

**Western Washington University Associated Students  
Legislative Affairs Council  
Wednesday, February 11, 2015, VU 567**

**Present:** Sarah Kohout (ASVP for Governmental Affairs), Heather Heffelmire (Legislative Liaison), Kendra Thomas (Local Liaison), Mayra Guizar (Western Votes! rep), Cody Simrell, Belina Seare, Sam Goldblatt, Nora Selander, Haley Newhouse, Adam Schaefer

**Absent:**

**Advisor:** Lisa Rosenberg, Assistant Director of Student Activities

**Secretary:** Lily Jaquith, Board Assistant for Representation Committees

**Guest:** McKenzie Dent, Luciane De Almeida, Aja Campbell

**MOTIONS**

**LAC-15-W-10** Make the support of SB 5732 an action item.

**LAC-15-W-U** Support SB 5732

**Sarah Kohout, Chair of Legislative Affairs Council, called the meeting to order at 5:05pm**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

**II. Additions and Changes to the Agenda**

Kohout moves to have support of SB 5732 to an action item. This is so Heather Heffelmire, Legislative Liaison, can do actions on it in her professional capacity.

*MO TION LA C-15- W-10 by Guizar*

Make the support of SB 5732 an action item.

Second: Selander                      Vote: Unanimous Action: Passed

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**IV. Public Forum**

Luciane DeAlmeida, Haley Newhouse and McKenzie Dent introduced themselves.

**V. REPORTS**

**A. VP for Governmental Affairs**

Kohout said she's been working on lobby days, including the Ethnic Student Center and Environmental Lobby Days. She's working on Carver Lobby Day for March 2, it's a chance for students to talk about their experience in the classrooms. Mayra Guizar, Western Votes! rep, and her are working on USSA LegCon so they can send another person.

**B. Legislative Liaison**

Heffelmire said there seeing some bills move along. This week she testified on a bill that would mandate a GPA requirement of 2.5 to maintain the state need grant. The WS A is opposed to this and ASWWU should be too. She really thinks student that are getting the state need grant are having to work and then pay for tuition, that's obviously going to impact grades. She thinks the best way to get students to maintain a high GPA is to fully fund higher education and give students the tools they need to succeed. She thinks for a lot of student receiving the state need grant, they came from under-funded, low income school, so classes aren't up to par with schools in better funded areas. Then she comes to college and is expected to compete with

students who had a better education. Today the senate republicans released a plan to lower tuition by 30%. They're saying that tuition can't be more than 10% of the average income in Washington for regional schools and The Evergreen State College and then 14% at the research schools. It's not tied to any sort of funding, so she's not sure how it will be funded. The WSA will support it because it's a tuition decrease. She's worried about something like that that's not tied to any funding. She thinks they need to be focused on new revenue. There will be a press conference tomorrow, she feels obligated to attend. The final thing she wants to talk about is the revenue coalition. A group organizations, non-profits, etc. that are looking at revenue and the archaic tax system that Washington has. Washington has the most regressive and inequitable tax policy. The revenue coalition is working to change that. The WSA has been a part of it. She thinks it would be great for ASWWU to be a part of it and to start educating students on revenue. That's a proposal she'll be bringing next week.

#### C. Local Liaison

Kendra Thomas, Local Liaison said she hasn't done a lot. She's working with the Campus Community Coalition coordinator on what student interest is in rental registration. She's wondering what students have talked about in testimonials so Thomas gave her that information so that the focus group will accurately represent student interest. She's working on changing her job title to the local issues coordinator and adding to the description some different responsibilities including meeting with the Vice President for Student Life and sitting on some university committees as a non-voting member. She also might be a voting member on the transportation advisory committee.

#### D. Western Votes!

Kohout said they made Valentine's Day cards for those who supported motor voter. They also wrote story cards for Heffelmire to give testimony on. It was a cool meeting, they're able to take legislative action in a different form.

## VI. Presentations

### A. Aja Campbell from USSA

Aja Campbell, United States Student Association West Coast Field Organizer, said she's a graduate from the University of California Riverside. Now she's the West Coast Field Organizer for USSA. Western is a direct member of USSA now. She's been to campus one other time. She went to the Ethnic Student Center conference in October and then did a campus visit after that. She's been doing meetings with board members and people interested in getting involved with USSA. She's going to talk about the state of emergency campaign. The way USSA works is that the national body convenes twice a year. Congress is where they decide on campaigns, this year there's three. Funding the Future, which is focusing on the reauthorization for the higher education act. They have become partners with the carry that weight campaign, about ending sexual violence on campuses. Then the state of emergency campaign, which talks about extending recruitment and retention for students of color and other underrepresented communities. It's been worked on hard here. There are two pieces of national legislation, ending racial profiling act and voting empowerment act. A lot of people believe they're more symbolist pieces of legislation. The ending racial profiling act would mandate trainings for federal law enforcement. It would make sure the justice department would provide grants to departments that end policies that produce racial profiling and they want the local departments to do more data collection when it comes to interactions with people who feel like they've been racial profiled. They will be putting in a new complaint system for those who feel like they're being racial profiling. The voter one amends the voter rights act of 1993 to make sure universities can be seen as voter registration agencies. It also allows those who have been convicted of criminal offenses to be able to vote in federal

elections. Which opens the door to more people, especially under-represented folks, voting. The campaign is focused mainly on local demands. They were developing some today for Western. That's that basis of the campaign. They can get her contact info from Kohout or Guizar or Heffelmire.

#### **B. Federal Brainstorm Update**

Kohout said she met up with Steve Swan, WWU Vice President of University Relations and Community Development, to talk about what the federal agenda looks like. Annika Wolters, AS President, and Kohout will lobby on it in Washington DC, it will combine with the administration's agenda. She's hoping it will be an information item in two weeks. She wanted to check in with everyone. She wanted to go over what they're already working on. For profit colleges, state of emergency campaign, free community college, funding the Pell grant, higher education act reauthorization, alternative energy and student loan debt forgiveness. Does funding Pell and student loan debt forgiveness go into the reauthorization of the higher education act? Campbell said it include the Pell grant. Guizar said she's interested in the reauthorization of the higher education act and state of emergency. Nora Selander said she would like to work on the reauthorization of the higher education act. Kohout said they'll include the Pell grant with the reauthorization of the higher education act. Newhouse asked to be on student loan forgiveness. Kohout said they don't need to be pages for each, a paragraph or two is fine. She'll send another email reminder to the group that documents are due next Tuesday at 1 p.m.

#### **C. USSA/WSA Fund, Legislative Action Fund Update**

Kohout said she wanted advice on the legislative action fund. Lisa Wochos, WWU Assistant Attorney General, is still working on it. It's not her priority right now. She was talking to Campbell about the issue. Some schools have state student association and USSA funds. That's what this fund was originally for, but now they've seen it used for a lot more things. She was wondering they wanted to write a referendum to create a WSA/USSA fund. It would have to be opt in though, which is worrisome. It also goes into whether or not they want students to have another fee. She just wanted to start the conversation. Guizar said if it's an opt-in fee, the idea to have it separate is really cool, but that would make the budget less predictable year by year. That could be difficult in terms of paying dues. Kohout said they would keep the LAF, this would be a different fund. Thomas asked when the LAC fund was opt in, how much that brought in. Kohout said it was a \$2 and it brought in anywhere from \$16,000 to \$22,000 They would need about \$20,000. It would be about \$6,000 to \$7,000 for USSA and \$12,000 for WSA. Thomas asked if when they advocated for LAF to become a mandatory fee, was it presented that part of it would pay for WSA or USSA or was that established later on. Kohout said it was passed as a referendum to pay for USSA and other federal stuff. It was an unforeseen problem. Selander said she likes the idea of separate funds. She's wishing that the USSA/WSA fund could be established like the mandatory fee, so they know what's coming in and the LAF be opt in. It makes her nervous not knowing what money is coming in. DeAlmeida asked if it was in the system where the LAF is already set up and then they could they borrow from the LAF on years where it falls short. Goldblatt said they could apply for a grant from the AS reserves. In the case of not making enough money. Lily Jaquith, AS Board Assistant for Representation Committees, said that is similar to the situation that the University of Washington Seattle has run into. Goldblatt said if it happens two years in a row then they could figure out a more sustainable plan. Kohout said they'd have to run a referendum. Thomas said when Goldblatt said, if it happens two years in a row, they could reevaluate it but sometimes things don't get reevaluated when people leave. There's a risk of people leaving and things getting forgotten. Kohout said she wonders if they could put it into policy that it has to be reevaluated in two years. Lisa Rosenberg, Assistant Director of Student Activities, asked if one of the reasons for thinking about the opt-in fee to address the

issues they're facing right now to get a determination if it can be used for dues. The concern is paying a registered lobbyist. Kohout said yes. The issue is that Garrett Havens, WSA Executive Director, being a registered lobbyist. Rosenberg said so then using the LAF might not be an option.

## **VII. Information Items**

### **A. Support for Senate Bill 5732**

## **VII. Action Items**

Goldblatt asked if she knew where the money to pay for it would come from. Kohout said she's not sure. She's guessing it would come from local departments. Goldblatt said they still should be trying to pass this today, it makes sense to support it on a local and state level. Thomas said Bellingham already did this and so it's in line with local issue. Kohout said this will be seen by the board of directors tomorrow

*MOTION LAC-15-W-11 by Guizar*

Move to support SB 5732

Second: Goldblatt

Vote: 7-0-0

Action: Passed

## **VIII. Discussion Items**

## **IX. Other Business**

Thomas asked if she can let them know who's going to LegCon. Kohout informed the committee of who is going to LegCon. Guizar said she didn't bring handbills with her today, but she's working really hard on an AS elections event. She'll give an overview about the elections process. It'll be two hours long, free pizza, current board members will be there to answer questions and folks can hang out with them and ask them questions. It's February 19, it's free invite your friends. Kohout said the 30% tuition decrease is SB 5954.

## **X. Next Meeting Date**

**February 18, 2015**

## **XI. Adjourn**

*The Meeting was adjourned at 6:06p.m.*