

Opinions

Students' apathy about SGA surprising

I am surprised by the seeming lack of interest, except from Student Government Association members themselves, in the *Pilot's* coverage of the 2006 SGA elections.

Pilot reporters hit the streets to gauge student reaction and came back to the newsroom with a depressing report of apathy. Students, one journalist reported, just don't care what the SGA does or doesn't do.

Nor do they seem to care what the SGA could do for them.

Although *Pilot* reporters found apathy, and the *Pilot's* e-mail box lacks a written response to the paper's coverage of the elections, students cared enough to vote for a student-body president in an election and then a run-off election.

My question, then, to all Gardner-Webb University students is this: Why don't you care enough to actively question the way the election was carried out?

You have reason to question it.

For instance, the SGA's response to the *Pilot*, which you will find printed in its entirety below, says, "The Election Reform Package was passed by the Senate in order to ensure the fairness of the elections. The same legislation included the set-up of Run-off elections.... The [*Pilot*] article raises the question of why SGA does not allow students to 'ratify' the Election Reform Package. Well, the Election Reform Package is only a piece of legislation. The legislation states the way in which the Senate wishes to hold the elections and can be changed

if future Senate bodies deem it necessary. If the students were asked to vote on every piece of legislation that SGA passed, there would be no need for the students to elect officers to represent them. Any governing body that is a representative government passes legislation based on what they believe is for the best interest of their constituents. The Student Senate believed this legislation was in the best interest of the students in order to ensure fair and truthful elections."

The *Pilot's* March 24 editorial calls into question the validity of the 2006 elections not because students weren't asked what they thought about the reform, but based on the failure of the SGA to allow the legislation to be approved by the dean of student development and GWU's board of trustees—before the new legislation was enacted.

Article 12, Section 9 of the SGA Constitution states, "Following an affirmative vote by the Student Senate, the proposed changes [of legislation] will then be submitted to the Vice-President And Dean Of Student Development."

The *Pilot* assumes that the new legislation would be submitted to the dean for approval, much like amendments to the constitution.

Furthermore, Article 13, Section B states, "The amendment shall be ratified by the Student Senate by a two-thirds majority vote and shall be considered official when the University's Administration and Board of Trustees affirm the Senate's request."

According Bruce Moore, dean of student development, the new piece of legislation—the election reform package—had not been approved by his office at the time of the elections.

"The proposed constitution that I have seen recently has not been approved by any university officials for it to be in effect," Moore told the *Pilot* March 22. "There has been an absolute mess this year about the constitution."

If that is the case, the SGA did not follow its own constitution, the 2006 SGA elections were held under nullifiable circumstances, and the legitimacy of the elections should be questioned by the student body.

In light of the events of the past two weeks, which I will not describe here, I want to extend my thanks to the *Pilot's* advisors, who handled the newspaper's coverage of the elections and the ensuing events with professionalism.

They worked to protect the free press rights of the student newspaper at Gardner-Webb University, and their work is appreciated.

Intimidation, of any kind, will never thwart the *Pilot's* pursuit of the best obtainable version of the truth.

Students have the right to know what is taking place with an organization that is supposed to represent and serve them.

What the student body chooses to do with the information the *Pilot* provides, however, is up to the students.

SGA response to the Pilot

Editor's Note: The Pilot is printing the SGA's letter, with the exception of its description of the election process, in its entirety. It has not been edited by the Pilot.

Fellow Students,

As you have read in the latest edition of the *Pilot*, there were several articles that covered issues dealing with SGA. The main issues were the recent SGA elections and the One-Card proposal. This letter was written in response to those articles, in order to uphold the integrity of SGA and its members. There are a few points that were omitted from the articles that would have cleared the unsightly confusion that was left for you to muck through on your own.

Concerning the first election, the *Pilot* was allowed to observe the steps of the election in order to report to students. However, excluding the statements which came from an anonymous source, the only thing that was printed about the election itself was that it was observed to be "fair." If the article discussing the elections would have expressed the process correctly it would have proved the anonymous letter to be asinine and answered the question of "non-transparent" elections.

With the addition of validating the ID numbers in Election Reform Package passed by Senate, it is impossible to "stuff votes" because if a number is a fake or if a number is duplicated, the votes are thrown out. The Election Re-

form Package was passed by Senate in order to ensure the fairness of the elections. This same legislation included the set up of Run-off elections. SGA has never had the requirement of run-offs before, but Senate felt that in order to allow the total population to be represented, it is only fair that a candidate receive a majority of the vote. If a candidate does not, then a run-off has to be held. The article raises the question of why SGA does not allow students to "ratify" the Election Reform Package. Well, the Reform Package is only a piece of legislation. The legislation states the way in which the Senate wishes to hold the elections and can be changed if future Senate bodies deem it necessary. If the students were asked to vote on every piece of legislation that SGA passed, there would be no need for the students to elect officers to represent them. Any governing body that is a representative government passes legislation based on what they believe is for the best interest of the of the constituents. The Student Senate believed this legislation was in the best interest of the students in order to ensure fair and truthful elections.

There are several issues that were raised in the anonymous letter that we will go over as well. In the letter it stated that votes were not counted if they only had one name circled, names crossed out, or things written on the ballot. This is entirely FALSE. As long as the ballots had a name circled the vote was counted.

This statement can be verified by not only the members of the Elections Committee and the Student Leadership and Activities office, but by the *Pilot* who questioned reasons for ballots being not counted, and the number of students who passed through the Wellness Center lobby. The vote counting is done in the open of the lobby so that way people can come by and observe if they feel the need to. SGA has nothing to hide from the students.

The reason behind only the people who voted in the first election are allowed to vote in a run-off election is because that is how true run-off elections are done. If you do not vote the first time in a general election, you are not allowed to vote in the case of a run-off. And yes it is correct that there were only 367 votes counted in the Run-off election. The reason for that is, there were only 367 ballots turned in that had ID numbers that were valid for that election. If you as a student have an issue with such a small number of ballots being turned in, then you should talk to the other 300 people who exercised their right to abstain from voting.

For the One Card, it is not a "false hope". And although it may take a year to implement, the leg work has to be done somewhere. Sometimes you need to be willing to start projects, even though you will not see the tangible effects on them, in order to make life better for future students. **Big projects such as this do no happen over night** or even over

one month. It takes months of research and discussions of which route would be best for the University to take to make the project most effective and beneficial for students and the University as a whole.

On a final note, SGA has advertised for all the events that we have been in charge of or helped with this year. From Homecoming events to our blood drives, our campus clean up day to our Fireside Chats with Dr. Bonner and the One Card forum. All were advertised in Paw Prints, flyers, Web Net and word of mouth. As far as the *Pilot* is concerned, they have invited to every SGA meeting we have had this year, they have yet to be present. The editor Amanda Wood, is also a member of SGA as the Commuter Chair, yet she also has failed to attend any meeting for this year.

All SGA meetings are open to anyone who wants to come sit in. They year SGA has actually had more students attend our meetings than we have in the past few years. After reading this letter, if you have any further questions that you would like addressed please attend our Q&A Forum that we will be having Thursday March 30, 2006 at 6:00pm in Fireside Lounge. If not, feel free to attend our next meeting April 19, 2006 at 8:30pm in Ritch Banquet Hall.

Respectfully and apologetically,
Your 2005-2006 SGA Members and
your SGA President Anya E. Huneycutt

GWU students sound off on the would-be Bush impeachment

Clark: Unfounded impeachment hearings won't protect Americans

The politicians are on the warpath again, and this time they are calling for the impeachment of Bush.

Everyone from bloggers who speak in the name of "news" to John Kerry the presidential loser still trying to find his own mind, is advocating rousting Bush out of office.

My mission is not to praise Bush and my opinions are simply my own. I am neither a Bush-lover nor a Bush-hater, I am simply trying to look at the situation critically and support my country instead of attempting to destroy it from within.

If I believed everything the media declared, then I would come to realize that everything from 9/11 to Hurricane Katrina is directly the fault of Bush and basically our country and the rest of the world is going to hell in a hand basket.

I am an advocate for truth and believe it must be actively sought out as it is not obviously presented, and balance must be discovered. There are always two sides to a story but we too often don't see the other side.

Impeachment is a serious step, and a last resort. The democrats calling for this measure are using this more of a tool to undermine a president's credibility whom they do not like, then thinking it will actually happen.

Some of the charges against Bush include the issue of wiretaps, an issue personally adopted by the media and, in my view, blown out of proportion. Strange how it didn't make headlines when Clinton took the same action with wiretaps...Not only that, but a computer programmed to catch suspicious words between the U.S. and foreign coun-

tries is personally no threat to me and if it protects my country in any way, I am willing to give up a bit of my "privacy."

Another huge point of contention is, of course, Iraq. Many of our leaders today seem to believe in defensive strategies instead of offensive. Peace is the big issue, though whose peace that is remains to be discovered. At least we haven't turned a blind eye to genocide like in the past.

Also, the media is fond of citing and quoting such things as Bush's deliberate attempt to "lie and mislead" us into war. Apparently, for them, he is cut from the same cloth as Hitler, Stalin, and other such dictators.

First of all, even members of Congress and prominent Democrats such as Ted Kennedy and Hillary Clinton voted for the removal of Hussein and the invasion of Iraq. Secondly, at some point biological and other weapons did exist as the Kurds and Iranians can personally testify.

It was also a gamble to begin with as Saddam would not allow U.N. weapons inspectors to even remain in the country. Information was limited because of this fact. If we went back a few years, it was more than Bush calling for the invasion of Iraq.

Bush is our president; there are not sufficient grounds to authorize impeachment. I would think it is in the best interest of the American citizen to work on improving situations instead of dismantling them and undermining the authority of our country.

As Marta Kramer, executive director for the Republican Party of New Mexico questions, "How will dragging the country into impeachment hearings protect Americans?"

Wallace: Bush deserves to be investigated, and he needs a dictionary

With every ounce of sarcasm possible, I must say, that the recent calls for an impeachment of President Bush have come as quite a shock to me.

Whoever assembled that crackpot team we call the Bush Administration should be forced to watch all videos and document each grammatical error in Bush's speech collection.

That, or listen to Michael Savage talk for more than 10 minutes. Either way, some sort of mental dysfunction is sure to set in.

December 18, 2005, Congressman John Conyers Jr. (D, Mich.) introduced a resolution in the House of Representatives that called for "a select committee to investigate the Administration's intent to go to war before congressional authorization, manipulation of pre-war intelligence, encouraging and countenancing torture, retaliating against critics, and to make recommendations regarding grounds for possible impeachment."

Aside from a few appreciative ovations from left-wing bloggers and heavy sarcasm from the right-wing neoconservatives, no media outlets threw up red flags in shock, anger, or celebration (depending on what political party was, at the time, playing 'hand' to its 'puppet'.)

Now, as of late, conservatives and liberals are battling it out in yet another knock-down-drag-out flamewar in response to the resurfacing of these long-awaited impeachment pleas.

But while peace-loving, tree-hugging liberals across the nation do their celebratory impeachment dance, the reality of the

situation is that the Democratic Party is claiming it just doesn't have the numbers to pull off a full-blown impeachment.

A poll done by Zogby (the highly regarded non-partisan polling company), a margin of 53% to 42%, Americans wanted Congress to impeach President Bush if he lied about the war in Iraq.

This may be the last chance us left-wingers have of giving Bush his well-deserved boot in the rear.

Now, let's get this straight for all those God-fearing conservative extremists out there that are still lights-out on the issue as to why Bush is facing impeachment.

Two words: executive tyranny. The list can be capped off with ignoring the Constitution, conducting illegal actions, torture, violation of international treaties, violation of our own domestic agreements, suppression of dissent on the democratic minority in the Congress....

Should I continue? I sway from the mainstream liberal flow when I say, no, I don't necessarily think Bush is evil.

I simply think he's a misguided, quasi-ignorant, egotist on a political power trip. Which isn't quite as harsh.

Since 9/11, Bush has done nothing but throw legal sand in our faces, and I welcome with open arms, any possibility of impeachment.

And, in closing, whether or not this impeachment goes through or becomes just another disappointed dream of liberals everywhere, for the sake of bleeding ears across America, someone buy him a dictionary.