

Dunn v Elections Commission

Petitioner: William Clifford Dunn

Respondent: SA Elections Commission

I, William Clifford Dunn, do hereby, in my capacity as a concerned student of the College of William and Mary, request an injunction against the Student Assembly Elections Commission. The Student Assembly Elections Commission has traditionally used the Student Information Network (hereafter referred to as "SIN") for the purposes of holding elections; this system, while useful in the past, has recently been compromised by many difficulties.

First and foremost is the change in William and Mary User IDs. Up until the 2006-7 school year, incoming students were issued a six-letter ID that was discarded shortly after they left the school. For the 2007-8 school year, this system has changed, and the User IDs created for students will include their whole last name. SIN is currently set up to deal only with six-letter user IDs; thus, all students whose last names are not exactly four letters long, accounting for their first and middle initials being added to the User ID, will likely be unable to vote unless SIN is able to alter its software.

Additionally, SIN has been beset with problems. The elections software on SIN is not well-understood by the people working at SIN; due to a combination of factors, including the fact that most of those who worked on the program with him have long since graduated, SIN is ill-equipped to handle any crisis that might arise (as one did during the election last spring, as I trust the members of the Board are familiar).

Article V, Section I, Subsection I of the Student Assembly Constitution states: "Every student enrolled at the College may cast one secret ballot in each race for which he is eligible to vote." If significant problems are encountered logging into SIN, as will be almost certainly be the case with the vast majority of students who will be lacking six-letter User IDs in the Freshman class, as well as with transfer students in other classes, then in many of those cases this right will be denied. Additionally, under the same Article and Section, in Subsection II, the following is stated: "II. Any full-time, degree-seeking student at the College may run for or hold no more than one office." Write-in candidates, who may legitimately run for office under §5.4-8. Campaign Regulations, Rule 17, would be denied the right to do so, as on SIN, write-ins are currently written in by entering their six letter user ID into a write-in slot on the ballot. Further complicating matters, all items on the ballot require a six letter user ID to be attached to their name; this includes both candidates and, when relevant, ballot items. Traditionally, students' names are attached to their own user IDs while substitute IDs are found for ballot items. The inability to clearly attach a student's name to their own ID has the possibility to create both confusion as to who has been elected and/or cause confusion if a substitute who is found is also written in elsewhere.

Due to both the Constitutional right of each student to cast a secret ballot, and due to the fact that SIN may violate this through making logins either difficult or impossible, as well as the extremely likely, if not certain, violation of students' right to write in candidates not presented on the ballot, the Student Assembly Elections Commission should be enjoined from using the Student Information Network for elections until the above problems are rectified beyond a shadow of a doubt.