

86-040



**The Student Senate
86th Student Government Association
Bethel College**

A Bill to Amend the Elections Processes

Introduced By: Alec Loganbill, Vice President of the Student Body

Date Submitted: Friday, March 8, 2019

Action Taken by the Student Government Association Senate

Vote: 15 For 0 Against 1 Abstentions

Sydney Bollinger, Speaker of the Senate

Samantha Karten, Secretary of the Senate

Action Taken by the Student Body President

Enacted Vetoed

Heath Goertzen, Student Body President

Samuel Haynes, Vice President of Student Life, Dean of Students, SGA Advisor

86-040: A Bill to Amend the Elections Processes

Abstract:

This is a bill to change and add processes of the Fall and Spring Elections including changing the type of ballot for Presidential Elections from First-Past-the-Post to Ranked-Choice, mandating specific timelines, adding safeguards against potential conflicts of interest, and clarifying the ways in which SGA officers transition from year to year.

Whereas, the elections are some of the most essential processes to the proper function of the Student Government Association and must run efficiently and consistently from year to year and ensure the most effective level of representation,

Concerned, the current version of Bylaw XIV allows the election process to be open-ended and vary highly from year to year,

Recognizing, the issues which the Spring Elections of 2018 revealed,

Therefore, Let it be Enacted that Bylaw XIV be entirely deleted and replaced with the following:

(Green text denotes the text which has been added or largely changed from the current version of Bylaw XIV. This is for clarity only and, if enacted, these colors shall not appear in the Bylaws.)

I. Student Government Association Elections

A. **Elections Commission.** The Elections Commission shall oversee the annual Fall and Spring Election Process and enforce all Election Guidelines and Rules (XIV. E.). The Commission is appointed by the Chief Justice with approval from the SGA Advisor. The Commission shall be responsible for

1. Finalizing the Fall and Spring Elections Timelines in accordance with the bylaws
2. Prepare and distribute petitions
3. Promote the Fall and Spring Elections
4. Distribute a copy of Bylaw XIV to all candidates prior to the election
5. Preparing the ballots
6. Approve waivers for Elections
7. Clear candidates for Elections
8. Running the Candidate Presentation
9. Submitting winners to the Advisor the Certification of Election
10. Resolve election issues

B. **Composition of the Elections Commission.** All members of the Elections Commission are appointed by the Elections Commissioner.

1. Elections Commissioner, Chair
2. Executive Representative, voting
3. Legislative Representative, voting
4. Judicial Representative, voting
5. The SGA Advisor, non-voting

C. **Elections Commissioner.** The Elections Commissioner shall be the Chief Justice, in their capacity as an unbiased adjudicator. The Student Body Chief Justice shall Chair the Commission as long as they are not seeking an elected position. In the event that

Chief Justice is seeking election, the senior most official of SGA shall serve as the Elections Commissioner.

1. The Elections Commissioner shall be responsible for
 - a) Overseeing the elections timelines in accordance with the bylaws
 - b) Leading the Elections Commission

D. Elections Timelines.

1. **Fall Election Timeline**
 - a) Fall Elections shall only be held for Freshman Senate seats.
 - b) Fall Election packets shall be made available two (2) weeks before the election date
 - c) Fall Elections shall be held the week of Thanksgiving Break
 - d) Freshman Senators shall be sworn in and assume their duties at the first meeting of the Senate after Winter Break
2. **Spring Elections Timeline**
 - a) Spring Election packets shall be made available two (2) weeks before each election, respectively.
 - b) Presidential Elections shall be held four (4) weeks before Finals Week
 - c) Senate Elections shall be held three (3) weeks before Finals Week
 - d) The final meeting of the outgoing senate and the first meeting of the incoming senate shall be held one (1) week before Finals Week
3. **Special Declaration of Candidacy**
 - a) If any sitting member of the Elections Commission decides to run in any election, they must announce their candidacy three (3) full weeks before that election. At this time, the Elections Commission and SGA Advisor will meet to decide if any changes must be made to the candidate's current roles and duties in order to avoid any issues of conflict of interest. Any member of the Elections Commission who does not announce their candidacy three (3) full weeks before the election of the seat they are seeking is ineligible to run.
 - b) If any sitting member of the SGA Executive Council decides to run in any election, they must announce their candidacy two (2) full weeks before that election. At this time, the Elections Commission, the Executive Council, and the SGA Advisor will meet to decide if any changes must be made to the candidate's current roles and duties in order to avoid any issues of conflict of interest. Any member of the Executive Council who does not announce their candidacy two (2) full weeks before the election of the seat they are seeking is ineligible to run.

E. Election Guidelines and Rules

1. **Filing Candidate Application.** A person shall file as a candidate by
 - a) Filing their intention for candidacy by completing registration with the Elections Commission during the filing period
 - b) Verifying their eligibility by the Election Commissioner
2. **Petitions**

- a) Petitions for Student Body President and Student Body Vice-President shall require the signatures of thirty (30) enrolled students of any classification or designation, with the exception of graduating seniors
- b) Petitions for a SGA Senate Seat shall require the signatures of ten (10) students of the Class specific Senate Office, with the exception of graduating seniors
- c) All petitions must include signatures from the following offices to be validated:
 - (1) Registrar's Office, to confirm the candidate's status as a full time student, confirm their class designation, and confirm their GPA is at or above 2.5
 - (2) Vice President of Student Life, to confirm the student is in good judicial standing
 - (3) The Elections Commissioner, to confirm the candidate has met all requirements and all student signatures are valid

3. **Candidate Eligibility.** All candidates must:

- a) Be classified as a full-time Bethel College Student by the Registrar's Office, based on the fall status
- b) Have a cumulative 2.5 GPA to be qualified to run
- c) Be in good judicial standing with Bethel College.

4. **Campaigns**

- a) All campaign material must be approved by the SGA Election Commissioner and the Director of Student Activities and Engagement, who will ensure content meets campus standards
- b) Candidates are allowed a maximum of six posters campus-wide, and twenty flyers
- c) A sheet counts as a poster. Sheets must be no larger than twin size. T-shirts count as a poster.
- d) No material may be distributed (i.e., candy or food)
- e) Any candidate caught defacing or removing another candidate's materials will forfeit candidacy
- f) No campaign material may slander any other candidate
- g) All campaign material must be removed by the closing of polls on the second Election Day
- h) All posters must be placed in approved locations and must meet the Posting and Marketing guidelines.

F. **Elections Waiver.** A student seeking election to the Student Government Association who does not meet the Election Qualifications as stated in the Election Guidelines and Rules may submit a written request to the Elections Commissioner and SGA Advisor asking for a waiver to seek election. The Elections Commissioner and SGA Advisor will handle the process of approving or denying all Waiver Requests and will submit a written notice within five class days of the receipt of the request.

G. **Election Day**

1. **Voter Qualifications:**

- a) All students enrolled for the following academic year are eligible to vote in the Presidential Election.

- b) All students enrolled for the following academic year are eligible to vote for the Senate Election of the class in which they will be classified the following Fall Semester.
 - c) All currently-enrolled and classified Freshman are eligible to vote in the Freshman Senate Election.
2. Presidential Election Ballots
- a) In the case of one (1) ticket, there will be no election and the sole candidate shall be declared the winner.
 - b) In the case of two (2) tickets, the election will be First-Past-the-Post: the candidate with the most votes wins
 - c) In the case of more than two (2) tickets, the election will be Ranked-Choice Voting (also known as “Instant Runoff”):
 - (1) On the ballot, voters will rank as many candidates as they want, in order of preference.
 - (2) Upon counting all of the ballots, if one candidate has more than 50% of the votes, they are the winner of the election.
 - (3) If no candidate has more than 50% of the votes, the candidate with the least number of votes is eliminated. The voters who voted for the eliminated candidate will have their next choice cast toward the remaining candidates’ totals.
 - (4) This process is repeated until one (1) candidate has more than 50% of the votes, who will be declared the winner of the election.
 - d) All Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates who did not win the election will be eligible to run as a Senator for their respective class in the Senate Election held the following week. These candidates may choose to accept or decline to be put on the Senate Election ballot.
3. Senate Election Ballots
- a) Senate Elections will be First-Past-the-Post: the top three (or however many senators are representing a given cohort) most vote-receiving candidates win their respective seats.
 - b) If three (or however many senators are representing a given cohort) or fewer candidates are running for a certain office, those who ran are appointed to their respective seats and the Vacancy Process is initiated to fill the remaining seats.
4. **Contesting an Election.** Any student wishing to contest the results of a SGA Election shall file a petition in writing to the Elections Commissioner with three (3) full class days after the elections results are available. The Commissioner shall notify the Judicial Council and the Elections Commission within two (2) full class days that a petition contesting the results of an SGA election has been filed. The hearing must be conducted by the Judicial Council.
- H. **Term in Office.** SGA Officials shall be elected for a term of one (1) year, with no term limits as long as they are eligible to hold office again.

- I. **Remaining in Office.** All SGA Officers must be required to maintain full-time student status as set by the Registrar's Office during the fall and spring semesters to be eligible to remain in office and must remain in good standing with Bethel College.
- J. **SGA Transition Plan.** Upon their election or nomination, all SGA Officers are permitted to attend the meetings, sessions, etc. which will be required of their new position, unless otherwise specified by the Student Body President, the head of their branch, or the SGA Advisor.
 1. The final meeting of the outgoing Senate and the first meeting of the incoming Senate shall occur one (1) week before Finals Week. At this meeting...
 - a) The outgoing Senate shall conduct any remaining Old and New Business
 - b) The outgoing Senate shall close the outgoing session
 - c) The Chief Justice shall open the incoming session
 - d) The Student Body President shall present all appointments (i.e. Executive officers, Associate Justices, etc.) and the Senate shall vote on their confirmation
 - e) The Speaker of the Senate and the Secretary of the Senate shall be appointed
 - f) All incoming SGA Officers shall take their oaths of office
 2. Before the end of the school year, all incoming SGA Officers are required to meet with their predecessor to review any pertinent information about the position.