

## Legislative Affairs Council Budget Policy

*In order to be responsible stewards of student funds apportioned to the Legislative Affairs Action Fund through mandatory student fee, the following policy has been adopted. The policy is meant to ensure that funds are used appropriately and can be accessed and distributed in an efficient manner to serve the students of Western Washington University in the best way possible.*

The purpose of the Legislative Affairs Action Fund is to ensure that students are represented in the legislative process, and are able to effectively educate and advocate for affordable, accessible, and quality higher education and as well as other issues affecting students' rights. This budget pays primarily for the Associated Students educational and legislative advocacy efforts which are coordinated by the AS VP for Governmental Affairs.

### Non-Discretionary

Items falling into the non-discretionary budget will automatically be approved for expenditure without a vote of the Legislative Affairs Council (LAC). These expenditures will be authorized autonomously by the Vice President for Governmental Affairs. Items labeled as non-discretionary will get priority funding over discretionary items. In order to be considered a non-discretionary expenditure, a line item expense must be approved by the Legislative Affairs Council as a recurring expense. Membership dues to student government association organizations like Washington Student Association (WSA) and United States Student Association (USSA) and personnel costs have been previously recognized by a 2/3 vote of the Legislative Affairs Council as such non-discretionary items that will stay on the list each year. Due to the variable nature of many costs the Legislative Affairs Council incurs, a "not to exceed" (NTE) level may be set for each non-discretionary item at the time it is adopted by the Legislative Affairs Council. Non-discretionary items are automatically reauthorized and may only be removed from the non-discretionary budget by a 2/3 vote of the Legislative Affairs Council. All changes made to the non-discretionary allocation amount or items must be approved by the ASWU Board of Directors.

### Discretionary

Any funds remaining following the allocation of funds to cover non-discretionary expenditures will be available for expenditures as approved by the Legislative Affairs Council. These expenditures are to be allocated only following the presentation of a funding request to the Legislative Affairs Council under the established info-action schedule when possible, allowing for reflection and evaluation before final approval is granted. Any discretionary funding request involving limited attendance must follow the LAC Guidelines for Funding Conference Attendance. During the summer, and when not in academic session, this council's responsibilities fall to the AS VP for Governmental Affairs with approval from the AS President and Assistant Director of Student Activities.

### Reserves

As with any variable income funding structure, a reserve fund is necessary to provide stability and ensure continuity for the Legislative Action Fund. Should revenues ever be insufficient to cover non-discretionary allocations, the Vice President for Governmental Affairs may use funds held in reserves to make up the difference. If reserve funds are needed to cover non-discretionary allocations, the Vice President for Governmental Affairs is to notify the Legislative Affairs Council at their next regularly scheduled meeting. 5% of any funds loaned to the Legislative Affairs Action Fund are to be

held in reserves until the reserve level reaches 125% of the previous year's non-discretionary expenditure. Should reserves fall below this level, 5% of any future funds donated-paid to the Legislative Affairs Action Council Fund are to be automatically moved to reserves until the balance reaches 125% of the previous year's non-discretionary expenditures. These reserve requirements may be changed only by a 2/3 vote of the LAC and approval of the Board of Directors.

Commented [PEI]: Income funding structure no longer variable. Reserve level too high.

### **Allowable Usage**

For the Department of Education and the Assistant Attorney General to allow the Legislative Action Fund to be paid for by federal financial aid, it must be used in a manner that does not violate state or federal law. Allowable uses for this fee include providing students access to direct legislative education and advocacy opportunities, funding staff support positions to assist in the organizing of outreach events, paying for membership dues to United States Student Association and Washington Student Association, and for student representation and engagement in those organizations. The ways in which the fund can provide access to these opportunities includes, but is not limited to: transportation (vehicle rentals, gasoline, mileage reimbursement, etc), lodging, per diem or food stipends, conference registration, publicity, and supplies and materials.

With respect to legislative advocacy efforts that are implemented by Western's Associated Student Association or the statewide or national student organizations of which Western is a paid member, such as WSA and USSA, such advocacy activities are not paid for by the direct recipient of the federal financial aid (i.e., the individual student nor Western, the institution) but are instead funded by the Associated Students of Western and are, thus, permissible if consistent with the limitations imposed under Prohibited Usage (below.).

RCW 28B.15.610 specifically provides that voluntary student fees and service 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."

### **Prohibited Usage**

Federal financial aid monies may not be used by Western Washington University nor its Associated Students organization to directly support lobbying activities. Lobbying activities are defined as actions designed to influence voting for or in opposition to electoral candidates or to influence voting for or in opposition to specific ballot initiatives as well as those activities designed to advocate with federal legislators or federal agency employees and officers for specific Congressional financial allocations or federal "earmarks"