

THE OBSERVER

<http://www.ilymca.org>

Delegates have varied opinions on elected officials

Jessica Harvath

Elected officials have met with varied success and popularity among Y&G delegates this year.

"About half of the presiding officers are doing real well. The other half need some help," said Jason Penrod of Mt. Vernon.

Some officials, in particular, received high praise from the delegates.

"I think Peter Fu has done a great job this year. He helped support us," said Mark Deaton of Mt. Vernon about the executive director of the lobbyists.

Chief Justice Kevin Becker also received praise on his judicial review bill choices.

"He picked two very good controversial bills. These bills do need to be analyzed. I personally feel that both bills are unconstitutional," said Matthew Niemet of Lombard Willowbrook.

Governor Patel received varied reviews on his performance in office.

"I think [the Governor] is getting a little ahead of himself in empty promises. He is not using common sense when vetoing bills," said Chris Meehan from Heritage Geneva.

"I don't agree with the governor's advisory board. Most of the members are from his school. He said he wanted a diversity of ideas, and that never happened," said Penrod.

"He said a lot of things that didn't come to pass. There was a lot of false advertisement," said Sandra Herrera from South Suburban Seton Academy.

Others feel the governor has performed his duties well while in office.

"I think he's done a good job. The advisory board seemed to work out for him, and he got quite a few bills passed," said Secretary of State Josh Michels from Paris Marshall.

Sleep -- a much sought after commodity at YG

Kurt Maes

Before most students come to Springfield for the Y&G weekend, they know for their trip to be a success that sacrifices would have to be made. However, few students thought that sacrifice would be sleep.

"I can't think. This weekend has been so taxing. I don't even want to go to school tomorrow," said Chris Zuber from Elmhurst-Lake Park.

Many of the delegates have only been able to sleep four or five hours a night. Saturday's early start, preceded by Friday's late conclusion, provided for an almost non-stop Y&G focus.

Additionally, the inflexibility of the weekend's schedule and the number of people in each room has thrown off some people's sleep pattern.

"With three or four people in a room, you need to get up extra early," said Liza Voloshin, an attorney from Heritage Nequa Valley. "I have to set an alarm at 5:30 just so we can all get moving on time."

"Nap times" have taken place fre-



Delegates get some much needed shut-eye in the Stratton Cafeteria prior to Sunday's legislative Session.

quently throughout the Capitol this weekend. In the halls, legislators could be found taking naps between legislative sessions and committee meetings.

The Senate and House galleries are other popular spots for students to catch up on some zzz's.

"Kids weren't afraid to catch up on sleep," said Zuber. "Sleep is something that we will need to make this weekend all that it can be. I'm not ashamed. I know that it is not polite to catch a few winks while other students are presenting their bills, but if I 'go out,' I know it is something I could not have helped.

Capitol Confuses YG Delegates

Christen Gates

The majority of the delegates agree, the Capitol Complex is confusing.

From hidden bathrooms, tiring tunnels, to elusive exits, no one seems to know his/her way around.

Some delegates believe that the added security caused much of the confusion, and some delegates even went so far to question the validity of the security.

Meg Shad, a senator from Heritage Geneva, said, "It's a power trip...not security. It drives me nuts."

Dustin Herr, a lobbyist from Mt. Vernon, said, "It's a gross overuse of security."

"It's moronic, and it does not promote security," said Danielle Carlson, a senator from Chicagoland Andrew.

On the other hand, there are a few delegates who do not mind.

"It's not bad at all [in reference to the security]," said Hanna Collier, a page from Springfield Williamsville.

"I didn't care. It was good walking," said Zach Koutsy, chaplain from Heritage Na-



Youth and Government - Putting the "C" in YMCA

Laura Shapiro

The chaplain's position in Y&G has been a much discussed issue this year, and the prayers made in the chambers over the course of the weekend tend to go hand-in-hand.

Typically, the tone of the prayer was left up to the chaplain and the focus of the prayer was usually open-ended.

Therefore, the delegates were left to interpret the prayers as they saw fit, thereby quelling any offense that could possibly be taken.

During this weekend, however, that has not been the case -- various prayers at Friday night's banquet, for example, referred specifically to Jesus Christ.

Many non Christians were left with the impression that their beliefs had been overlooked.

As a YMCA affiliated program, is it permissible to integrate decidedly Christian tones into prayer?

Or, as a program of such broad diversity, does Y&G, along with the chaplains, have a responsibility to make all delegates feel comfortable with the nature of what is said?

"Chaplains know that prayers should be non-denominational in nature, and I think they [the chaplains] took too many liberties. People came here to learn about government, and it's very unfortunate that some were made to feel uncomfortable in

their religious beliefs. What bothers me is that the whole process is very assuming," said Andrew Biliter of McGaw Evanston.

Chitra Shukla of Heritage Waubonsie Valley agreed.

"Y&G is very diverse. To refer to a higher power is one thing, but to say 'Jesus' is another -- it excludes people. I just stood and listened," said Shukla.

The other side of the argument arrives at its conclusions through a distinctly different manner of reasoning.

"This [Y&G] is run by a private organization. Where religion is concerned, I think they have the right to do whatever they want," said Omar Raddawi of Chica-goland Morgan Park.

Speaker of the House Levi Bennet of Paris Marshall believes the issue is a balancing act.

"Prayer is a government organization and chaplains should feel free to speak their minds. Prayers should be made in the best interest of the assembly, but I believe the chaplains were doing what they thought was best."

Heritage YMCA staff member Patty Manser takes the middle ground.

"Y&G is a YMCA program. It's founded on Christian values. I didn't feel that the prayers were necessarily unreasonable," said Manser.

Rules at Y&G - Delegates Respond

Rachel Parkin

Students in Y&G had a number of opinions on the rules of the 53rd Y&G assembly.

Some students were grateful and could understand the challenge of accommodating nearly 1,000 students.

"I don't really have a problem with the rules. I think we're lucky to get to use these facilities," said Chris Knetzer of Edwardsville.

Others were not so positive.

"[I don't like] some of them (the rules). I can understand being strict at the Capitol, but they're too strict at the hotel," said Katherine Kott of Heritage Geneva.

"I can understand why they implemented them, but some of them go too far," said Craig Kauzlarich of B.R. Ryall Wheaton Warrenville South.

The majority of the students had at least one complaint.

"I didn't like the rule about not being allowed to sleep during the session. I was rudely awakened twice. I had a good dream going, too," said Jason Fitterer of Heritage Naperville Central.

Is the Capitol haunted?

Katie O'Reilly

Some details about the supernatural side of Springfield have remained unknown even to Y&G and mature Springfield natives.

With the exception of Jordan Snow from Springfield Williamsville who has heard from an unknown source that the shadow poltergeist of state senator Larry Bomke walks the halls at night, Springfield natives are unaware of the manual elevator that moves on its own accord in the Archives Building or the ghost of former Governor Yates' wife who haunts the Governor's mansion.

No Springfield folklore, however, can measure up to the mystic happenings of the Capitol building.

Take, for instance, the House committee room 400. This area was sealed off from the Capitol's construction in 1888 until 1938.

Amidst reconstruction, the spacious room was uncovered and in it was found expansive portraits of an unknown Civil War soldier and Abraham Lincoln perfectly intact.

The eyes in Lincoln's portrait are reminiscent of those in the Mona Lisa; there is not a single place in the room that Lincoln's gaze does not penetrate.

Perhaps some of the fervent debates and filibusters in the Senate were never truly settled.

"If you sit in the Senate late at night, especially from midnight until 4 am, you

can hear mysterious voices," said Illinois State police officer Terry Spencer.

Having worked in the Governor's office for 28 years, Spencer can recount various instances in the many rooms of the Capitol in which pictures have randomly flown off walls, and the scent of women's perfume has permeated the night's air.

"Three people have died in this building, some of them security guards who have gone upstairs to make the rounds and have never come back," said security guard Peter Bruno.

Yet another fear instilled in the security guards is that of being spun around by the coat by an unknown force. This has been said to have occurred several times.

On any floor of the Capitol, a ghost hunter can find plenty of satisfying mystery.

Chicago metro area, bill group argues, wants to leave the U.S.

Joseph Collier
Jessica Harvath

A group of Mt. Vernon lobbyists have been creating quite a buzz with their special committee bill to allow Chicago area counties to secede from the state.

"At first, we were just trying to have fun because we were so bored, but after discussing it and listening to the debate, we learned that it is an important bill and should be taken seriously," said Bryan Raymond and Scott Gibbs, co-authors of the bill.

The bill passed both the House and the Senate and moved on to the governor's desk.

Governor Patell was reticent about sign-

ing the bill.

"I think it is a very fun bill, but it should be kept as a 'fun' bill. I live in DuPage and I want to stay in Illinois," said Patel.

Afterward, Patel vetoed the bill to allow delegates a chance to overturn his decision. Many delegates were elated at the opportunity to pass this popular bill.

"The bill perfectly captures the mood of this year's Y&G," said Mark Riggs from Paris Heritage.

The bill managed to pass in the House, but it narrowly failed in the Senate.

"I was a little disappointed. I think it would have been kind of fun to have Chicagoland as a separate state," said Christen Gates from Edwardsville.

Controversy surrounds senate president Mork

Andrea Gebhart

Controversy has swarmed around the President of the Blue Senate David Mork of B.R. Ryall Wheaton Warrenville South.

Allegations of being too quick on the gavel and not knowing parliamentary procedure have bothered many senators.

"He doesn't know parliamentary procedure, and he seemed unsure of himself," said Jillian Clouse, a senator from Heritage Waubonsie Valley.

She also added that he has too quick of a gavel and does not allow for an accurate count.

"He has a lot of quick gavels even

though division was clearly called, and I don't think he represents our senate accurately," said Clouse.

He is also accused of not choosing a variety of people to speak.

"He seems to call the same four people every time, and he rarely picks girls," said Nicole Hamblin, a senator from Elmhurst Lake Park.

Some delegates may not have been pleased with this performance, but they felt that he wasn't treated fairly.

"His procedure wasn't finely polished, but I feel the senators acted badly," said Anne Hiller of Heritage Waubonsie Valley.

However, when everything was all said and done, it was just a weekend...spent playing house. Although many great (and a few not so great) bills were brought up, they were not real. Although strong and efficient leaders were elected, they inevitably returned to their high schools and are still human like the rest of us.

For one weekend, we were removed from our own little pond and thrown into an ocean, full of new ideas and people. Don't be disappointed if you didn't get your bill signed. Take with you signatures of new ideas and friendships that you made over the weekend.

If you were fortunate enough to get that bill signed...I hope that's not the only signature you left with. If it is, you really missed the boat.

See Everyone Next Year in Springfield!!!

Don't forget to check the Youth & Government web site at <http://www.ilymca.org> for all of your YG information and answers to your questions this summer and next year!

THE OBSERVER, a publication of Illinois YMCA Youth and Government, is published four times annually and distributed free of charge to participants. The advisors and editors welcome letters but reserve the right to edit the letters for considerations of length, taste, and mechanics.

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Megan Graeff
Rachel Harzinski

STAFF

Saadia Ahmad, Meghan Bourke, Joseph Collier, Chad Ettelbrick, Brigitte Frett, Matt Galligan, Christen Gates, Andrea Gebhart, Jessica Harvath, Jina Hassan, Robert Kern, Lisa Koerner, Kurt Maes, Julia Nash, Katie O'Reilly, Rachel Parkin, Jenna Quick, K.J. Reid, Ashley Sampson, Laura Shapiro, Eileen Sosnicki, Dannah Steele, Matthew Traeger, Emily Worth

PHOTO

Joseph Collier

ADVISERS

Robyn Fullerton, Michael Gudwien, Melanie Gulley, Penny McCarty, Carol Carter

