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Student Assembly 'Free Tampon' Referendum Passes With Overwhelming Support

By Yun Soo Kim

Garnering 3,034 student votes — with 78.6 percent of all participants voting in favor — referendum 30, which plans to make feminine sanitary products available for free in all campus bathrooms, was passed by the Student Assembly on Tuesday afternoon.

Slightly more than 26 percent of the 14,622 undergraduate students eligible participated in the referendum vote — 16.3 percent voted against and five percent submitted a blank answer. The referendum was placed on the S.A. election ballot last week after garnering sufficient signatures in an earlier campaign.

The proposal was introduced a week following Brown University's announcement that it will supply tampons and sanitary products free of charge in every gender's non-residential bathrooms on campus.

Matthew Indimine '18, S.A. executive vice president, expressed his excitement for student support of the referendum.

"This referendum shows that there truly is overwhelming support for this," he said. "Three thousand and thirty four students voted in favor of passing an initiative towards gender equity. I'm excited for the next steps, and hope that this momentum continues."

Jordan Berger '17, S.A. president, said while she anticipated the referendum would pass and had registered student enthusiasm, she did not expect such a large margin of votes in favor.

REFERENDUM RESULTS



SA REFERENDUM #30

Should pads and tampons be available free of charge to students in all bathrooms on campus?

a) yes

b) no



“I worked with the Women’s Resource Center to get this referendum on the ballot,” she said. “They had many supporters so I was not very surprised that it passed, but I was surprised that it passed by such a large margin.”

Berger also expressed her eagerness to present the referendum to the University president for implementation.

“I am really excited to go to the president with the results of the referendum,” Berger said. “There was an overwhelming majority of students who voted in favor and I look forward to figuring out how to implement this initiative.”

Josephine Chu '18 contributed reporting to this article.

February 9, 2017

Cornell To Begin Dispensing Free Tampons in Some Campus Bathrooms

By **Jeanette Si**

Members of Cornell’s Student Assembly and the Women’s Resource Center are meeting with University administration to discuss how to provide free tampons and pads in all campus bathrooms.

Bridget Doolittle '17, board member for the Women’s Resource Center — who, along with S.A. Chair Jordan Berger '17 and Executive Vice President Matt Indimine '18 met with administrators to discuss the next steps — said the administration agreed to run a pilot program in select bathrooms.

“[W]e have selected a number of restrooms across campus, both female-identified and gender non-identified, that we think will provide an accurate snapshot of the usage of products when they are made free of charge,” Doolittle said.

During this pilot, the Women’s Resource Center will be funding the hygiene products, according to Indimine, who also added that the task force may also provide the products in male-identified bathrooms.

“Currently, there is not adequate infrastructure in men’s restrooms to support [the initiative], but we are working towards resolving this issue beyond the initial pilot,” Indimine said, adding that the initial pilot program will begin later this semester.



Period Partner

Doolittle said she is still working out the kinks in funding the products and purchasing the containers from which they will be dispensed.

This plan will allow Cornell to join other colleges, including Brown University, which have announced similar plans to provide accessible sanitary hygiene products to their students.

In September, Brown's Undergraduate Council of Students announced that it would fund and stock free sanitary hygiene products in bathrooms around campus.

"[S.A. is] currently in contact with our counterparts at Brown and working to support each other's initiatives," Indimine said.

The Brown initiative was entirely student-run and student-funded, but Cornell's referendum will have backing from the University administration.

Doolittle said the University side of the task force — composed of Vice President Ryan Lombardi, Associate VP of Facilities Management Ben Kuo and Associate Director of Building Care Cindy Lockwood — was excited by the program and shared valuable insights during the meeting.

"They have been available to answer questions, work through ideas and concerns with, and simply support our vision throughout the past few months," Doolittle said.

Indimine and Doolittle said the pilot was recommended by Interim President Hunter S. Rawlings III, who has also endorsed the initiative.

"[All] the stakeholders are pushing for this as a team, on behalf of the students," Indimine said. "We're all pretty optimistic about this and see success in the future."