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Council supports gay, black rights

By MARINA SARRIS

Student Council voted Tuesday to support the Gay Student Union (GSU) and the Black Student Alliance (BSA) in their battles for civil rights.

Council voted overwhelmingly to back the BSA-NAACP rally today, as well as the hiring of more black faculty members.

Council voted also 18-4 to support a motion sponsored by Law School representative Bob Schwartz that favored "efforts of the GSU to promote understanding of gay and lesbian individuals and lifestyles" next week.

"It's our responsibility as elected representatives to promote equal opportunity" and endorse groups

struggling for civil rights, said Leslie Eliason, Student Council vice president for services and projects.

The Gay Celebration Week will spotlight gay-oriented seminars, speakers and entertainment programs.

Council should endorse the GSU's efforts, the motion's supporters argued, to promote tolerance of the gay community.

Council defeated several amendments to find a wording "everyone could live with." To mollify opponents, the final motion was worded to endorse only the GSU's educational activities, not the week itself. Several Council members had argued that Council should not endorse a gay

celebration or the GSU's social activities.

By endorsing the week, opponents argued, Council would be appearing to endorse homosexuality, which some students might object on religious or moral grounds.

"I'm against endorsing something that's opposed to Virginia state laws and the religious beliefs of many students," College representative Andy Cohen said. "I don't like the idea of celebrating anyone's sexual preference."

But Council, according to Schwartz, will be manning tables at an Easter party "that will be followed by more illegal sex acts than the gay com-

munity will engage in in a month."

While College Representative Anne O'Brien noted that Council was "not supporting (gay) sexual activities, just the GSU's educational seminars," Engineering Representative Chuck Meyer opposed making that distinction.

Council member Sean McDonald agreed, saying Council was too afraid to support gays. Council members have been "piddling around with (the motion's) wording so they could call up and get a date tomorrow," McDonald said.

Council's constitution mandates that Council attempt to "improve community conditions," College representative Jeff Thompsen said,

adding "that is what the motion does."

In response to Council's approval of his motion, Schwartz said, "I'm looking forward to the day when gay rights will be as mainstream as black or women's rights."

In other business, Council voted to support the BSA-NAACP rally today at 11 a.m. near Old Cabell Hall.

Council urged "all students to attend the rally" to protest peacefully what they considered the unequal academic and social lives of University blacks.

The motion also supports the BSA's request for more black professors and