The Voting Reform Act of 2020

Whereas, Each year during an Associated Student Government election or referendum ballot, thousands of University of Arkansas students cast votes that allow their voices to be heard regarding the questions and candidates proposed; and

Whereas, Currently there are four options given to the students on their ballots during Associated Student Government elections; and

Whereas, The options are a positive or affirming vote (yes), a negative or dissenting vote (no), a prefer not to respond vote, and a skip option that allows voters to skip the question asked; and

Whereas, Candidates and referendum questions are required to get a majority of votes cast which is defined as 50% of the vote +1; and

Whereas, Title VI Section 4 G of the ASG Code currently states “Candidates for an Executive Office must receive a majority of votes cast in the corresponding election. If no candidate receives a majority vote, a run-off election shall occur”; and

Whereas, Votes cast for yes, no, and prefer not respond are all calculated into total votes cast while the “Skip Question” option is not; and

Whereas, In two of the past three ASG elections, there have been only two ballot options for the ASG Executive Offices where a simple majority was achieved, but the inclusion of the prefer not to respond option in majority calculation forced a run-off election; and
Whereas, Prefer not to respond and Skip Question both serve the same purpose on the ballot: to give voters the option to abstain from voting on the question; and

Whereas, This creates a voting redundancy that forces unnecessary run-off elections such as in the general elections of 2018 and 2020; and

Whereas, The Office of Student Activities has no requirements to include a “Prefer not to respond” option or any option that is taken into account when calculating a majority vote, and several OSA staff members have expressed frustration with the inclusion of such options; and

Whereas, No other candidate can be added to the ballot once an election has begun, therefore one of the original options for the executive office will be elected eventually; and

Whereas, If Prefer not to respond and Skip Question were consolidated, it would prevent this issue from happening while still giving students the opportunity to vote yes, no, or to abstain; and

Whereas, A consolidation of the Skip Question and Prefer not to respond options on ASG Election ballots would ensure that future elections are won by a simple majority vote, similarly to how local, state, and national elections operate; then

Be it therefore resolved: That Title VI Section I J be amended to state “Ballots for a referendum question provide voters three options which are “yes”, “no” and “skip question””; and

Be it further resolved: That Title VI Section 1 J c. be amended to state “By selecting” skip question”, a voter is indicating they prefer to abstain from voting on the question. Selecting “skip question” does not count as a vote cast and does not factor into total votes cast. Skip question responses should not be used when calculating if a majority of votes was received for the referendum question.”; and
Be it further resolved: That Title VI Section 1 K be amended to state “Ballots for executive elections must include all eligible candidates as well as a “skip question” option. Votes cast for “skip question” are not counted as votes cast and should not be used when calculating if a majority of votes was received.

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Amendments: ________________________________

Vote Count: Aye 47  Nay 0  Abstentions 0

Legislation Status: Passed X  Failed  Other

_________________________________________  ________________
Caleb Parker, ASG Chair of the Senate  Date

_________________________________________  ________________
Julia Nall, ASG President  Date