

Central Student Government may eliminate joke write-ins in elections

[Jennifer Meer](#) - Daily Staff Reporter Wednesday, March 30, 2016 - 8:54pm



Bailey Oland, administrative assistant at the University of Michigan's Bicentennial Office, discusses involvement opportunities in the university's upcoming bicentennial celebration at the Central Student Government meeting at Pierpont Commons on Tuesday. Andrew Cohen/Daily

A new resolution proposed at Tuesday's Central Student Government meeting could make comedic write-in candidates during elections a thing of the past.

Partially in response to a [trend](#) in recent years of writing in Jim Harbaugh as a candidate for various CSG positions, the legislation would amend the CSG election code so that write-in candidates can be screened for their prospective positions before receiving votes. It would also emphasize that disqualified or ineligible candidates cannot be elected.

Rackham student Jared Ferguson, chair of the CSG rules committee and co-author of the resolution, said the legislation was crafted in response to the recent election results. During this year's election, Harbaugh received 215 votes, and a slate of other write-in candidates — like U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-Vt.) and Darth Vader

The code currently says any write-in candidates who receive votes from at least three separate and eligible students and are enrolled in the University and reside in the college in which they are voting will be considered viable to fill a vacant position.

As well, under the proposed change, when a write-in candidate wins a position but is deemed ineligible, everyone else running would be shifted up a spot.

“The second thing we do, which I’m now going to call the Jim Harbaugh rule, since it’s what happened, when the candidate is disqualified the seat is not left vacant,” Ferguson said. “Instead, it would shift everyone else up.”

He explained that in the past this procedure was done regarding the executive ticket; when the leaders were disqualified, the runners up would take the position.

“In Rackham, Jim Harbaugh placed seventh — he gets a seat, but he doesn’t because he’s disqualified, which would make that person who’s in eighth place become seventh and so on and so forth down the line,” Ferguson said.

Resolutions

Also at Tuesday’s meeting, the body entertained three pieces of legislation including one to financially support the University’s first Mental Health Day, one removing party affiliation from candidates for the University of Michigan Police Department Oversight Committee and another to mandate identity training for all CSG members. The first two passed, however the third was tabled due to its authors absence. CSG also heard a presentation about the University of Michigan’s Bicentennial. Additionally, three new resolutions regarding the CSG election code and its operating procedures were brought to the floor.

After some debate, the assembly passed legislation stipulating that candidates for the UMPD Oversight Commission are not to run with political parties. Students hold two spots on the commission, one elected each CSG election.

LSA sophomore Jacob Pearlman, one of the co-authors of the resolution, responded to opposition by saying that though political parties provide a necessary platform for the representatives to show their own qualifications and alignments, the UMPD position is not political in nature.

“This is not a political position,” he said. “There is really nothing that you would advocate for to obtain this position besides being a competent, well-versed individual with the community. The person that is

running for UMPD Oversight board member should be removed from discussion about funding, doing this with Maize Rage, or whatever the platforms are. They have nothing to do with any of that.”

One of the two other resolutions to pass was a resolution approving the financial sponsoring by CSG for the first Mental Health Day. CSG will now partner with student organizations and the [LSA Student Government](#), among others, to host the event on Oct. 10.

LSA sophomore Nicholas Meier, LSA-SG representative and co-author of the resolution, said his goal in partnering with CSG is to raise awareness about mental health resources on campus.

“CAPS is great, but there are a bunch of other things on campus that not enough students know about,” he said “Through this, we hope to advocate for their resources that they have here.”

The event will consist of tables set up both in the Diag and on North Campus to promote those resources.

Guest Speaker

The meeting’s guest speaker Bailey Oland, administrative assistant senior of the University’s Bicentennial Office, gave a brief presentation regarding the importance of student awareness and involvement in Bicentennial festivities.

The Bicentennial Office coordinates and encourages Bicentennial-related events across campus, particularly by student organizations.

Oland said student voice should factor into the decisions surrounding the event because they are the most important part of the University’s 200-year history.

“Without students we don’t have a University. It’s a plain and simple fact,” Oland said. “You are our biggest constituent for the Bicentennial. We talk a lot about the future impact of the University. If we don’t know what students want and what students are interested in... then future students may not be interested and we can’t move forward.”