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## Divest-from-Israel resolutions pass at U.C. Santa Cruz and San Jose State

by dan pine, j. staff

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The student governments at two local universities passed resolutions this week that call for their schools to divest from a handful of companies that do business with Israel.

U.C. Santa Cruz and San Jose State University have joined a growing list of campuses that have passed similar measures - demanding that their schools divest from companies that they claim are "profiting" from the Israeli "occupation of Palestine." The resolutions are non-binding and routinely ignored by the entities that control the university purse strings.

U.C. Santa Cruz passed a divestment resolution last year that was subsequently vetoed. However, on Nov. 17, in a 28-5 vote with seven abstentions, the student senate reversed the veto on appeal, thus reinstating the original passed measure.

Meanwhile, a divestment resolution also passed at San Jose State, according to Spartan Daily's Twitter feed on Nov. 18. A source said the vote of the Associated Students of San Jose State was 10-5.

Sarita Bronstein, the executive director of Hillel of Silicon Valley, said the resolution passed despite a lot of lobbying by opponents.

"We developed a strategy in which we paired our students with students in government," Bronstein said. "We had one-on-one conversations with [student senators] to present our side. We also lined up students to speak at the hearing."

Bronstein said the resolution that passed demands the university divest holdings in such companies as Caterpillar, Motorola, Hewlett-Packard and G4S, yet she was told by the administrator of the SJSU portfolio that it has no stock in three of those four companies.

Circumstances surrounding the vote at U.C. Santa Cruz proved to be controversial.

According to news service JNS.org, "a Jewish member of the [UCSC student government] was warned to 'abstain' from voting on [the] resolution because he is the president of the school's Jewish Student Union and was 'elected with a Jewish agenda.'"

Daniel Bernstein, a student representative from the school's Stevenson College, posted on Facebook this week a screen capture of a Nov. 12 text message he told J. he received from a Stevenson Student Council member whose identity he would not reveal. As of late in the day on Nov. 19, an image of the posting could be seen on the StandWithUs Facebook page.

It included the following: "You will be abstaining, as the president of JSU that is the right thing anywho" and "There was also a comment tonight that you were elected by a - hmmm idk [I don't know] if these are the right words but let's say - a Jewish agenda and that the Jewish community rallied with you to elect you the Stevenson rep."

Bernstein, a 21-year-old junior who also serves as an officer of the Jewish Student Union, responded on Facebook: "The implication that I, as a Jewish student and leader in the Jewish community, should not be allowed to vote on an issue that so deeply impacts the Jewish community, and that I should abstain because I cannot be trusted due to an alleged 'Jewish agenda,' echoes the racism Jews have faced all over the world throughout our history."

Why was he told to abstain? As he explained it to J., Bernstein is an elected student representative from Stevenson, one of 10 colleges on the UCSC campus (two other representatives are appointed by the student council). He acknowledged it is routine for the representatives to be told by the council how to vote on SUA measures.

It had been decided at a Nov. 10 Stevenson council meeting (which Bernstein did not attend) that one representative would vote yes on the appeal, one would vote no and that Bernstein would abstain. He defied the order, voting no on the appeal.

In a statement, UCSC Chancellor George Blumenthal acknowledged the SUA had a right to reinstate the divestment resolution, but worried "it will have a chilling effect on individuals within our campus community. However unintentional, its passage may create an environment in which some of our Jewish students feel alienated and less welcome."

Andy Borans, executive director of the Jewish fraternity Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi), described the incident to JNS.org as "blatant anti-Semitism."

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"When a student like Daniel Bernstein, a democratically elected student representative, is told that he should abstain from a vote affecting the entire campus community because he is a Jewish student, we must not sit idly by," Borans said.

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