Order to Elections Commission Encourage Purposeful and Informed Voting
UGS-A2014-17

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Submitted for Consideration: October 28th, 2014

Action Requested: Majority approval of the Undergraduate Senate and Graduate Student Council

WHEREAS, Joint By-Laws, Article 5, Section 2, B.1 indicates that the Elections Commission’s purpose is “To oversee any logistical operations. This includes the hiring of all elections staff, including the creation and staffing of polling stations, the publicity of the commission, and the creation and maintenance of an elections webpage;

WHEREAS, Joint By-Laws, Article 5, Section 2, B.4, states the Elections Commission also has “To coordinate and serve as liaison between the ASSU and students with regards to elections affairs. This includes communicating with all campaigners, coordinating the activities of all special fee applicants, and making statements to the campus media regarding the elections process. The Commission will also serve as the primary reference on all issues regarding the interpretation of By-Laws and Policies relating to campaigning and eligibility”.

WHEREAS, Joint By-Laws, Article 5, Section B.5 states that the Commission has the ability “To devise and implement the procedures for carrying out all elections and elections operations, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, the Association By- Laws, the US By-Laws, the GSC By-Laws, and the Elections Policies of the relevant Association legislative bodies.”

WHEREAS, The Joint By Laws give the Elections Commission considerable control over all duties related to the functioning of an election;

WHEREAS, The Joint By Laws, Article 5, Section B.5 state that “The Commission shall operate under the oversight of the Executive Committee in devising and implementing the procedures for carrying out elections and other purely administrative matters”;

WHEREAS, The By-Laws establish that the Elections Commission does not operate as a
completely independent organization and is still subject to the provision of the Legislative Bodies. Thus, this order to the Elections Commission has reasonable and constitutional grounds;

WHEREAS, Stanford University’s yearly student activity fee for 2014-2015 academic school year is $450\(^1\), and reported as one of the highest in the county;

WHEREAS, In 2014, 49 groups applied for Special Fees and 6 applied for joint fees\(^2\);

WHEREAS, The current ballot does not indicate the total amount of Special Fees that a student approves of and is willing to pay;

WHEREAS, Calculating the total for oneself is both time-consuming, cumbersome, and difficult given the interface of the ballot;

WHEREAS, Informing the student body of what they have voted for is critical and necessary to ensuring that all are aware of how much money in Special Fees they have voted for;

WHEREAS, Educating and informing the student body should be a priority of the ASSU, especially given the lack of transparency and understanding among the student body;

THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED BY THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE BODIES OF THE ASSOCIATION:

THAT, The Elections Commission be required to create a function on the website that lists a sum total of the amount of Special Fees funding that a student has voted for prior to submitting the ballot, and the Special Fees groups that the student voted for. The student must approve the amount he or she approves of before submitting the ballot. This will allow the student to recognize if there are any groups left off the ballot that he or she would like to vote for Special Fees;

THAT, The phrasing of the sum total pop-up function should be neutral to groups requesting Special Fees. The language of the function could include something such as the following: “You are in favor of allocating [xyz amount] and abstaining on an additional [abc amount] per student to support [list of student groups] during the [academic school year]. This sums to a potential total student activities fee of [abc+xyz amount] per student”; and

THAT, The amount included would include both the Special Fee and General Fee amounts;

\(^1\) https://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/sfs/bill/resources-tuition#assu
\(^2\) http://elections.stanford.edu/archives/2014-elections-results
THAT, This measure be enacted for both undergraduate and graduate student populations;

THAT, In the event that funding reform is passed following the passing of this order, the Elections Commission is still ordered to create a similar system that would provide voters with what they voted for and the corresponding amounts;

THAT, The Elections Commission will show the Undergraduate Senate an example of this system before it is enacted on the ballot. The Undergraduate Senate must approve the wording and language of the pop-up function before it is finalized. The language must reflect the spirit of this bill, which is to encourage purposeful and informative voting decisions to support the diversity of student groups on Stanford’s campus.