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Date: February 1, 2011

To: Marc Pound  
Chair, Elections, Representation, & Governance (ERG) Committee

From: Linda Mabbs   
Chair, Senate Executive Committee

Subject: Change of Process for Handling Tie-Breaks in Senate Elections  
Senate Doc. No. 10-11-39

The Senate Executive Committee (SEC) reviewed a proposal entitled, "Change of Process for Handling Tie-Breaks in Senate Elections," at its January 28, 2011 meeting. This proposal was submitted by an undergraduate senator who raised concerns about the Senate's current process of handling an election that results in a tie.

The Plan of Organization gives the SEC the power to decide how replacements are appointed if a Senator vacates his/her seat. In the cases of students and staff, the long-standing practice has been to offer the seat to the candidate with the next highest vote count. In the event that there is a tie for the next seat, a coin toss has been held in the Senate Office to decide the winner.

The Senate's model of shared governance allows constituents to elect their own representatives. The long-standing practice of a coin-toss to break a tie is random by design so not to disrupt this model. The proposer has given options such as re-polling the constituents. This option would be complicated because replacements may not be needed for up to a semester after the elections have already been conducted. By this point, the population of those that originally voted may not be the same. The other option of having the Senate vote on a replacement is also not viable. This option does not allow constituents to elect their representatives.

The SEC felt that it was important to seek the ERG Committee's advice on possible solutions that still maintain our model of shared governance. Since, the election process is currently in progress, we would appreciate any input that you may have by February 8, 2011. If you have any questions, please contact Reka Montfort in the Senate Office ([reka@umd.edu](mailto:reka@umd.edu) or x55804).

Attachments

Cc: Glen Fuhrmeister