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Brazil calls for impeachment after bribe scandal

“ I believe that our country needs a government that shows confidence, we need a government that is going to be there for us. The only thing we expect from Dilma’s party is another scandal.

ENGINEERING STUDENT PEDRO HENRIQUE CONCÍLIO

BY BEATRIZ CALDAS
STAFF WRITER

How would you feel if a whole country went to the streets calling for your impeachment after they have elected you as their president? This scenario is currently facing Dilma Rousseff, Brazil’s president.

Rousseff is facing a lot of problems less than five months after her reelection.

A huge scandal involving the country’s most important oil and gas company, Petrobras, became public in 2014 and is still under investigation.

Brazil’s Supreme Court is leading the investigation into top politicians who are accused of taking at least \$800 million in bribes in exchange for lucrative oil contracts from Petrobras.

President Rousseff is one of the suspects.

“Dilma knew what was going on with Petrobras,” said law student Philippe Barros in a phone interview with The Guilfordian. “It’s hard to believe she didn’t know a thing because she has always been too involved with her party.”

The incident affects not only Brazil itself but other companies which are linked to Petrobras.

“This scandal could affect U.S. companies who might be invested in oil exploration and production off the coast of Brazil,” said Visiting Professor of History William

Hamilton in an email interview.

Trying to calm people down, Rousseff went on air on March 8, Women’s International Day, and spoke about the scandal. She said Brazilians had every right to be worried, but they should be patient and understanding because the situation was temporary.

During the president’s speech many people started to bang pots and honk horns, a form of protest called “panelaço.” The protests have been ongoing since.

On March 15, the movement “Vem Pra Rua,” which translates to “come to the street,” reunited thousands of indignant individuals all around the country who wore the Brazilian green and yellow jersey and held signs.

“We are tired of being disrespected,” said Rogério Chequer, leader of Vem Pra Rua, in an interview with television show Roda Viva. “Politicians are elected by the people. (They) receive money through our taxes. But they end up using it for personal interests. We are done.”

Another protest will take place on April 12 to express frustration with the lack of change since last month.

“Our government sees and speaks what it wants,” said comedian and screenwriter Criss Paiva in an email interview with The Guilfordian. “We pressure them, but they don’t feel pressured. Screaming is not the answer, but we can’t just stay quiet either.”

Some people believe the government is actually doing a good job overall.

“Dilma had nothing to do with the Petrobras scandal,” said engineering student Isac Chagas in a phone interview with The Guilfordian. “She was always against corruption, and the protests are not getting anywhere. They call for impeachment when that is not even legally possible. A lot of people are mixing ideologies.”

Numbers of people say otherwise.

“I think chances of an impeachment are fairly high, especially with the protests and the fact that her popularity (has) plunged from 42 percent to 23 percent over the past several months,” said Hamilton.

Besides calling for impeachment, protesters also complain about their country’s high inflation, unemployment and exchange rates.

“These problems are reflexes of our economy’s disruption,” said engineer Valéria Pacheco in an email interview with The Guilfordian. “And since Dilma and her party are the ones in charge, they are obviously the ones to blame, especially after so many situations of corruption.”

Again, not everyone agrees that Rousseff should be condemned.

“We tend to link the image of our president with everyone involved in her party,” said law student Mariana Morais in a phone interview. “But we know that the decisions made in Brazil come from the Congress. So



Protesters in Brazil demand the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff.

high inflation and unemployment rates are not Dilma’s party’s fault.”

Besides many demands, Brazilians are also providing solutions.

“I believe that our country needs a government that shows confidence,” said engineering student Pedro Henrique Concílio in a phone interview. “We need a government that is going to be there for us. The only thing we expect from Dilma’s

party is another scandal.

“A great solution would be increasing investigations of both our former and current president.”

In four months of infamy, confusion, arguments and anger, Brazil’s future seems uncertain.

“I worry about not finding a way out,” said Paiva. “We need help. All the help we can get. We need to save our country.”

State cuts expected to hurt Guilford County Schools

BY AUBREY KING
STAFF WRITER

Guilford College students and faculty know as well as anyone the harsh realities of budget cuts, and now it seems local high schools are facing a similar problem.

Over the past few weeks, preliminary budget announcements by Guilford County Schools have caused discontent over the possibility of continued cuts. Far from a onetime occurrence, this year’s cuts reflect a startling trend of state-mandated cuts to a school system in need of capital.

In response, the school system has turned to the county for extra funds.

“In the past we have focused on cuts, and significant cuts, to compensate for budget shortfalls,” said Guilford County Schools Superintendent Maurice “Mo” Green in an

announcement on GCSNC.com. “Now that we are moving out of the Great Recession, it is time to make up for those cuts and start to adequately fund our children’s education.”

Though many blame the school system for the cuts Green mentioned, cuts beyond the system’s control have put them in a difficult position.

In a presentation to the Guilford County School Board, Green revealed that the state had cut the school budget by almost \$1.8 million, down from \$7.4 million last year. Targeting teachers’ assistants and driver’s education, the cuts forced the school system to look elsewhere for funds.

“(Green) calls for \$205.3 million from (Guilford County), up from \$179.4 million provided for this year,” reads GCSNC’s web page. “The majority of that money would go to restoring cuts to schools.”

Though the allocated amount would certainly lighten the load, hopes for the grant are not high.

Since 2008, the county has shifted its focus from county schools to charter schools. Though the total given to schools by the county has slowly grown, not all of the schools have reaped the same benefit.

“The State allocates money based on the number of students in your building,” said Caryl Schunk, chair and assistant professor of education studies. “If you have fewer students, your building receives less money for your faculty and staff, as well as for supplies.”

With failing state funds and a variety of issues preventing particular schools from receiving the funds they need, cuts are still likely, and community members have begun to think about where the cuts would do the

least harm.

“The school I go to, the Early College at Guilford, is a huge GCS-funded program for a very small group of students,” said Early College junior Harris Billings. “Though I know this experience has been invaluable to advanced students like us, I do not know if programs for the benefit of the top students outweigh the importance of programs that help students struggling to keep up.”

Green and the board also realize that cuts have to happen, and in response, they are trying to do what they can to keep programs running.

Green announced on the GCSNC website that his first priority is to save teachers, though they cannot save them all, a sentiment which agrees with the community’s values.

“I think cutting electives is better than cutting teachers,” said Early College junior Katherine Quinn in an email interview. “Programs providing kids from lower class families with school supplies should also be kept because they are always neglected.”

The board cannot finalize the school budget until the county releases their budget on June 1, but, until then, the Guilford county community waits with nervous anticipation.

In Guilford County, a continuation of harmful cuts casts doubt on the effectiveness of the current educational system. Change has to happen if local schools want to continue to operate, but, for now, all residents can do is hope the changes do not hurt too much.



Guilford County Schools