

Daily Nebraskan  
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University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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## Backward reasoning ROTC exclusion of homosexuals doesn't fly

The University of Wisconsin Faculty Senate voted Monday for a resolution suggesting removing the ROTC program from the campus if it does not change its policy barring homosexuals by 1993.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln officials have not heard many complaints about the policy's application at Nebraska, thus they are not concerned.

Maybe they should be.

Joe Rowson, NU director of public affairs, said the policy barring homosexuals does not violate any university or Nebraska policies.

Wait a minute.

Just last summer, the NU Board of Regents added a clause to the discrimination bylaws for the university, stating that this university will not allow discrimination on the basis of "individual characteristics." The regents definition of "individual characteristics" includes sexual preference.

So ROTC's policy may be in order federally, and under legal pretense, but the charade doesn't wash on this campus. It violates the regent's bylaws.

Besides, the military's reasoning for the policy is backward.

Lt. Col. Robert Jacobson, commander of UNL's Army ROTC program, said those applying for entrance to the ROTC program sign a statement that they have not committed homosexual acts -- which is the basis for the military to know who is a homosexual.

The premise is that homosexuals supposedly are a security threat and can be blackmailed.

That makes very little sense.

If you sign a statement saying you've committed homosexual acts, the military labels you as homosexual. So where does the blackmail come in? People already know you're gay.

The opportunity for blackmail arises when people are trying to hide something. Someone who is homosexual, and wants to participate in the ROTC program will mark "no" on the questionnaire, and be admitted to the program.

Those are the people who can be blackmailed, because they stand to be kicked out for their sexual preference.

But it's a federal policy, so the federal government should judge that, right?

Wrong.

The policy should be abolished at the federal level, but without universities demanding abolishment, that won't happen. The University of Nebraska should send the same message to the Pentagon that the University of Wisconsin did.

Discrimination -- even in the military -- should not be tolerated.

-- Amy Edwards  
for the Daily Nebraskan



## 1990's ASUN joke has begun

But everybody has to wait until March for the big punch line

Except for a few minor controversies here and there, the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska hasn't been exactly in the center of the public eye lately.

In fact, five whole people actually have come up to your faithful columnist and asked, "Brian, what's ASUN up to, anyway?"

Well, folks, I have the answer. Its members are running for office.

The ASUN elections are a mere three months away, and the horses already are in the gate. ASUN Government Liaison Committee Chairman Deb Fiddelke and former ASUN Senator and Student Foundations President Phil Gosch both are said to be planning to run for the coveted ASUN presidency. And a Coalition Party being formed by members of Early Warning! and Ecology Now also has emerged and soon will nominate its candidates at a party convention.

If you're like the 88 percent of students who do not vote in ASUN elections, you're probably asking yourselves at this point, "So what? Why should I care?"

Here's why: The ASUN elections are a case study in how politics really work. They're an annual event chock-full of intrigue, back-room maneuvering and behind-the-scenes dealing.

So wake up, friends, and follow along as we take a guided tour through the wonderful world of student government campaigns. Come with me as we answer the following burning questions:

**1. WHERE DO THE CANDIDATES COME FROM?** There are three people on an ASUN executive ticket -- a president, a first vice president and a second vice president. A person decides that he or she wants to run for president and asks two friends/associates/interest group leaders to join him or her on an executive ticket.

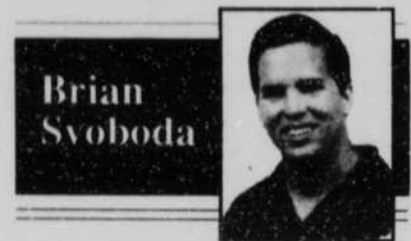
The three of them then merrily cobble together in private a slate of senate and advisory board candidates, drawn mainly from the greek houses but usually including a sprinkling of residence hall, off-campus and minority students. By February, the slate is filled and the real campaign begins.

That's the way it's usually done. There are, however, exceptions. The Coalition Party plans to have a full-blown party convention, where a

platform is drafted and candidates nominated in true democratic fashion.

The ASUN office also maintains a list where interested bystanders can sign up to be approached by parties to run for office. However, in the end, the candidates and parties decide who runs for what. A person signing the list is more apt to run for the campus weed authority than ASUN second vice president.

**2. DO ISSUES MATTER?** What, are you kidding? Of course not. This is politics!



Brian Svoboda

Seriously, though, issues carry remarkably little weight in the ASUN elections. There is no mass consciousness to be melded, since only a couple thousand people turn out to vote. And since for many students the Daily Nebraskan is the only source of campus news, students do not have access to a wide range of information about the parties or the candidates.

The real way to win an ASUN election is to network -- that is, to cobble together a base and get 1,000 of your closest friends to vote for you. The ability of the greek system to serve as such a base is a big reason why ASUN presidents always seem to be in a fraternity or sorority.

One sign of just how insignificant issues are in the election is the platforms of the parties. The platforms of the last three winning ASUN executive tickets have been strikingly similar, indicating that candidates feel little obligation to say anything new. And, in fact, they don't have to. They can still win anyway.

**3. ARE THE ELECTIONS HONEST?** In 1941, after young Texas Congressman Lyndon Johnson narrowly lost a race for the U.S. Senate, President Franklin D. Roosevelt told him, "Lyndon, apparently you Texans haven't learned one of the first things we learned up in New York State, and that is when the election is over, you have to sit on the ballot boxes."

Franklin Roosevelt must have run for ASUN president. Just like real elections, the ASUN elections often

have been dogged by tales of fraud. Past scandals prompted ASUN to take extreme security measures to prevent casting of multiple ballots. And the existence of three politically active secret societies -- Theta Nu Epsilon, Rho Delta and Senior Scroll Society -- have added spice to the rumors.

ASUN's elections are largely an in-house operation, increasing the opportunities and incentives for fraud and bias. Rather than having an independent group responsible for the ballots, ASUN instead has an Electoral Commission composed of ex-officio members (the first vice president and director of development) and members appointed by the ASUN president.

The Electoral Commission in the past has appeared less than objective to some candidates. The commission in the past has turned down requests by ASUN leaders to put polling places in the residence halls, a move which many thought would draw hundreds of non-greek voters.

And ASUN executive candidates, more often than not, are drawn from ASUN's own ranks, making it difficult for Electoral Commission members and the ASUN president to be completely impartial. For example, should she elect to run, Deb Fiddelke would be the fourth consecutive GLC chair to run for president.

By the way, the last three won.

So here's the story, folks: The ASUN elections are largely a closed process. Candidates and parties are formed far from the public eye, the campaigns are largely devoid of significant issues and the process is governed by individuals who are much too close to the candidates for the process to be completely impartial.

The process should be changed. Students should be better informed about the campaigns from the very start, when all the backstage maneuvering and formation of slates are occurring.

And the job of enforcing electoral rules should be given to a group more removed from political pressures and personal ties to the candidates. People deserve the right not only to vote, but to make a meaningful choice when they do.

Isn't that what democracy is all about?

Svoboda is a senior political science and Russian major, and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

## opinion READER

### From conception, child has life

This Thanksgiving, I met my nephew Maxwell for the first time. The little fellow is 3 months old, weighs a whopping 18 pounds and with just a little help, can keep his own balance while standing. Though Max constantly drools and occasionally burps up, the second he smiles at you, you'll love him. He's quite a charmer and as his dad says, "He's a cool little guy."

It's a miracle that three months ago a new living, breathing being came from inside another and Max was born. Only nine months before this, Max was simply an egg and a sperm waiting to meet. Then, at the moment of conception, Max was simply a single cell. It seems that there must have been something special about that cell and that moment, for it became Max and gave him life.

Ending that life seems wrong. Though women certainly should have the rights to decide what happens to their bodies, the right of the child to live seems to be far above these. It seems only a medical or legal technicality to decide when life begins for the embryo or fetus. However, I believe that from conception the child is something magical and also possesses life.

I took a nap with Max one day. As he lay by my side I just watched in wonder as he stretched and his chest moved with his breath, and, of course, drooled by the gallon. It's definitely something special that he was given life. That should be more important.

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