

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA



ASSOCIATED STUDENTS OF WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

ETHNIC STUDENT CENTER
DISABILITY OUTREACH CENTER
STUDENT ADVOCACY + IDENTITY RESOURCE CENTER
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM



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WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATORS,



It is with great pride that we present the 2019 Legislative Agenda for Western Lobby Day. On behalf of the Associated Students of Western Washington University (ASWWU), we appreciate and thank you for your time.

This document was drafted to demonstrate the strength, solidarity, and diversity of the students here at Western. The needs, experiences, and opinions represent both our students and our extended communities to the best of our ability. By supporting our undocumented students, strengthening state environmental protections, and implementing strategic institutional reforms, you can ensure that the students of Western will excel as leaders and change-makers of Washington state.

Sincerely,

The ASWWU Board of Directors



DISABILITY OUTREACH CENTER



Expanded Access to Healthcare Resources

People with disabilities have a greater need for access to comprehensive healthcare services, especially to emergency and mental health services. Given the current lack of resources available to people with disabilities, the need for affordable, easily accessible healthcare is a high priority of the Western Community. Small but substantive changes will increase both the autonomy and overall quality of life for people with disabilities.

To expand accessibility to affordable and quality healthcare, Western strongly advocates for the following:

- Support for HB 1065 & SB 5031 which prohibits balance billings by out-of-network facilities and providers. This will prevent individuals from receiving surprise bills or services and removes consumer responsibility for managing disputes between health insurance carriers and health care facilities/providers.
- Passing SB 5054 which will establish a reciprocity program so that specific healthcare professionals (such as chemical dependency professionals, mental health counselors, social workers) with licensure or certification in other states can work in Washington state.
- Introducing additional legislation that addresses the need for greater access to affordable healthcare.

Employment Equity for People with Disabilities

In Washington State it is legal to pay both adults and minors with disabilities below state and federal minimum wage requirements. Although the reasoning centers around allowing employers to extend employment opportunities to people with disabilities, many businesses exploit the labor of people with disabilities, paying them far below a livable wage. This forces disabled people to be dependent on those around them for financial support in a way that prevents independence and restricts the ability to leave abusive environments.

To ensure people with disabilities are not exploited in the workplace, Western strongly advocates for the following:

- Repealing WAC 296-128-050 and WAC 296-125-043 which allows employers to pay adults and minors with disabilities less than minimum wage.
- Introducing additional legislation that calls for additional job placement support for people with disabilities.
- Create additional support and funding for workplace accommodations.

Expanded Education Support

Washington's K-12 education system requires expanded support and protection for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities need greater access to supportive and adaptive learning environments that are prepared to meet their needs, particularly those that are not accounted for within the generalized K-12 curriculum. These changes will increase the opportunities for students with disabilities to succeed within and beyond K-12.

To address shortcomings in K-12 curricula prior to higher education, Western strongly advocates for the following:

- Supporting SB 5089 which supports additional access to early learning for students with disabilities. This will allow students with disabilities greater opportunities to meet grade level expectations, increasing their odds of attaining higher education.
- Supporting HB 1039 to increase access to non-addictive, opioid overdose medication to K-12 schools and higher education. This will aid in combating the lethality of the opioid epidemic.
- Considering incentives for promoting the Universal Design of Learning in schools so that students with disabilities and their abled peers can learn in the same classroom environment.



ETHNIC STUDENT CENTER

Support for Undocumented Students and Communities

The Associated Students of Western Washington University recognize that undocumented students are one of the most vulnerable groups of students and is concerned with the lack of resources available for undocumented students in higher education across the state. In addition to supporting undocumented students in their higher education and career endeavors, we see it important to encompass and support the undocumented community as a whole.

To support undocumented students and their communities, Western strongly advocates for the following:

- Publicly support the Tacoma City Ordinance No. 28491 which limits the expansion of the Northwest Detention Center.
- Amend the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), WAC. 365-196-550, and RCW 36.70A.200 to specifically exclude federal detention facilities.
- Close the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma by revoking its business license due to the number of severe health and safety violations that have occurred there under the ownership of the GEO Group. The GEO Group is responsible for the poor conditions, human rights violations, and numerous incidences of hunger strikes, suicides, and deaths.
- Amend RCW 28B.15.012 to lower the residency requirement for in-state financial aid and tuition from three years to one year, thereby ensuring as many undocumented students have access to higher education and opportunity as possible.

Farm Worker Protections

The Associated Students of Western Washington University recognizes and strongly believes that the health and safety of farm workers here in Washington state are integral to the success and vitality of our state's economy. The people who perform the more strenuous work in our economy - growing and harvesting our food - have been denied even the most basic health and safety protections, fair wages, and proper recognition. Substantive change is required in order to ensure the State of Washington adheres to the strictest standard of human and worker dignity and secures the future prosperity of our state.

To support the rights and dignity of workers, Western strongly advocates for the following:

- Amend the 1958 Washington State Minimum Wage and Hour Act, closing the overtime loophole for farm and dairy workers, making them eligible for overtime pay and a fair compensation for time worked (RCW 49.46.130).
- Simplify independent contractor definitions and improving enforcement to end the practice of misclassifying workers as independent contractors in an effort to avoid paying workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, and other public necessities. By doing so, the state will support both workers and law-abiding employers.
- A mandate to provide general notice to neighboring farms and properties prior to commencing a pesticide spray application.
- Pass the Keep Washington Working Act, HB 1815/SB 5497, as endorsed by the Washington State Labor Council and Yakima Immigrant Response Network, among others.
- Institute a state-level ban, such as those passed in Hawaii and California, of chlorpyrifos to protect local communities and habitats



ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAM

Department of Ecology Request for Pre-Adjudication work

The students of WWU are in firm support of the department of ecology request for adjudication in order to define water rights for tribes, and create better boundaries for the Nooksack watershed and the Puget Sound. This will be necessary for defining water rights for tribes, farmers, and other interest groups in Washington state. Additionally, this will provide tribes with a necessary definition of their rights to water helping guide policy and development decisions. Conflicts regarding water rights for tribes have been occurring increasingly over the past few years, resulting in upwards of 75 completed adjudications across Washington State. There has not been any adjudication work assessing the Nooksack watershed or the Puget sound, which HB 1051 sets aside funding for. This work is incredibly necessary for these watersheds because it goes beyond the regulatory Growth Management Act standards and helps give decision making processes to tribes regarding watershed management. This is vital for community planning, protecting water resources, and resolving or preventing water conflict.

To better define water rights for tribes, Western strongly advocates for the following:

- Support Governor Inslee's \$600,000 allocation in the Department of Ecology's natural resource budget for pre-adjudication work.

Carbon Free Utilities by 2029

The students of WWU strongly support carbon free utilities in order to maintain financially stable energy sources, transition towards green energy, and protect vulnerable communities. Carbon free utilities are not only environment conscious but have been increasingly competitive in price compared to their coal counter parts. We stand in firm support of HB 1211 to create carbon free utilities by 2029. Carbon free utilities both benefit the environment ecologically and are cost competitive. Wind costs roughly one fifth of the cost of coal, and a third of the cost of natural gas.

With environmental consciousness in mind, Western strongly advocates for the following:

- Follow precedents set by other states by passing carbon free utilities HB 1211 in order to help transition towards more renewable and sustainable energy sources.
- Continuing to support and invest in communities that are impacted negatively by this energy transition in order to protect and support them as outlined in HB 1211.
- Supporting HB 1211 and SB 5116 to support Washington's clean energy economy and transitioning to a clean, affordable, and reliable energy future.

Plastic Bag Ban

Students of WWU strongly urge a plastic bag ban to support the transition away from oil, reduce waste, and move towards more sustainable practices. A ban is necessary to fulfill promises from legislature to preserve and protect the environment. This type of ban as outlined by SB 5323 will ban plastic bags, while recipients of assistance on programs will not be subject to the fee on plastic bags or other non-reusable alternatives. Previous plastic bag bans have worked extremely well in Seattle with a 50% reduction in usage of plastic bags in the first 4 years of implementation. Plastic bags use around 12 million barrels of oil per year for producing 100 billion plastic bags per year (roughly how many plastic bags the US uses per year). It is incredibly important to transition away from a dependence on oil in order to meet sustainability goals.

To move towards more sustainable practices, Western strongly advocates for the following:

- A statewide ban on single use plastic bags through the passing of SB 5323 and HB 1205.
- Continued support of reducing the number of single-use plastics to lessen our dependence on oil and fossil fuels in order to meet sustainability goals, as outlined by the Department of Ecology's Integrated Climate Response Strategy.



STUDENT ADVOCACY AND IDENTITY RESOURCE CENTER

Menstrual Care Products

Menstrual products are required at point in time for every person with a uterus and are still expensive, heavily-taxed as a luxury item, and not readily available to all. The lack of access to these products unfairly burdens impoverished or homeless people with uteruses in our communities. Even those who can afford these products should not be forced to pay taxes on these necessities. The term “feminine hygiene product” is also not appropriate because possessing a uterus is not synonymous to being a female. People who do not identify as female experience menstrual bleeding and should not be misgendered when gaining access to these products.

To support greater access and equity, Western strongly advocates for the following:

- Supporting the amendment of HB 1053 to be more inclusive by changing “feminine hygiene products” to “menstrual products”. Once this has been done, support the passage of HB 1053, which eliminates the undue burden of taxes for those who can’t afford menstrual products.
- Requiring free menstrual products on college campuses to lessen the financial burden on students.
- Mandate non-gendered discussion of menstruation in K-12 sexual education curriculum.

Expanded Rights for People with Mental Illnesses

Western is concerned with the lack of prioritization of mental illness and behavioral disorders. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), LGBTQ young people are more than twice as likely to feel suicidal and over four times as likely to attempt suicide, compared to heterosexual youth. Additionally, one third of transgender youth have seriously considered suicide. Groups such as veterans, people of color, people with disabilities, and womxn are also disproportionately burdened with mental health disorders. Without providing more resources, we are knowingly increasing the hardships on those already struggling.

To support the rights of individuals with mental illnesses, Western strongly advocates for the following:

- Supporting SB 5053, 5054, 5055, and 5056, all of which either promote more resources for people with mental illnesses or for those going into the behavioral health field, which will directly affect the population facing mental illnesses in the future.
- Allocate more resources to college campuses statewide, including but not limited to: requiring detailed training for faculty, staff, and students in various types of mental illnesses. Additionally, education on which groups are disproportionately affected, and hiring counselors representative of said groups.
- Provide more funding to college counseling centers, which are overworked and often take weeks, if not months, to schedule an appointment. Expand staff in order to ease the burden on students suffering from mental health crises and ensure that their needs are met in an appropriate amount of time.



The Associated Students of Western Washington University is increasingly concerned with the frequency of sexual violence on campuses and how often these instances go unreported. It is estimated that while 1 in 5 women and 1 in 16 men are sexually assaulted in college, only 20% of those students report assaults due to personal or institutional barriers. Furthermore, transgender students, students with mental disabilities, black and Native American students, and students facing poverty are disproportionately impacted. Increased funding at the state level will promote a safer campus and community environment, alleviate the burden faced by survivors, and permit universities to implement stronger and more effective support programs for survivors, thereby creating campuses where survivors can complete their education with the fewest number of roadblocks.

To stand with and support survivors of sexual assault, Western strongly advocates for the following:

- Allocated funding so that specialized personnel, resources, and training for staff members can be implemented at universities to improve the universities' ability to prevent and respond to sexual violence.
- Development and implementation of a mandatory, state-wide training program for all university faculty, staff, and administration.
- Clarification and transparency of the reporting process as well as readily available information of support services for survivors of sexual and domestic violence at the university and in our communities.
- Support for HB 1002 (which modifies the offense of rape in the third degree) and 1016 (which concerns hospital notification of availability of sexual assault evidence kit collection), both of which have direct impact on survivors of sexual assault.



**SUPPORT FOR
SURVIVORS OF
SEXUAL ASSAULT**

K-12 REFORM: ETHNIC STUDIES AND SEX EDUCATION

The Associated Students of Western Washington University strongly believes that the public school curriculum must require sex education and ethnic studies. Current curricula used in Washington state fails to teach the importance of consent and does not prepare students for healthy future sexual relationships. Research has shown that consent education helps in the prevention of sexual assault. Improving sex education will result in a more informed and ultimately safer college campus. Public schools teachers and curricula must also represent the historically marginalized communities of the state. Current curricula contains persistent gaps in perspective from communities that have faced discrimination and bias. Ethnic studies will empower students to develop a critical and intersectional understanding of issues and engage at-risk youth. A Stanford study found that ethnic studies implemented at the high school level improved student GPA by 1.4 points and at-risk youth attendance by 21%.

A failure to implement such changes is a disservice to communities across Washington state.

To address shortcomings in K-12 curricula prior to higher education, Western strongly advocates for the following:

- Improve and expand the Healthy Youth Act (RCW 28A.300.475) to include the necessity of affirmative consent, LGBTQIA+ identities, sexualities, and safe sex in non-heterosexual relationships, in addition to simply requiring medically accurate information.
 - Requiring comprehensive HIV and healthy sex education for all K-12 public schools in Washington State by amending WAC 392-410-140.
 - Support and pass SB 5023 to develop a model ethnic studies curriculum for grades K-12, including the establishment of an ethnic studies advisory committee comprised of educators of color, students, and appropriate community stakeholders.
 - Support school districts in successfully implementing ethnic studies standards.
 - Support school districts in the hiring and retention of a diverse and representative staff
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POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY REFORM

The Associated Students of Western Washington University recognizes that the use of excessive and deadly force by law enforcement affects all communities by fostering distrust and resentment. Not only are individuals deprived of their constitutional and human rights, their communities are likewise negatively impacted, resulting in decreased public safety and unproductive relationships between communities and law enforcement. Often times, abuses of power are not isolated incidents, but rather a symptom of systemic and institutional shortcomings. People of color, disabled people, and the queer community all experience police violence at a disproportionately high rate.

To improve trust and faith between law enforcement and the communities they serve, Western strongly advocates for the following:

- The adoption of the recommendations put forth by the Joint Legislative Task Force requiring:
 - Safe mechanisms to submit formal complaints about officers
 - Objective investigation of those complaints, completed in a timely manner, and mechanisms to ensure discipline is appropriately completed
 - All instances of deadly force be investigated by external bodies under the oversight of external bodies
 - All law enforcement agencies to report the use of deadly force to the Attorney General's Office and requiring the Attorney General's Office