



Iowa State U. student government supports Tasers

By Nicole Paseka

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(U-WIRE) AMES, Iowa -- After a heated debate, the Iowa State University Government of the Student Body voted 30-2 Wednesday night in favor of a resolution endorsing the use of tasers by the Department of Public Safety.

"DPS is the most highly trained police force in the state, yet they are almost completely defenseless against violent aggressors," Vice President Charlie Johnson said. "It is ludicrous to require a group to protect the public, hold them accountable to do so and, in the same right, utterly impede their ability to effectively and safely discharge their duties. You cannot confront violent crime with flowers or batons or pepper spray. We must have more."

DPS Capt. Gene Deisinger presented a program to the senate about the benefits tasers would provide to DPS officers and the ISU community. Tasers would be used only when a suspect has left a DPS officer with no other option, he said.

"We have a very restrictive use of force policy," Deisinger said. "Our officers are very skilled in verbal de-escalation. We have a heightened level of that because our officers are not armed. This is a very safe community, and we are committed to keeping it that way."

Deisinger, who has been shot by the taser during training exercises, said the nonlethal devices would be issued only to state-certified law enforcement officials who have gone through extensive training.

He described being shot by the taser as an intense experience -- but with no lasting effects. The marks where the taser darts struck his back "felt like a minor sunburn," Deisinger said.

Andy Walling, RCA, said there should be little debate in the senate about the question of tasers.

"We are one of three universities nationwide that do not arm our officers with firearms, and we're arguing over tasers," Walling said.

The University of Iowa and the University of Delaware are the only comparably sized universities in the nation besides Iowa State that do not provide their peace officers with firearms, Walling said.

Several senators were opposed to the prospect of arming DPS officers with tasers.

"To me, it just doesn't seem necessary to have these," said Lucas Howell, off-campus. "Intellect is our biggest ally."

He fears people could be harmed by the taser device, and DPS officers should try to use other methods to gain control of difficult situations.

"It is a slap in the face to the men and women of DPS who are expected to put themselves in peril to keep you safe if you fail to give them the same trust that you yourself expect from students," Johnson said. "It is time that the students of Iowa State stand alongside their police force instead of opposing them."