

**Western Washington University Associated Students  
Legislative Affairs Council  
Wednesday, March 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, McKenzie Dent, Luciane DeAlmeida, Adam Schaefer

**Absent:**

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

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

**Guest:** JulieAnne Behar, Carmen Rasmussen

**MOTIONS**

**LAC-15-W-16** Approve all outstanding minutes.

**LAC-15-W-17**

**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**

**III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*MO TIONLA C-15- W - by DeAlmeida*

Approve all outstanding minutes.

Second: Schaefer                      Vote: Unanimous Action: Passed

**IV. Public Forum**

JulieAnne Behar, Washington Student Association Organizing Director, said she's excited to be back on campus. She wanted to talk to LAC about a couple of things coming up for WS A in the spring. Their legislative agenda setting is on the LAC agenda, so she won't go into that too much. In addition to setting the legislative agenda at the May General Assembly meeting, they also elect a new executive board. As students that have participated in LAC, they're exceptionally well informed on the types of issues that the WS A works on and know a bit about what the WS A is and how they function. Some members have even attended meetings. They're always looking for skilled, experienced leaders on campuses who are interested in getting involved. To give an idea of what the executive board does, they have a president and five different vice presidents. They have a VP of Communication, which is Lily Jaquith's, AS Board Assistant for Representation Committees, position, there's a VP of Outreach position, VP of Federal Affairs, VP of Finance and VP of Legislative Affairs. They cover different roles in the WSA's operations. These are volunteer positions, not paid, but generally speaking they aren't more than a five hours a week time commitment outside of the monthly Board of Directors meetings. Basically they work with as a team from around the state to lead the WS A, work with the board of directors and help carry out their priorities that they outline. They work very closely with the staff members, like her, and there are a lot of training a professional development opportunities that go along with it. If

anyone is worrying if they're not qualified or if they're not sure they know enough about the WSA, she would say don't worry about that. They can definitely get anyone up to speed. She'll be on campus all day tomorrow, so she'd be happy to talk to anyone who might be interested and give a little more information. Jaquith would also be a great person to chat with, she's be on the executive board for the last two years. She just wanted to let them know that that's an opportunity, nominations will be taken first at the April board meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> at Washington State University Vancouver. Then nominations will be taken again at the May 2<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly and elections will be held that same meeting.

## **V. REPORTS**

### **A. VP for Governmental Affairs**

Kohout said LegCon is coming up in a couple weeks, so she's been working on the logistics behind that. She's also working on the federal lobby day trip that she goes on with AS President Annika Wolters. There was also a WSA meeting this past weekend. They saw a presentation on a lot of relevant bills, but she does not believe they took stances on any of them. They also had a budget committee meeting beforehand.

### **B. Legislative Liaison**

Heather Heffelmire, Legislative Liaison, said she's happy to be back. She's going to try and think of a better way for her reports to flow and pass that down in her legacy document. On senate bill 5954, on the tuition decrease. It sounds awesome, but if it's not funded then it's not as good as it looks. She found out today that that bill passed in the senate without the part that required any additional funding. So if it passes, there would be a tuition reduction but they wouldn't give any extra money to our institutions. That means courses would be cut, faculty would be cut, advising, which is already a huge issue here, would be cut. All voter access bills passed through the house, but they didn't pass through the senate. She definitely thinks that extending the voter registration deadline will pass, there was a lot of bi-partisan support for it. She's excited for the start of next quarter where she can come in and give a presentation on the state of higher education. Offline, she helped with the action on Sen. Jim Honeyford that Mayra Guizar, Western Votes! Rep, led. As she mentioned at the last meeting, Sen. Honeyford made some really racist remarks and it was time to take action on that. She's happy with how that worked out, hopefully they'll see more movement on that. She would encourage everyone to get involved with the WSA, if they're interested. That's the office she and the other liaisons have been working out of. Behar said if anyone wants to track the bills on their own, she'd be happy to share everyone on the WSA bill tracker. Kendra Thomas, Local Liaison, asked who passed the 5954 bill. Heffelmire said the senate.

### **C. Local Liaison**

Thomas said this week she's been trying to get in contact with the Seattle Tenants Union. They have a lot of really excellent resources. They do workshops for groups of tenants and other organizations. She's been trying to get in contact with them in regards to their educational materials that they provide and regarding how the roll out of rental registration and inspections in Seattle went and if they encounters any issues or things they didn't expect and how they can prepare for it in Bellingham. She hasn't heard back from them yet. Hopefully she will soon. That's been taking up most of her time. The rental registration ordinance passed city council.

### **D. Western Votes!**

Guizar said they just had their wrap up dinner on Monday. That was the last official thing of the quarter. She's also involved in USSA and she thinks she's going to start incorporating that into the Western Votes! updates. They're 13 days away from LegCon. The delegation from Western is 16 folks. It's incredible because they first reported 8 students at most. It was efforts from others to get more people there. The staff from USSA loves Western. They've been

organizing delegation meetings and the actual lobby visits, they'll be lobbying the weekend before spring quarter starts. Thanks to Kohout for all the planning she's done.

## **VI. Discussion Items**

### **A. Carmen from CCC**

Carmen Rasmussen, Campus Community Coalition Coordinator, said she's not sure how many people are familiar with the work of the CCC. Her office is housed at Western, but they also represent the other schools in the area. They work to improve collaboration and communication between the campuses and the community at-large, primarily Bellingham. They work on education and problem solving, trying to make that interface between students and the community as positive and safe and healthy as possible. A few things they're really working on includes the off-campus living website, they're really focused on promoting that. They're working to get the information out to students and the community that the website exists. She's always collecting information from community members and students about what needs to be added to that website. If there's something a council member think would be a good addition to the website, they should feel free to contact her. She's gone with Oscar Aguirre, AS Legal Information Center Coordinator, to all the residence halls and they did rental seminars. She's worked with Thomas on some of the issues at the local level, especially around rental registration. CCC also coordinates the Hospitality Resource Alliance, it's made up of downtown bars and restaurants. They coordinate a group that works with the Bellingham Police Department and University Police, Liquor Control, the city of Bellingham and different stakeholders. They meet once a month to talk about downtown and how to make the area active and safe and promote safe a responsible behavior. Their focus there is make it feel safe for students, so students feel they have thing to do downtown and the opportunity to make good choices. They also advise on the "Advice on Taps" group, which is a group of students that go down to bars and provide messaging on good choices people in the 21-25 range can make. They're currently working on a marijuana community forum that will be on April 22 and May 13 at the Mt. Baker Theatre. It is an unbiased view of marijuana, in light of the recent legislation and legalization. There's still a lot of pending legislation around marijuana because the legislation that legalized it didn't answer all of the outstanding questions. They will have representatives with all kinds of views. She's been working with Thomas on rental registration. She's been serving on the focus group that the city put together to help with the implementation and roll out of rental registration and to work on the education piece. As Thomas noted, the legislation passed for rental registration, so there is an ordinance now. Some of it is clear, and some of it isn't. The inspections piece is still very unclear, so that group will continue to meet. She will be sure to pass information along as it develops. She attends neighborhood meetings on a pretty regular basis, working with neighborhoods on general outreach to students. Also working with them on problem solving any issues they might have with students or students might have. Overall the experience she's having is that people are really grateful for the energy and enthusiasm of the students that live in Bellingham.

### **B. WSA Legislative Agenda**

Kohout said WSA puts together a legislative agenda, similar to the one that LAC puts together. It's for all 150,000 students that WSA represents. They put there's out in spring. Behar said she's sure everyone has heard about the WSA's general assemblies that happen twice a year. They can be kind of a wild experience. Every school has votes based on their student body population. That usually means there are about 70 students as opposed to the usual 30 students and this is where all the big decisions are made. They will elect the new officer team, set the legislative agenda or set the budget. It's important to have more student voices in those decisions. For a lot of decisions it makes sense to have the elected student body

presidents make them, but they feel like for these items it's important to have as many student voices there are possible. They can get more voices for different parts of the student body to make truly representative decisions. One of the most consequential things they do is set the WSA legislative agenda. It drives all of the policy work WSA does for the next year. The importance of doing it in the spring is that it gives them a chance to lay the ground work. Over summer staff can outreach to other organizations, build partnerships and relationships. It also gives them the chance to do some research. It gives them the time to lay the foundation for what they want to do in the next year. It also means that the students coming in to set that legislative agenda will have had that experience. The process is completely open, anyone from any member schools can bring forward a proposal to present to the General Assembly. Their proposals are a pretty simple document. It has about 10 questions that are filled out. The proposal is not much beyond that. They try to keep each to about two pages. If there's an issue that someone here is working on that they know someone else on another campus is also interested in working on, they might connect them with those other people. Usually proposals done by multiple schools have a better chance of passing. Basically they bring the proposal forward, present on it and then the General Assembly votes on whether it should be on the agenda or not. Usually there are a few items identified as priority items, those are the big ticket items such as college affordability. Kohout said for those that worked on the ASWU legislative agenda, it's the same form. Behar said she really encourages everyone give it a thought and if there's something you want to see students across the state work on, bring it forward, don't be shy. It's really important as a conversation starter. Kohout asked if there was anything anyone had been thinking about. Heffelmire said she thinks that there's a lack of civic engagement and civic knowledge in young people. She thinks if students had the knowledge they would be so much more engaged. She talked with numerous legislators while she was done in Olympia and everyone agrees it's a problem and that civic engagement really should be something they're giving the youth to get involved. She'd like to write something on that, getting civic engagement classes in schools. Starting as an elective and then moving into a mandatory class. She doesn't think they would have any trouble finding sponsors, as she has heard bi-partisan support on it. That's something she really wants to work on and if anyone wants to work on that with her, they're welcome. She's also interested in overturning the initiative that blocked affirmative action in Washington state. Kohout said applications are due to WSA on April 20 and would need to go through LAC, so the deadline for those would need to be a couple weeks beforehand. If members have any ideas over spring break feel free to bring them up. If they want LAC's endorsement, they have to go through the council, but if a member comes up with something later on they can still do it, it just won't be endorsed by LAC.

#### C. VLD Board Assistant Job Description

Kohout said this is the last meeting of the quarter, which is why this is just a discussion item. This is the job description for the VLD Board Assistant position. She made some small changes. They didn't help assign people into groups, that requires a lot of late night work and she would hate to have someone work five hours into the middle of the night. She also changed who the position report to from reporting to the VP for Governmental Affairs to the Board Program Assistant. It's weird to work really closely with the person you report to. For example, Lily Jaquith, AS Board Assistant for Representation Committees, doesn't report to Kohout, she reports to Sabrina Romano, Board Program Assistant. She just wanted to give the committee a heads up that this is coming. Let her know if there are any spelling errors. This will come back to the council and she'll be asking for it to become mandatory funding, which requires a change in the budget policy and a 2/3 vote. She just wanted to give the committee a heads up, which is why this is not an information item this week. She didn't want to leave a week break between then and now.

## **VII. Action Items**

### **A. Revenue Coalition**

Heffelmire said this is item as last week. She still doesn't have the exact information on how they would join, but she thinks they just tell one of the leaders in it. She definitely thinks they could join, just to strengthen the fight for new and dedicated revenue. ASWWU is already unofficially part of it, just as members of the Washington Student Association. Adam Schaefer said he took a look at their website and he they have a space to join if organizations want to. So to be an official supporter you just send them email. Have they put out anything saying exactly what they want to change in the Washington tax policy? Because they have a lot of general things. Heffelmire said from what she knows about them, policies or bills will come out and from there they take a more concrete stance. She thinks wanting a fair, representative tax system is a concrete ask. Guizar said just to add to that, when it comes to making those general statements, it's not up to them to come up with the solutions, it's up to the legislature. Thomas asked for Heffelmire to describe past stances the Revenue Coalition has taken stances on. Specifically anything that might be in line with or go against the Associated Student's stances. Heffelmire said she's sure they've supported a carbon tax. They seem to line up pretty well with the AS's views. Although, on the bill at the beginning of the quarter the council discussed on 2/3 of revenue going to higher education, the coalition was really opposed to that. Because it would be a huge win for higher education, but all other social program would take a huge hit. That's the only time she would see them coming to a head with them. Also just because the Revenue Coalition supports something doesn't mean the LAC has to. But the council is always welcome to take positions different from the Revenue Coalition, they would never sign support of a bill as the Revenue Coalition. The organizations sign it individually. They really exists for everyone to come to the table to talk about new and dedicated revenue. Schaefer asked if they would get anything from them besides just working with them through the WSA. Kohout said if it's something the AS agrees with, then why not join. She thinks it would say a lot about students if they were to join. Heffelmire said it would give ASWWU more of a voice in the effort to seek out new and dedicated revenue. Nora Selander said when they put together the agenda and students say they want new and dedicated revenue but then get asked questions about it from legislators students would say it's their job to figure it out. But if they took a stance here then they might have more to those answers. Thomas asked if they have anyone regularly attending these meetings outside of the term when the legislative liaison is in Olympia. Heffelmire said they're really only active and officially meeting during the legislative session. Thomas asked if they are still available as a resource outside of the legislative session. Heffelmire said yes. She can reach out to them and get more details. She's sure they'll be excited to help them out.

*MO TION LA C-15- W-2 by Thomas*

Moves to become members of the Washington United for Fair Revenue Coalition.

Second: Guizar

Vote: 11-0-1

Action: Passed

## **VIII. Other Business**

Lisa Rosenberg, Assistant Director of Student Activities said she wanted to remind the committee that all AS positions are open until April 7. Goldblatt said right now there's an opening for an hourly position in the Legal Information Center.

## **IX. Next Meeting Date**

First week back from Spring Break

**X. Adjourn**

*The Meeting was adjourned at*