



Johnson, left, and Tofilon stand on CyRide shortly after they won the election.

# Hail to the Chief

**Andy Tofilon and  
Charlie Johnson,  
you've just won  
the GSB election  
by a landslide.  
What are you  
going to do next?**

by Jacqui Becker

**Y**ou'd think Andy Tofilon would be sick of fighting tuition increases by now. The ISU junior from Davenport spent his summer vacation last year working with members of the Government of the Student Body perfecting their pleas to the Board of Regents. Their argument was simple: ISU students simply could not pay any more for their education. The reward for their hard work was an increase of about ten percent, not chump change but still less than the threatened 15 or 20 percent increase.

And GSB President Tofilon again will be spending his summer vacation in Ames, working with his vice president, Charlie Johnson,

and other GSB types to crunch numbers and get ready to beg for mercy from the regents and the Iowa Legislature. He wouldn't have it any other way — GSB president is what Tofilon, a former *Iowa State Daily* political reporter and veteran of the GSB senate, has worked for his entire college career.

In March, Tofilon and Johnson won the 2001-2002 GSB presidency and vice presidency with almost 3,000 votes, about 50 percent of the total turnout of about 6,000 students. It was a record-breaking election for GSB, likely because of the institution of online voting. In total, four slates ran for the executive positions. The turnout, they believe, will help them in

their fight to keep tuition relatively affordable. "This gives us more credibility with the administration and the Board of Regents. Now we're representing more students, not just a couple hundred," Tofilon says.

Tofilon and Johnson, junior in political science from Waterloo, are a curious political duo. Tofilon worked for Al Gore and is a young Democrat; Johnson was a member of the College Republicans. They choose to see their political union as a positive match instead of a recipe for disaster. "For everything I am good at, he's not so good at and for everything I'm not so good at, he's good at," Tofilon says. "We compliment each other's strengths and weak-



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- Charlie Johnson, GSB vice president

nesses very well."

Johnson agrees, "We have different opinions about a lot of things but have similar goals. We draw from so many points of view for a lot of issues."

They'll need cohesion to face next year's challenges. State legislators are talking about slashing millions from Iowa State's budget this year, and cuts for next year are inevitable. In the past, the regent universities have been on the business end of many such cuts, but none as large as this one.

GSB candidates have always talked about fighting tuition increases; it's seemed almost obligatory. Now, increases will decide the difference between dropping out of school and graduation for many cash-strapped students. For the GSB senators and executives involved in the fight to keep tuition affordable, this summer is crunch time. The most serious challenges of the coming year will all be over halfway into the fall semester.

"[Lowering] tuition is the most important thing we will ever do. This year is going to be the toughest tuition fight," Tofilon says. "It is essential that we work with the administration and every student group to pressure the Legislature."

Tofilon is passionate about this issue for several reasons, but mainly because he feels tuition increases and budget cuts will hurt Iowa State — and lead to a record number of students dropping out or transferring to out-of-state schools. "It is a doomsday. Lives will be changed forever," he says.

The bulk of Tofilon's time in GSB has been spent fighting tuition increases. It's his pet issue. Last year he was an LAS senator and was appointed the director of Internal Government Affairs. In that position, he became the liaison for city, state, and federal government affairs. He says he knows through those experiences that the best way to fight tuition increases is by letting the public know how important Iowa State is and what regent schools give back to the state. "We can cry as much as we want, but we need to tell people how it will affect them personally," Tofilon says.

Johnson points out that higher tuition gives college students no incentive to stay in Iowa, a state where officials are constantly worrying about "the brain drain."

"We don't know who cares about Iowa State anymore. It seems like no one cares about higher education," Tofilon says. "Both parties are giving up, which is a travesty. If you cut money

from this program, a couple thousand kids will have to drop out of school and work at Phillips 66 for the rest of their lives."

Tuition, of course, won't be the only issue the two will have to tackle. About \$1.5 million in student fees goes into the GSB general fund. GSB's other main focus is doling out about a half million dollars in student money to ISU clubs, organizations, and publications, including *Ethos* magazine. And there's the free CyRide routes to worry about, on top of it all.

"We need to make sure what students are paying for goes to what they want to be paying for," Johnson says. "Right now, the hard part is beginning in making sure that the routes and changes to CyRide are being implemented so students can fully reap the benefits of what they voted for."

Like Tofilon, Johnson has also spent a considerable amount of time in GSB. He's held multiple positions, including Union Drive Association senator, speaker of the GSB senate, and Senate Rules Committee chairman. He counts his experience as one of his major assets.

"I've learned how important it is to be knowledgeable about procedural kinds of things, and sometimes how complicated it is to get what you want done," he says.

"I've learned how to work with different people, how to compromise, build a team, and work with people with different ideas and different goals. GSB spends their student fee

money, and we really are working for so many different people's concerns."

Another problem Tofilon and Johnson will have to face is that many students either don't know what GSB does or believe it can do very little. If they plan to beat that rap, they've got some public relations work to do. The duo says they're up to the challenge.

"If people want us to come to their group, even the smallest group on campus, we're going to make every effort to do it," Tofilon says. "Neither of us has done anything this huge. We've never represented 27,000 people before. Being able to engage what students feel on every issue is going to be important because the administration is going to be asking us about that."

It's going to be tough changing people's minds about GSB, at least as tough as the tuition fight. Unfortunately, their chances for success seem bleak. However, Tofilon remains optimistic.

"We really believe we can get students involved. We're not just figureheads and not just someone in the paper. We're two guys that listen to groups to hear what they want done."

The problem with listening, of course, is it doesn't work unless anyone is talking.

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