

Legislative Action Fund Restructure



Proposed Motion: Recommend to the Board of Trustees approval of a mandatory fee of \$1 per quarter to the Legislative Action Fund to begin collection Fall 2014.

Sponsor: Kaylee Galloway, AS VP for Governmental Affairs

Persons of Contact: Kaylee Galloway or Sarah Kohout, 2014-15 AS VP for Governmental Affairs

Date: June 10, 2014

Background & Context

In Spring of 2014, students passed the following referendum 75%- 25%:

“Shall the students of Western Washington University, using the power granted to them by state law, change the Legislative Action Fund to a \$1 per quarter opt-out fee structure in order to increase student representation and advocacy efforts at the campus, local, state, and federal level?”

Due to administrative concerns about the feasibility of an opt-out fee structure, we are not able to go forward with the fee structure presented in the referendum. This new proposal will accomplish lowering the fee to \$1 per quarter, but will institute the fee as a mandatory fee that will be automatically charged to student accounts with no opt-out (refund or waiver) option.

Eileen Coughlin, WWU VP of Enrollment and Student Services, has discussed this fee with President Bruce Shepard. In light of 2011 RCW 28B.15.610, President Shepard would be comfortable administering a mandatory fee upon approval of the Board of Trustees.

Having the LAF as a mandatory fee will increase and stabilize revenues, which will help the AS further increase and enhance student (and Western) representation at the campus, local, state, and federal level. Other benefits include:

- Stabilized revenue will allow for sustainable and responsible budgeting
- Ensure Western students remain leaders in statewide and national student advocacy efforts
- Affordable investment that could save students money and enhance their academic experience
- Ideas Moving Forward
 - USSA (federal representation)
 - Student Personnel
 - Relieve S&A fees

It is widely acknowledged that this situation is not the ideal one. Ideally, we would have a LAF restructure referendum for the mandatory fee so that we could collect student input on this issue. Unfortunately, we are faced with a different and difficult situation. The LAF restructure that was discussed in the referendum was opt-out, however, we did not learn until after the referendum and before the Board of Trustees meeting that an opt-out would not be possible given current infrastructure and that a mandatory fee would be possible. I was under the impression that Central Washington University was operating under opt-out (where I was basing my idea), but found out last week they are \$1 mandatory (a surprise to their student leaders too) by contacting their Cashier's Office, Registrar's Office, their Dean for Student Success Office, and their BoD advisor. Running a special referendum is

not a likely or reasonable possibility and waiting until spring 2015 is waiting too long. Running a referendum in fall would not be reasonable because of the voter registration and GOTV efforts for Washington State elections. It would only be confusing to students and we would not get the ideal level of input. Running the referendum in the winter will not be possible as it will be during a very busy, important, and long budget legislative session where students will already be working overtime to lobby and organize around student issues such as college affordability. That being said, running another referendum in spring is waiting too long as will not be in the best interest of the AS and the student body. In order to sustain our current and projected growth and enhancement in student representation, we need to have this fee restructured. The current structure is unable to maintain our current efforts let alone accommodate any growth. The student body voted in favor of the LAF referendum as presented, thus showing their support for the spirit and the goals (increase student representation at the campus, local, state, and federal level). This is obviously a topic students are interested in and passionate about as students always want to make sure their voices are being heard in decisions being made that affect them. I think the fact that we have student support for the concept and goals, we can feel comfortable making this change especially since we are now operating under new information that we did not have before. I think the students will understand that we were trying to act in their best interests given the level of knowledge available at the time.

If the Board of Directors does not pass this restructure to mandatory fee, we are putting a lot at risk and jeopardizing all of our efforts, success, and influence at the various levels of our involvement. If the AS Board of Directors does not recommend the mandatory fee restructure, then the LAF will go to the Board of Trustees as it is currently presented (\$1, opt-out). Currently, the BOT has authority over all fees, but have delegated authority over administrative implementation to President Shepard. In the event that the BOT approves the restructure and \$1, it is possible that President Shepard will not authorize the administrative implementation of the new opt-out structure, which means that the fee will be lowered to \$1 under current opt-in structure. This means that our revenue would be cut in half and we will have to drop all involvement with the WSA. If we drop WSA, we will lose all of our legislative influence and support/training for the Legislative Liaison, thus jeopardize that position and their ability to fully lobby on behalf of Western students. WSA is the hub of the wheel and the community that allows Western to excel legislatively in terms of lobbying and organizing, and Western cannot afford to lose involvement. As you can see, this is a grave and unfortunate possibility and one we should avoid at all costs.

Furthermore, \$1 is only \$1, and students are not likely to oppose contributing a \$1 especially when there is such a high return on investment. I think we can all agree on the importance of this fee and what we have been able to accomplish with the funds. Relatively speaking, \$1 is not a lot compared to what the AS Board has already recommended in terms of increase in other student fees. We have already recommended a \$4 per quarter increase in Student Rec Center Fee, \$13 per quarter in Student Health Fee, a 9.5% increase in the Child Development Center Fees, and a 4% increase in Housing and Dining Rates in addition to the S&A Fee Committee recommending a \$16 per quarter increase. Just in mandatory fees alone, that is a \$33 increase per student per quarter for 2014-15. Adding another \$1 is not relatively significant per student, but as a whole is very influential and necessary for the AS.

Student representation is a core value and responsibility of the AS because that is what students want. They want to be represented because that is what is in their best interest. We were elected to represent students and I believe that by passing this fee that is what we are doing. We are investing in the future of students. This is a movement moment, an opportunity for our AS Board to make history, and to promote positive change and progress. We are at a pivotal time in AS growth and development in the student representation capacity and must recommend the LAF be restructured to a mandatory fee in order to continue moving forward. I ask you to join me in supporting and investing in the future of student representation and legislative successes at all levels.

Summary of Proposal

This fee will replace the current \$2 voluntary fee system that occurs at course registration.

Fiscal Impacts

14,950 students x \$1 x 3 quarters = \$44,850 plus summer collection (unknown)

Rationale

All students benefit from the advocacy efforts funded by the LAF, therefore all students should pay into these efforts.

A one dollar fee per quarter does not place an undue burden on students, while providing an excellent return on investment via legislative victories increasing access and affordability of their education.

Additional Information

There is precedent at Central Washington University for a mandatory student lobby fee.

This fee would be compliant with Washington State Law:

RCW 28B.15.610

Voluntary fees of students.

The provisions of this chapter shall not apply to or affect any student fee or charge which the students voluntarily maintain upon themselves for student purposes only. Students are authorized to create or increase voluntary student fees for each academic year when passed by a majority vote of the student government or its equivalent, or referendum presented to the student body or such other process that has been adopted under this section. Notwithstanding RCW [42.17A.635](#) (2) and (3), voluntary student fees imposed under this section and services and activities fees may be used for lobbying by a student government association or its equivalent and may also be used to support a statewide or national student organization or its equivalent that may engage in lobbying.

[2011 c 60 § 11; 2009 c 179 § 1; 1969 ex.s. c 223 §[28B.15.610](#) . Prior: 1915 c 66 § 8; RRS § 4552. Formerly RCW [28.77.065](#).]

Notes:

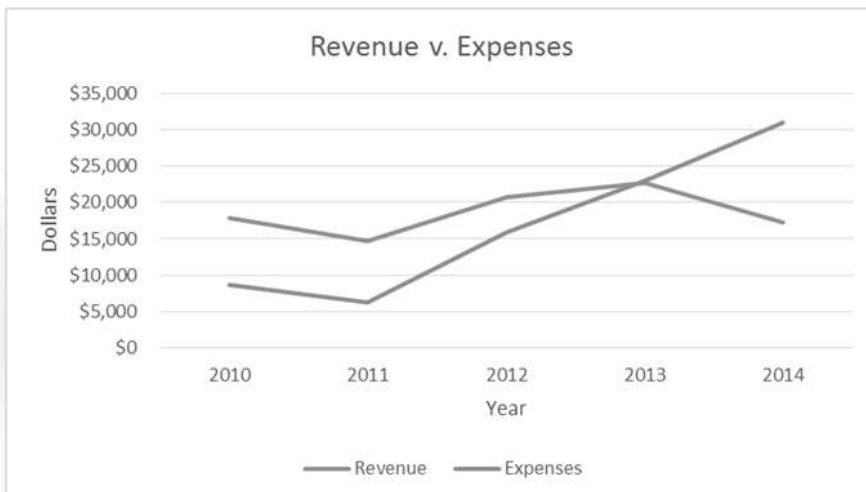
Effective date -- 2011 c 60: See RCW [42.17A.919](#).

Use of fee dollars this year



- WSA Membership
- WSA Board Retreat
- WSA Lobby Day
- USSA Congress
- USSA Legislative Conference
- AS Environmental Lobby Day

Demonstrated Need for Restructure



<u>Year</u>	<u>Revenue</u>	<u>Expenses</u>
2010	\$17,864	\$8,677
2011	\$14,678	\$6,203
2012	\$20,702	\$15,922
2013	\$22,698	\$22,986
2014*	\$17,682	\$30,883

* As of June 4, 2014