elementary School. Mexican immigration is changing our daily lives.

The March/April cover story of Foreign Policy magazine opines that change is a problem. Samuel P. Huntington, who co-founded the magazine, writes, "The persistent inflow of Hispanic immigrants threatens to divide the United States into two peoples, two cultures, and two languages. Unlike past immigrant groups, Mexicans and other Latinos have not assimilated into mainstream U.S. culture, forming instead their own political and linguistic enclaves from Los Angeles to Miami and rejecting the Anglo-Protestant values that built the American dream."

First, one should be wary of a smug sense of cultural superiority when one hears of "Anglo-Protestant values that built the American dream."

Second, Huntington partially bases his thesis on the assertion that Mexican Americans and Anglo Americans have irreconcilable differences. He approvingly cites a Mexican-American businessman who pointed to a "lack of initiative, self-reliance and ambition" that supposedly hold Latinos back.

This is the same absurd stereotype of the lazy Mexican that we should all be sick of hearing. Huntington, afraid to call it as he sees it, instead lets a Mexican American do it for him, as if that somehow makes it less offensive.

Huntington should take a close look at the hardworking Mexican Americans who run their own businesses, who put out forest fires, who every day mop, clean, pour, wash, pick, plant, scrub, hammer and otherwise support our comfortable existence in exchange for wages that are in some cases exploitative (of course, Mexican-American doctors and lawyers do exist, but for every Mexican-American doctor there is an army of cooks).

One might also take issue with the alarmist tone of Huntington's piece. He writes Mexican immigration could result

incentive to come to the United States.

The North American Free Trade Agreement was supposed to do just that. The accord reached by the United States, Mexico and Canada a decade ago broke down trade barriers among the three nations, but it has not lived up to its billing.

The New York Times reported NAFTA has not raised living standards in Mexico as promised. In fact, the gap between the rich and poor in Mexico has widened.

While NAFTA lets U.S. consumers save a few cents on Mexican imports, those savings have come at the cost of American jobs. As usual, the greatest beneficiaries of the free-trade pact have been large corporations.

Perhaps a better agreement could have raised the standard of living in Mexico, thus reducing illegal immigration, but that was never the focus of the negotiations.

In the final analysis, Mexican immigration is something Americans will simply have to learn to accommodate. Huntington worries that Mexican immigrants are not sold on the American dream, but that has been said of every immigrant group that has reached our shores.

America is resilient. No matter how many Mexicans immigrate to the United States, it will not change what makes this country unique.

Perhaps we might have to learn Spanish, perhaps immigrants will strain America's social safety net, perhaps we might see a few more soccer matches on TV.

Is that really worth panicking about?



Chuck Slothower
 Taking Issue

in "the end of the America we have known for more than three centuries." He adds, "Americans should not let that change happen unless they are convinced that this new nation would be a better one."

One would like to hear Huntington explain what he means by "let it happen." What can be done to stem the flow of Mexican immigration into the United States? Surely, throwing more money into the bottomless hole of border security is not the answer. Physically blocking entry into the United States along the 2,000-mile U.S.-Mexican border is unworkable. This leaves only one good solution, as Huntington admits: Raise Mexico's standard of living to a level that significantly reduces Mexicans'

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