

Students Vote Here

By Howard Saltz

The battle for student voting rights ended at Stony Brook with at least a partial victory, as four students who brought their cases to court yesterday were allowed to vote here.

After being denied the vote by poll-watchers, the students brought their cases to New York State Supreme Court Justice John J. Jones, who ruled that they could vote here, instead of the traditional voting place, their parent's home towns. Though aware of a recent ruling in Albany by a United States District Court giving students attending college in Albany County the right to vote there, Jones' decision, his law secretary, James Doyle, said, was based on his own interpretation of the law.

"If a student is residing on campus for the requisite period of time... the only thing we're concerned about is if they vote twice," Doyle said. He said that as long as a person lived at the same address for the 30 days prior to the election, he was eligible to vote, regardless of his status as a student.

Doyle said that the students who brought their cases were granted their voting rights in about five minutes. He also said that two students who brought cases to the Court were not given voting rights, but this was because they had not registered properly.

Students attending upstate colleges were also voting in their college towns, after Court battles in Broome, Onondage and Ulster Counties were decided last week in their favor. Their suits were based on the October 7 decision in Albany, which was the first of its kind in the state.

Because of the close proximity to Election Day, however, students attending schools in other places, such as Stony Brook, did not have sufficient time to file class action suits. Cases are expected to be filed before next year's Election Day, and Stony Brook students will most probably be voting here in the future, said Jim Stern, president of the Students Association of the State University (SASU), a SUNY-wide student advocacy group that pursued the students' voting rights upstate.

Referendum on Ballot

The Polity Council voted Monday night to place on the upcoming election a referendum asking the student body to decide a controversial constitutional amendment that would, if passed, outlaw specific earmarking of funds by the student body.

The Council, voting 6 to 1, agreed to a request by the Polity Senate to place the referendum on the upcoming election for Treasurer and Freshman Representative.

Presently, a Polity-sponsored organization may, by obtaining signatures of 25 percent of the student body or by getting the Council's approval, bypass the ordinary Senate budgeting process by placing a referendum on a ballot. Such a referendum was passed last year, giving the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) \$1.50 per student per semester, and the athletic program \$5.50 per student per semester.

Concern was voiced in the Senate that such referenda tied the hands of the Senate, and that members of the organization asking for funds on the referenda would be the only ones interested enough in voting.

"We're better off without earmarking," said Polity Senior Representative Ruth Supovitz, who voted with the majority Monday night. "The Senate is given the power to budget. By earmarking funds, it's more difficult to come up with a fair process of budgeting."

Supovitz also said that the referendum, if passed, would not do away with referenda in the future, just the specific earmarking of funds. "If the student population voices the sentiment that we should increase a budget, it would be irresponsible if the Senate," did not, Supovitz said. "But to bind them... caused a great deal of problems," last year.

NYPIRG Project Coordinator Stephen Johnson objected to the proposal "not because we think we'll lose it. We object because we have to spend a month knocking on doors [to get votes against the referendum]. This

takes away time to do the job students asked us to do."

Johnson also rebuffed the charge that the referendum passed by a 7 to 1 margin. "Students have made it plain," he said, "they want to fund NYPIRG. They knew full well what they were doing" last year. Johnson also said that even though the proposal, if passed would outlaw only specific earmarking of funds, even if the student body passed a referendum supporting a club, the dollar amount was still up to the discretion of the Senate. "It

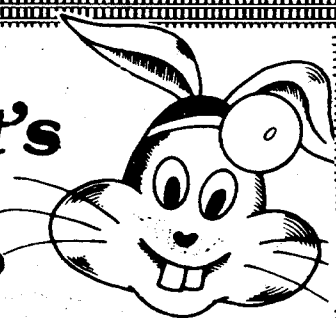
would be a waste of time," he said about a referendum without a monetary amount, "because they could say to NYPIRG 'here's a dollar.'"

Johnson also stressed that the minimum funding NYPIRG needs to exist is its present \$28,000 a year.

Paul Dudzick, acting director of men's athletics, also hoped that the proposal fails. Dudzick said, however, that he feels the referendum last year was being ignored, and a future referendum in his favor might

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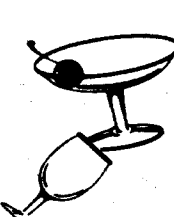
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