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Regents can bar protesters

ANN ARBOR — (AP) — University of Michigan regents can move their meetings behind closed doors to avoid disruptive protesters, a judge ruled Wednesday.

The state's Open Meetings Act does not mean a public body "is obliged to tolerate disruption," Washtenaw County Circuit Judge Ross W. Campbell said.

The regents moved their last meeting and allowed only reporters and a few invitees to attend after unruly protesting by the Washtenaw County Coalition Against Apartheid, a group made up largely of U-M students who would like the university to divest all its holdings in South Africa because of that country's racial segregation policies.

The judge ruled the regents can stop a meeting and reconvene later and bar protesters at the new site.

Headlines word "secretly" surfaces again, unfortunately.

jsb

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U-M regents may meet

'secretly'

ANN ARBOR (AP) — University of Michigan regents can move their monthly meetings behind closed doors to avoid disruptive protesters, a judge ruled Wednesday.

An attorney for the protesting group which prompted U-M to go after the order says it will be appealed.

The state's Open Meetings Act does not mean a public body "is obliged to tolerate disruption," Washtenaw County Circuit Judge Ross W. Campbell said in his opinion.

The regents moved their last meeting and allowed only reporters and a few invitees to attend after unruly protesting by a coalition which wants U-M to divest all its holdings in South Africa because of that country's apartheid racial segregation policy.

THAT MOVE was approved by a visiting circuit judge and challenged by the Washtenaw County Coalition Against Apartheid, the protesting group which is mainly made up of U-M students.

The regents can stop a meeting and move it as long as they announce the time they'll reconvene and the location, and get back together within 36 hours after breaking un. Campbell ruled.

Anybody who disrupted the original session can be excluded from the relocated session, the judge said.

"The right to observe a meeting of a public body does not constitute a right to disrupt the business of that body," Campbell said.

COALITION LAWYER Thomas O'Brien pledged to appeal.

U-M general counsel Roderick Dane said the school was "pleased with the court's ruling which will help the university regents to conduct their business peacefully and in a rational manner."

The regents meet again next week.

Bok's Broadside

Harvard vs. divestiture

"The divestiture movement is developing into the Viet Nam issue of the late 1970s," says exiled black South African Dennis Brutus, professor of English at Northwestern, and a leader of the campaign to get universities to ditch stock of companies doing business in South Africa. The universities of Massachusetts and Wisconsin, among others, have responded to student demands that such stock be sold to protest South Africa's apartheid policies, while debate over the issue has caused demonstrations at Princeton, Stanford and Columbia. But in an open letter to students last week, Harvard President Derek Bok presented his university's objections to divestiture.



President Derek Bok

"Widely disputed on its merits."

For Harvard to divest (\$300 million, or about 30%, of its portfolio involves companies with business connections in South Africa), Bok said there would have to be proof that the action would help overcome apartheid, persuade American firms to leave South Africa, and offer more encouragement to black workers than the alternative policy of pressing companies at stockholder meetings to improve treatment of black workers. "Harvard has declared its opposition to the South African regime," said Bok, "and has pledged itself to vote on shareholder resolutions in the manner best calculated to overcome apartheid." Calling this course "the most ethically responsible," Bok referred to legal problems facing portfolio managers who buy and sell on political rather than financial grounds. Said he: "Total divestment would almost certainly cause the university to divert millions of dollars in pursuit of a strategy that is legally questionable, widely disputed on its merits, and very likely to prove ineffective in achieving its objectives."