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[congress] Must Read-Important Information from March 5th Meeting

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 To: The Congress Mailing List <congress@listserv.unc.edu>

Fri, Mar 8, 2013 at 5:56 PM

Dear Congress Representatives,

This email is of importance to inform you of something that some of you may already be aware of, but must be understood among all. Four and a half hours after the Full Congress meeting on March 5th, there was a lawsuit filed with the Student Supreme Court by Speaker Pro Tempore Brady, as counsel, on behalf of plaintiffs R&J Chair Travis Crayton, R&J Vice-Chair Peter McClelland, Representative Josh Aristy, and Tar Heel Rifle and Pistol Club President Grant Anastas-King. Their complaint states that their rights were violated by not being able to speak on the bill and procedure was violated. This lawsuit was filed against me as Speaker of Student Congress, and the Student Congress body as a whole. It asserts that there was an issue with the voting procedure on the ammunition bill at the Full Congress meeting on March 5th. The fact is, I was not present or presiding over this meeting due to my attendance at the ACC Lobbying Trip. The Presiding Officer that evening was Speaker Pro Tempore Brady, as according to the code he presides in my absence, and was in charge of maintaining correct procedure.

According to the minutes, during the debate on the ammunition bill, there was reportedly a motion to the previous question directly after the bill was introduced. Reportedly, Speaker Pro Tempore Brady incorrectly passed the motion on the floor and proceeded to the vote on the bill as a whole. The Standing Rules are very clear that the motion to the previous question must be passed by 2/3 of present and voting members, however reportedly in this case the Presiding Officer did not adhere to these rules and instead passed it with majority. The rules also are very clear about the available options for Congress members to speak on the floor outside of debate, as well as the Public Comment Period is available for any guest. Chairpersons also have the right during their reports to Congress to speak about anything they would like. Therefore, there were ample opportunities to speak, as is always available at meetings. We also have in our rules different procedures that could be applied to resolve perceived conflict on a bill. And every Congress member should know all of the above. In addition to be more clear, I returned later in the evening and attended a different meeting that night and was in the presence of Chair Crayton from 10:30pm-11:30pm and had been sent the bills via email by Speaker Pro Tempore Brady at 8:45pm. At **no time** did either of them mention their concerns or inform me of the issues. Instead, they simply filed a lawsuit at 12:30am that night. In addition, the lawsuit that I had not even seen yet was sent to the media and over the Tar Heel Rifle and Pistol Club listserv. I don't understand what the purpose of this would be, it seemed to serve no purpose other than to intimidate and harass Congress representatives. I had also received several complaints prior to the Congress meeting that there were lobbying efforts concerning this bill that came across as harassing and intimidating, and members had been receiving accusations of a personal nature.

This whole situation is extremely disappointing that a few congress members would resort to these methods of dealing with their fellow congress members. And frankly, this inappropriate behavior has

been an unfortunate pattern throughout this year in Congress. I find this lawsuit to be frivolous because the parties that brought forth this lawsuit were actually parties that contributed to the mishandling of the meeting. It would have been more beneficial if these members took responsibility for their actions at the meeting, and tried to find solutions within the organization. Court proceedings by definition are a last resort, and as I said previously there was no effort to address this or work it out at all when that should have been the first option. Again, I was not present at the meeting, so if you have any information to contribute to the situation, please contact me. I will address this lawsuit to the best of my ability. I urge all of you in Congress to assess behaviors that are not beneficial for us as a body, and for the student body as a whole. We are here to represent the students, and I would think this kind of effort should be put towards positive changes and finding resolutions within our organization, instead of furthered negativity and wasting time or causing obstacles to impede the success of the 94th Congress.

Sincerely,

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