

# Musical chairs

## Adding at-large seats won't help ASUN or campus



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Today is election day. Not for the President, not for the State Legislature, not even for some loony petition.

Today we are electing a new student government. And you don't care. You don't. It's sad, but it's true.

Now don't think I'm going to waste your time trying to convince you that apathy towards student government hurts our university or anything like that. It's pretty obvious that no matter what anyone says, less than 12 percent of you will actually vote.

But I want to talk about an issue that has an effect on more than just the 2500 Nebraska faithful that head to the ballot box, even more than the university itself.

The issue stems not from an election of a candidate, but from one little amendment to the constitution.

In a brochure outlining the proposed amendment, the ASUN says:

*"Under the new system  
— 25 seats will be apportioned, as now, among the academic units;  
— 10 will be apportioned among three identified 'types of living units' (residence halls, greek house, and off-campus dwellings); and  
— 5 seats will be elected from the student body at large."*

There are a load of things wrong with this amendment, including less emphasis on the academic colleges and the simple vagueness of the wording. But the intent of the amendment is what makes the change completely fallible.

This amendment is just like loads of other types of laws passed in universities, cities and states across the coun-

try that attempt to compensate for underrepresentation through legislation.

### The few and the many

These laws are conceived because certain portions of the particular constituency are not properly represented. In some places it's minorities because they are financially or politically disadvantaged. Here it's non-greeks because they don't have the incentive and knowledge of the system that greeks do. Or maybe they just don't feel the incentive to be involved as much as the frat boys.

It really doesn't matter *why* the dorm kids and off-campus dwellers are underrepresented, it's just important to understand that they *are*. Members of fraternities or sororities make up about 13 percent of the overall university body. But at least 50 percent of the current ASUN is greek. So there's a huge disparity, everyone knows it — that's just the statistic to prove it.

And a bunch of candidate-types got together and decided we need to fix this problem. Don't try to say it's not a problem, because for 13 percent of the population to "rule" the government is an oligarchy — where a few reign over a much larger political body. It's like the whites in the old South Africa or the communist Soviet Union. It's a problem all right.

But when we come up with plans to fix the problem, then we get into trouble.

### Too many laws

ASUN President Sara Russell knows laws can't solve these type of representation issues. In a letter to the Daily Nebraskan, she wrote, "No legislation in the world could ever solve any representation problem. Only activism, multilateral communication and visibility can."

But she is *in support* of this amendment, saying it "creates more avenues through which students can decide to get involved in ASUN."

The new opportunities created only serve to stifle others. Right now, if a greek is the best person for the job, he

can run and win without being hampered by restrictions. But under the new system, Joe Greek will be forced to compete against other greeks instead of the whole population. So if Joe and all of his other greek friends are more qualified than Susie Off-Campus, she still gets the seat and Joe gets the shaft.

Like affirmative action and other forced diversity programs, this amendment is inherently discriminatory when trying to fight this indirect discrimination. Why can't we try to increase this much-needed diversity without laws?

### Nix the quick fix

President Russell wants "activism, multilateral communication and visibility," so let's give the underrepresented students just that. Let's get into the dorms and talk about issues. Let's try to be more visible to the students who live in south Lincoln. Let's be active and try to fight this plague-like apathy that has a tight hold of our campus.

Let's ask intriguing questions, discuss interesting topics, encourage involvement and excite students about governing ourselves democratically.

How? Well, the Focus party is proposing a presidential cabinet of members of underrepresented groups. That's one idea. But ultimately, it's for ASUN to decide, hopefully without legislation.

If they want the government to be more representative of the entire campus, then they need to come up with ways to get people involved without a quick-fix constitutional change. And really that's all it is. A quick pass-a-law-and-take-care-of-everything amendment that'll shut up those dorm kids for a while. It's fast-food politics. And it won't amount to change.

We can try to repre-

sent every single group in our little student government all we want. But giving seats to the residence halls here is just like trying to give blacks and Hispanics chairs on Capitol Hill. It's ridiculous. Absurd. Ludicrous. Foolish. Preposterous. Insert your own adjective.

Just don't let this quick-fix mentality seep into our student government. And if you've read this far, chances are you're going to vote. If not, then

stay away from the ballot box. And wait.

One day, maybe ASUN will create a seat only for students from your state, your county, in your college, your age, height, weight and personality. Perhaps then we can all be "democratically" represented.



SHAWN DRAPAL/DN

# The snowball effect

## University proves itself scared of the 'racist' cry

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In my experience, snowballs are not news.

But when a snowball leaves the hand of a white fraternity boy and hits a Vietnamese student in the leg, it gets whipped into a full-blown diversity blizzard.

A blizzard of university sanctions, a forum discussing the racial climate of this university and a media frenzy looking for the next big mess-up by a few college boys.

Last week Duc Tran, a University of Nebraska-Lincoln Vietnamese student, was the victim of a so-called racial incident as he parked his car in front of the Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity house on 15th and R streets.

Tran happened to park on R Street in the midst of a snowball fight going on between a few fraternity members — something that happens nearly every day when enough snow covers the ground, as anyone who walks along R street can see.

The men threw a few of the snowballs — whether by chance or racial motivation — in the direction of Tran, but none made contact.

At first, Tran thought the snow-

balls were just being thrown in good fun, so he didn't think anything more of it. But as he walked across the street, Tran was the victim of a brutal attack of one snowball hitting him on the leg, and a few others whizzing by his head without harming him.

Tran, upset by this violation, then walked into the Nebraska Union and gathered some friends together to confront the fraternity members in person. Tran and six friends walked up to the door and repeatedly knocked, and a member of the fraternity answered the door.

Tran complained of the snowballing incident, and the member told him he would tell the other house members to stop.

End of story, right?

Wrong.

For some reason, police were called to the scene, and an officer, after hearing Tran's side of the story, entered the fraternity house and came out with another member of the house who apologized to Tran on behalf of the members who threw the snowballs.

Then Tran, the officer and the fraternity member walked up to the house to speak to the violators themselves. Two of the five men talked to Tran, listened to his complaints, and again apologized, saying there was no racial motivation behind the inci-

dent.

Tran said he accepted the members' apologies and left the house.

Now, end of story, right?

Wrong again.

Tran decided people could learn from such "racial" incidents, and he was generous enough to donate his own situation to do just that.

Tran wanted a forum to "create a bridge of understanding," and he got one Monday night in the Nebraska Union.

And the best thing of all was that about 90 people attended Tran's forum. About 90 people realized the crime — yes, *crime* — that these fraternity members committed. And they wanted something done about it.

Please.

The worst thing of all must be that the diversity police got what they were there for — the fraternity members got punished.

It's always easiest to make them the bad guys, right? It's always easiest to just write the ol' frat boys off as being racist, isn't it?

So Tran had his forum, he had his time to read a 2½-page deposition to the crowd, and he had a third apology from the fraternity members.

And he had his moment of glory, hearing that the members were going to be punished — all on his account.

But I'm not quite sure of the les-

son I am supposed to learn from this. Regardless, I do know the lesson that I am learning: The university is scared.

I'm also learning that anyone who cries "racism" about any event will be coddled immediately.

After the past incidents on this campus, who can blame UNL's administration?

The incidents I refer to probably don't need to be rehashed, we all know what they are.

But this is not one of them. This is not cross burning part three.

This is a snowball.

This is a snowball that was thrown with an intent that no one can accurately judge. No one except the man who owns the hand that threw that snowball. And he said it wasn't racist.

Who are we to pass judgment on that man? What makes it so easy for us to take the side of the Vietnamese student instead of the white student?

Even Tran himself — at least in the deposition he read at his own forum — told the audience that he did not speculate on the motivation until the fraternity member specifically stated that the motive was not a racist one.

Tran seems to have changed his mind about the whole thing, and since everyone else thinks it's racist, it must be racist, right?

So I'm not exactly sure if the forum was for the benefit of improving relations between Fiji and the Vietnamese students at UNL, or if the forum was an effort for the university to cover its tracks — just in case.

It's really not fair at all that the university would so quickly, and without a second thought, sell these fraternity boys out just because of the past history of other campus fraternities, which actually have nothing to do with this incident.

It's not fair that they be punished for something that could have been done without one bit of malicious intent. And it's not fair that their words are listened to but not heard, and they end up paying the price for something they may have not even done.

But no one seems to see it that way, at least from the university's side.

Whatever the case may be, it really doesn't matter after all.

The fraternity boys did get punished. The Vietnamese student is getting a lot of pity and a lot of support from the sympathetic majority. The university comes out looking like a winner.

Because, after all, snowballs are a big deal.