

Opinions differ on proposed ASUN amendments

By Betsy Miller

Tomorrow, UNL students will decide if the structure and representation of the ASUN Senate will be changed.

For the change to be made, 15 percent of the student body must vote for the amendments to the ASUN Constitution.

Two proposed amendments will be on Wednesday's ballot. Proposal I would elect senators from living units, instead of the current method of electing by colleges.

Proposal II would increase the senate by five members and require 15 percent of the senate to be non-traditional and minority students. Non-traditional students are those 27 years old and older.

With a 40-member senate, this proposal would require at least seven senators to be non-traditional or minority. However, if no minority or non-traditional students are elected, the senate total could rise to 47, because the entire 15 percent would have to be appointed.

The amendments were introduced by Working Coalition Party members. After the senate voted against putting the proposals on the ballot, Coalition members initiated a petition drive and got the required number of student signatures to allow the amendments on the ballot.

It was mentioned that the amendments surfaced at the same time as the formation of The Working Coalition Party, prompting criticism that the proposals were a "political move" by the Coalition's presidential candidate Dave Mumgaard, currently an ASUN senator from the College of Arts and Sciences.

However, Mumgaard said the timing of the amendments and the announcement of his candidacy are coincidental.

Mumgaard said he and several other students, including ASUN President Rick Mockler, former ASUN senator Tim Rinne and Afrikan Peoples Union President Eugene Tolston, began working on the proposal to include more non-traditional and non-white students last fall.

He said the proposals were ready by Christmas and that Feb. 3 was the earliest the proposals could be put on the senate agenda.

Mumgaard said appointing minority and non-traditional students might make party leaders recruit senate candidates more actively, because they would want to get a 15 percent non-traditional and minority ratio during the general election. If that didn't happen, party leaders would end up watching 15 percent of the senate being appointed, possibly with people they weren't familiar with.

Regardless of the amendments' political implications, they still have received support from one other ASUN candidate.

Dan Wedekind, Real Party presidential candidate, said the amendment that would change college representation has merit. He said that if he is elected, he would investigate changing senate representation to include a combination of college and living-unit senators.

He said several universities in the Big Eight Conference have a mix of senators from their living units and colleges.

Mumgaard said ASUN does not need college representation because "the issues that the ASUN Senate deals with are not college issues."

He said the senate usually discusses topics such as parking space and tuition increases, ideas which aren't directly tied to colleges.

In this instance, Wedekind said he disagrees with Mumgaard.

"The issues (the senate deals with) are of the university as a whole, but it's important to have an academic perspective," he said.

But Wedekind agreed there is "definitely a problem" with the lack of minority and non-traditional student representation on the senate.

However, he said the current proposal doesn't explain

who should make up the 15 percent non-traditional students, and who should select the minority and non-traditional senators.

"With major reforms, this plan could be made a workable plan," Wedekind said.

Mike Ford, True Party presidential candidate, said the current system of student representation does not need to be changed, but that the people within it must.

The True platform says the party "intends to work within the present system of student government and to use other organizations that already exist to the maximum extent possible in order to guarantee our student constituents the best possible representation."

Ford said students within the same college, and in some cases those who have the same major, share "the same basic philosophy."

"Education is the main reason we're here," Ford said. He also said he is against the process of using appointments for 15 percent of the senate seats.

Appointments don't fulfill a democratic purpose, Ford said.

He said the cabinet the True Party proposes would hear the opinions of minority and non-traditional students. It would consist of members from organizations on campus.

The party also proposes an off-campus representative organization to parallel groups like the Residence Hall Association, Interfraternity Council and Panhellenic Association.

Mockler said he would be "very discouraged if both (of the proposals) failed."

Mockler said the proposal to elect senators from living units would be a "vast improvement" over the current way of electing senators.

"It's been clear from comments made that the ASUN senators tend to represent the feelings of the people they live with," Mockler said.

He also said he supports the second proposal.

"The only way he can even begin to address the minority and older students' concerns is by bringing them into the political process," he said.

One last look . . .



Mike Frost, STUPID II Party

Dan Wedekind, Real Party

Mike Ford, True Party

Dave Mumgaard, Working Coalition

For the following interviews, the Daily Nebraskan asked each ASUN presidential candidate the same sequence of questions. The candidates were instructed to answer briefly.

Questions

1. How could the position of student regent be used most effectively?

2. What would be your major goal if elected president of the student body?

3. Which is more important — offering students representation or service — and why?

4. How would you, if elected, make students take student government more seriously?

1. I think we'd go with the kicking and screaming method, and also threaten to hold our breath until we got our way.

2. My goal would be to turn ASUN into a monarchy or a dictatorship, whichever will keep me in power the longest.

3. I suppose the success of Domino's pizza shows that service is the most important thing. I would guarantee to deliver all legislative bills to the students within 30 minutes.

4. I would have the meetings in the nude. Also, ASUN should go about getting students interested in it by using a realistic means, such as paying them \$15,000 to go to the meetings.

1. I think there are two important things to remember. The student regent position is a source of information. The duty of the student regent is to make information available to senators. Secondly, in dealing with the regents, it is also important to work with others outside of the university such as out-state citizens and legislators, as well as administrators.

2. My goals are to see better communication with the student body and better opportunity for input from students in the coming year. Also, because the most important issue confronting students right now is financial struggle, it is important to work with lobbying groups and individual state legislators.

3. My most important function now is to offer crucial representation. Student services are important, but the key issues are the university's and individuals' financial situations, which it is important to represent.

4. The solution has two parts. Communication needs to be increased so that students can become a part of ASUN again. Also, it is important to see that ASUN is dealing with things that students really are concerned about.

1. The best way to make the student regent effective is to give that student regent a vote. Also, the student regent must establish a good working relationship with the board. We (the True Party) will be actively campaigning for regents that we feel will represent students and their views.

2. My major goal is to get more students informed, which will result in a reduction in apathy. We propose to do this through bi-weekly newsletters, open forums, a Government Liaison Committee fact sheet and, basically, have the student government go back to students for input.

3. I don't think representation and student services should be separated. In order to provide service to students, representing is needed.

4. By solving the apathy problem. By informing students. We believe that will create interest and restore ASUN's credibility.

1. The student regent can be effective on specific issues only if backed cohesively by the student body. There is a given, then, that regents have to realize the student regent is a representative of the student body, and has the backing of the student body.

2. My goal would be to take the ASUN Senate and executive leaders, which are seen as lethargic and do nothing, to take that and actually use the potential of the office to try in different ways to achieve progress for the students. The way that would be done is to have an end to the compromising position that the student body president and the student regent have been put into.

3. We feel representation is more important. Student services are a good thing and should be maintained and enhanced though, especially legal services.

4. The only way for students to take their representation more seriously is if the student representative is able to effectively achieve something tangible. The only way to achieve that is to stand up and shout over the crowd and convince the crowd that what they (the representative) could be doing is worthwhile.