



Cornell University Student Assembly

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Type of Action	Legislation
Status/Result	Business of the Day

Appending the Referenda Process

Sponsored by: David Vakili '16, Juliana Batista '16

Whereas, the Student Assembly Charter (Article III, Section 8) states that, “the SA will have the authority and responsibility to conduct public hearings, forums, and referendums concerning topics of current student interest, and to determine in other appropriate ways students needs and opinions;”

Whereas, Article III, Section 2 states that a referendum “is an action of the SA to determine community opinion regarding matters of student concern;”

Whereas, a referendum is a call-for-opinion and a petition is a call-for-action;

Whereas, the current SA charter states nothing more regarding the referenda or how the referendum process should be undergone;

Be it therefore resolved, that Article III Section 2G of the SA charter be amended as follows (all proposed changes in bold):

G. Call for a ~~Sense of the Community Referendum~~ **Referendum** is an action of the SA **student body** to determine community opinion regarding matters of student concern;” and

Be it further resolved, that Article III Section 8 of the SA Charter be amended as follows:

The SA will have the authority and responsibility to conduct public hearings, forums, and referendums concerning topics of current student interest, and to determine in other appropriate ways student needs and opinion

A. At two times during the course of the fall and spring semesters, a student or student group (referred to as the “submitter”) may submit a referendum of any topic of current student interest to the Student Assembly general body upon successful collection of support from at least 3-percent of the registered undergraduate student body (submitters should plan to collect at least 450 undergraduate signatures) according to the following procedure:

- 1. The referendum must contain a single or a series of referendum questions that are neutrally worded and call for a yes/no response. Once the submitter has started gathering signatures, the question may not be changed or modified in any way.**

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- 2. Submitters must collect signatures (defined as a willfully submitted record of first name, last name, and NetID) exclusively from registered undergraduate students at Cornell University. Digital and print solicitation methods are permitted, provided that the referendum question and sponsoring student or student organization are clearly visible. An electronic form (ex, Google form) may be used to gather the names and NetIDs of students, but the final submission must be on the appropriate form provided by the Office of the Assemblies.**
 - 3. The deadlines for submission of referendums will be the following:
 - a. The second Tuesday of September at Noon**
 - b. The second Tuesday of November at Noon**
 - c. The last Tuesday of February at Noon**
 - d. The second Tuesday of April at Noon****
 - 4. All deadlines will be advertised through the SA monthly newsletter as well as the other usual publicity instruments.**
 - 5. Once a referendum question with the appropriate number of signatures has been submitted, the SA general body will roll call vote by simple majority whether to hold the referendum. The vote will also make the provision for two collective community votes. If the SA votes by simple majority to NOT hold the referendum, the submitter may overturn the decision of the SA by collecting the signatures of at least 10-percent of the registered undergraduate student body using the same method described in section A.2.**
 - 6. Once a referendum is approved or has gathered the support of at least 10-percent of the registered undergraduate student body, the following timeline will be observed:
 - a. STATEMENT PERIOD. The Student Assembly Executive Vice President will put out a call for pro or con statements regarding the referendum question. Any member of the Cornell community may submit a statement. Each statement will be no longer than 300 words. The statements must pertain to the topic of the referendum question. The deadline for pro or con statements will be seven (7) days from when the call was first made public.**
 - b. PROMOTIONAL PERIOD. Once the seven-day statement period has ended, the Student Assembly Vice President for Public Relations has a period of three (3) days to promote the referendum question and any submitted statements. The Office of the Assemblies will distribute via email to all registered undergraduate students the following: information on when****

84 and how to vote in the referendum, the referendum question,
85 and any pro or con statements submitted.

86 c. **VOTING PERIOD.** The Office of the Assemblies will conduct the
87 referendum on the next business day following the conclusion
88 of the promotional period. The voting period will be exactly 36
89 hours. The Office of the Assemblies will display any pro or con
90 statements submitted during the statement period on the poll.

91 7. The Office of the Assemblies will publicly release the results of the
92 referendum within one business day following the conclusion of the
93 Voting Period, including the percentage of the undergraduate
94 population that voted.

95 8. If a referendum has a majority of “yes” votes, then the President of
96 the Student Assembly will communicate the referendum question, a
97 summary of each side of the argument, and the results of the
98 referendum to the Office of the President in the form of a referendum
99 action.

100 9. The Office of the Assemblies will record and make publicly available
101 all communication between the President of the Student Assembly
102 and the Office of the President.

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105 **David Vakili '16**

106 *Arts & Sciences Representative, Student Assembly*

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108 **Juliana Batista '16**

109 *Executive Vice President, Student Assembly*

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111 *(Reviewed by: Community Life Committee, 11/19/14)*