

December 3rd, 2019

Dear Senators,

This letter is an official notification of my veto of SSB 24, Election Code Reform II. It is with careful consideration, and great respect for the authors of the legislation, that I am exercising this veto power. As President of UISG, it is my responsibility to veto legislation I believe to be harmful to the future of our organization. For the three reasons outlined below, along with our commitment to taking on more responsibility for election marketing and transparency as the current administration, I am blocking SSB 24. It should be noted that Sarah and I made our opinion on this matter clear since the beginning of election code reform discussions, and both the Student Judicial Court as well as the authors knew there was a strong chance of a veto.

Negligent Timing

The first and arguably most important point is the outrageous tardiness of this amendment to the election code. With less than four months before the commencement of the campaign period, one of those months including winter break, making a drastic change like prohibiting joint tickets *undermines* our commitment to transparency and accessibility. We have no way of knowing what types of tickets are already forming, within UISG or without, and throwing a curveball like this is a blatant abuse of power so late in the game. Additionally, the important work that has begun to create transparency for and encourage participation in the upcoming election will be severely set back by these drastic changes just a few months before the election period begins.

I am hopeful that with the strategic timeline amendments you all passed in SSB 23, this issue will not present itself in the future as we will have election code reforms from the Student Judicial Court to be considered at a reasonable point in time. It should also be noted here that the relatively late timeline of these amendments is not the fault of the authors, but rather a result of the historically weak relationship between the Student Judicial Court and the other two branches of our student government. All three branches have committed to improving this relationship moving forward.

Weakened Accessibility

My second point is obvious: senatorial and executive tickets already exist. If we want to see more senatorial tickets, let's create them. It was suggested by multiple senators that joint tickets would have an advantage over senatorial tickets. Considering none of us have seen a senatorial ticket during our tenure, there's no reason for any of us to believe they would have a disadvantage compared to joint tickets. It is irresponsible to remove options to run for an elected position at this university based on a theory we have no reason to believe will be proven.

The idea that students need to "know the right person" or "have the right connections" to be asked to join a ticket is not inherent to the structure of our ticket system, but rather a result of poorly built tickets in the past. A successful ticket will include students from various communities, backgrounds, and interests as to represent as many parts of campus as possible. Our ticket this year included 11 students who have never been in UISG, with seven of those students being strangers to us when we met. While one president and vice president team cannot reach out to every person that may be a good member of student government, those students have always had and will always have the opportunity to run as independents or create their own senatorial ticket. This is the reason we expanded the number of seats reserved for independent senators and the reason we are making a commitment to increase outreach during the election this year.

Let me be clear: UISG needs to be more accessible, and we have been working hard to increase accessibility to our organization. However, *the argument over joint ticket prohibition is not synonymous with the argument over the accessibility of UISG*. Much of the debate over this legislation centered around the need for accessibility in UISG, but this change cannot, and should not, be seen as a solution to this problem. I don't even think it's a step in the right direction.

Dangerous Assumptions

My third and final point is a strong pushback on the notion that senators "ride the coattails" of executives on joint tickets. I find this insulting to the senators who have worked so hard to elect executives and fellow senators they believe in and built a platform they can stand on together. None of the three tickets I've been on would have been much of anything without the passion and hard work of the senatorial candidates. The concept of "freeriding" by senators on joint tickets was never expressed by an executive in the formation of this legislation and Sarah and I wholeheartedly disagree with it.

Additionally, with only one year to fulfill the promises made to the student body, executives should be hand-selecting people they believe will help them follow through on those commitments. A notion that senators and executives should campaign independently because they don't do the same work was brought up in debate over this legislation, and I push back heavily on this because it simply isn't true. Sarah and I, as well as our entire cabinet, are quite literally the "executives" responsible for executing the projects outlined in the annual platform. We are all one team working toward one goal of making campus better for the student body. It is also vital to note that *the process of building a team and creating a unified platform during the campaign period makes executives better prepared to be the representatives they need to be*. It would be irresponsible to strip our future leaders of this opportunity because we have made a false assumption.

Moving Forward

UISG has traditionally taken on some responsibility in informing undergraduate voters of the election, most recently in the form of hosting the candidate forums and debates, contributing funds to the Student Election Commissioner, and advertising the election on social media with the help of the communications team. We are committed to enhancing that outreach effort this year to increase voter turnout, improve accessibility to the organization, and take some burden off candidates so they can focus on their platforms. This effort will substantially expand access to the election, a shared goal among all of us. Sarah and I commit to:

1. Work with the communications team to produce materials earlier and more frequently than in past years so voters can anticipate the election before it is already taking place;
2. Make a video or graphic with an in-depth explanation of how the election works, including descriptions of various ways of running (tickets, independent senators, and constituency senators) and an explanation of the timeline;
3. Produce a "running for UISG campaign accessibility guide" to help students without institutional knowledge of UISG to understand the process of running a successful campaign.

To reiterate, Sarah and I are deeply grateful to the Student Judicial Court and the authors of SSB 23 & 24 for their hard work and dedication to improving the election code. However, it is my responsibility to exercise veto power when I believe legislation will be ultimately harmful. With that, I encourage you to come to Sarah or me with any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,
Noel