



PRESS RELEASE

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With the help of Solicitor General Nicholas Gurney, Student Body President Joselin Padron-Rasines filed a petition Friday with the University of Florida Supreme Court addressing the constitutional legality of the current student government executive committee.

The petition was written by Gurney, a third-year law student, under the advisement of Padron-Rasines, in response to the gridlock in April surrounding executive appointments.

The SG executive committee is a group comprised of the executive branch officials: student body president, vice president and treasurer; and legislative branch leadership: the student senate president, president pro tempore, budget and appropriations chairman, and senior senate secretary.

This body is designated in the 500 codes to select and vet the Student Government Productions chair and ACCENT Speakers' Bureau chair; and approve financial transfers from reserve request funding. These are the only roles outlined in the 500 codes, which are secondary in importance to the UF Student Body Constitution much like in the American federal government.

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In recent years, however, the body is used to interview, vote for and ultimately select all of the executive cabinet, advisor and agency heads, a power which is constitutionally reserved solely for the executive branch. Therefore, it is an imperative issue for the UF Student Supreme Court to decide as the impartial governing branch that is responsible for upholding the constitution.

“The legislative branch is supposed to serve as a check and balance for the executive branch and vice versa, but this committee is not in that natural process of democracy,” Padron-Rasines said. “This committee blends the two and gives the legislative branch unauthorized power over who is appointed in student government because they can veto people before their names are even in the senate chambers.”

Traditionally, the executive branch appoints applicants for positions within their structure. These selections are then put before the student senate and approved or denied by the legislative branch. This mirrors the structure of the American democracy.

“The point of this petition is not to destroy a committee that has existed for quite a while, it’s to ensure that the constitution is being followed,” Nicholas Gurney said. “This does not take any constitutional power away from the legislative branch. The representative body deserves their rights, but this committee cannot act as a chokepoint from getting things to the floor properly.”

The Supreme Court will review the petition in the coming months and decide on the committee’s constitutional legality.

“This is change we need not just for my year as SBP, but for years to come of student government officials and students,” Padron-Rasines said. “The two branches

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are supposed to collaborate as individual bodies and make informed decisions for UF students; this petition can help aid in that representation.”

If the committee is determined unconstitutional, the petition outlines alternative method such as serving in an advisory context instead of a voting decision.

“The nature of my position as solicitor general is to ensure that student government in the legal sense is being administered correctly. If any students, any senators, or anyone in student government has concerns, I’m open to speak with them,” Gurney said.

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