

**Western Washington University Associated Students
Legislative Affairs Council
Thursday, October 29, 2015 VU 567**

Present: Patrick Eckroth (ASVP for Governmental Affairs), Josie Ellison (Legislative Liaison), McKenzie Dent (Local Liaison), Nora Selander (Western Votes), Danny Edgel, Bridget Doyle Williams, Sarah Davies

Absent: Seth Ceely, Luciane De Almeida

Advisor: Lisa Rosenberg

Secretary: Bryce Hammer

MOTIONS

- LAC-15-F-11** Motion passed, approved the minutes from 10-15-2015.
LAC-15-F-12 Motion passed, funding approved.
LAC-15-F-13 Motion passed, meeting adjourned.

Patrick Eckroth, Chair of Legislative Affairs Council, called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. REVISIONS TO THE AGENDA

- A. Vice Chair Nominations added under Other Business by Patrick

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. *MOTION LAC- 15-F-.11 by Ellison*

Approved the minutes from 10-15-2015

Second: Edgel
minutes approved.

Vote: 7-0-0

Action: Motion Passes,

IV. INFORMATION ITEMS

- A. Dedicated Revenue for Higher Education Agenda Proposal

Josie said this is the third or fourth year that this item is on the state legislative agenda because it's an ongoing situation and its format hasn't changed much in the time it's been on the agenda. Most of it has been carried over from last year with updated information about which loopholes in taxes can be closed. Taxing cannabis, taxing lottery winnings, closing the obstructed field exemption, increasing the estate tax, have all previously been on the state agenda. They've added two or three new ones for this year's agenda. Josie explained each of them

in detail. Tax on cannabis hasn't been taxed long enough to have a steady stream of income. A lot of the projection of the income it would create was based on an estimate that was created during the 2012 campaign. That info will be updated when session gets closer. Around 80% of the money that comes out of this tax goes into the State General Fund and the council is looking into directing some of it towards increasing student services on college campuses. The argument for that is increasing student services could mitigate on campus drug use through increasing counseling services and others like that. Taxing lottery winnings, a lot of the revenue created from taxing lottery winnings already goes into higher education. Last year the lottery made about 600 million and about 50% of that revenue went into education. About 50% of what's left goes to the winnings that people receive and the other half goes into the system that generates the lottery. Increasing the amount that goes into the Washington Opportunities Pathway Account, which pays for the State Need Grant and the work study program, would also increase the amount of money that students would benefit from. The council is often looking at potentially taxing the lottery winnings and putting it through to that same account. Closing the obstructed fuel exemption is another tax loophole that the WSA wants to close. It's a tax exemption on the fuel that is used to run refineries, originally created because of old wood burning refineries. Of the refineries that benefit from this exemption only 2% of them are wood burning refineries. Could generate a lot of income. Next is the Business & Occupation Tax for Research/Development firms. What happened with this tax in last year's budget is a little unclear. There was a loophole which might already be closed but if it's not then the council will lobby for it. B&O tax is a tax imposed on people, organizations, and corporations that do business in Washington, it is similar to a corporate income tax except it is imposed on gross proceeds instead of net income. Danny said that basically whenever something is bought or sold the entire value of the thing being bought or sold gets taxed. Josie said there are around 30 classifications under the B&O tax and the Research and Development firms were just one loophole under that. The council is also lobbying for increasing the estate tax, which is basically a tax on money that moves hands when someone dies. Currently it's on a sliding scale between 10-20%. We want to change it from 19-30%. It would affect about 300 people in Washington. McKenzie asked if it would change the amount of money that an estate would have to have before the tax was applied to them. Josie said no, it would only be on estates over two million dollars, which is what it currently is. Josie said Becca Kenna-Schenk, the director of government relations, talked about it as well. First Time Mortgage Tenders Tax loophole also needs to be closed. Currently banks that are lending to first time home buyers don't pay taxes on the profits made from that property. Originally created to benefit Washington Mutual, which no longer exists. Next is the Water Bottle Tax that was repealed by an initiative. It was taxed for six months in 2010 and then it ended. There was a referendum passed that said they wouldn't be taxed anymore, which was run by the American Beverage Association. This tax is more regressive but it aligns well with Western's environmental goals. Danny explained that a regressive tax

is one that falls harder on people that make less. Progressive means it will burden you less if you make less and burden you more if you make more. Limit Real Estate Excise Tax Exemptions is the last one. Currently if you sell a house in Washington you have to pay a tax. However, banks selling a foreclosed home do not have to pay that tax. The council is trying to close that loop hole. Patrick said one other thing that was mentioned by Becca and Joe Timmons, the assistant director of governmental relations, was potentially adding a capital gains tax that would fund higher education. Josie said it would be in next week's proposal. Everything else on the agenda is self-explanatory. This document will also be updated for the next meeting but should be close to what it currently is. Patrick asked if anyone has questions, comments, or concerns. Sarah asked if there will be a different proposal next week. Josie said that one week it will be an information item and the next will be an action item that will be voted on. Lisa asked if this is also being proposed for the WSA Agenda. Josie said this will probably be a secondary item on the WSA agenda because it's not a budget year. Which will change a lot of the language of the proposal. Nora was concerned that the first time mortgage lending tax might make the banks not want to sell homes. Josie said it will probably effect Credit Unions more than Banks but across the board people don't think this will affect the actual people getting loans for houses. Danny said there has been research on mortgage reducing tax, the consensus is it mostly discourages predatory lending practices rather. Josie said it mostly won't affect people getting a loan. Danny said worst case scenario they get a slightly higher interest rate. Patrick said in terms of the exemption for bottle water, it's a more regressive tax, environmentally concerned people are anti-plastic but against it because of the regressive tax. Josie said they were looking at some kind of carbon tax, but it's politically unstable ground in the legislature right now and would be an inflammatory partisan proposal. Danny said even aside from those factors it would only take away from resources that go into lobbying other agenda items.

- B. Legislative and Voter Education Assistant Funding Request—Josie**
Josie asked Lisa a question about minimum wage. Lisa said this position will probably start around minimum wage because most of the hourly employees start at minimum wage, which is \$9.47. Josie said that REP has an internship/work study position that is available to work study students but when one can't be found it is available as an internship. This would just put money where our mouth is, making sure that everybody who wants the position has the opportunity to take it because we'd be paying them for the work that they're doing. Josie asked Patrick about how he feels about it. Patrick said he severed in the internship role 2 years ago and it's a lot of work, especially for the Legislative Agenda process and planning Viking Lobby Day, though there is now a board assistant for that so this position will just focus on the actual assisting part of it (research, communication, etc.). They also works on bills we endorse but aren't on our agenda. Not as much work as it used to be but still a substantial amount. Josie said he's leaning more towards seven hours a week because someone under

the title of intern shouldn't be working more than that, because that might not be feasible. 7 or 10 would also be good. Maybe 5. McKenzie asked if there was a way we could make it a range of hours so the amount of work would depend on the week. Josie said yes, it could be an hourly position. Danny suggested 5 hours and putting a cap around 7 hours per week because it's directly student funded and he doesn't want to create an incentive for this position to not be work study. Josie said this position will always go to work study first. Patrick said work studies tend to not fill because of lack of interest. Lisa said that if LAC does choose to fund it, it might not be called an intern. She also said winter quarter is where most of the work is put. We might put more hours there than fall/spring. Additionally there has only been one year in the past five where the position was filled by a work study student. Josie said that running AS elections would also be something they helped with. The amount of tabling that happens on campus is substantial. Patrick said he can see valuing having a structure in place for spring quarter. Make sure legacies are being maintained. Bridget said she's work study and would apply. Josie moves to table this discussion and put it through personnel. Danny said that if it were a full job that would also be incentive for the person working it. The discussion was tabled by Josie.

V. ACTION ITEMS

A. Losa USSA Board of Directors Funding Request

Losa is a member of the USSA Board of Directors (co-chair for the People of African Descent caucus base) and wants funding to go to their conference. Patrick explained the relationship between USSA and WSA to Sarah. Josie said that this Board meeting is going to be for campaign planning, so it's very important that Losa go. Patrick said this would fund flights and transportation in Wisconsin from airport to office. Josie said that checking the flight cost it's going to be around \$550 so we might want to increase the funding request. Josie suggested \$750. Nora asked if ticket prices would go up by the time the paperwork is done. Patrick said getting all of the paperwork in takes a while before the tickets can be bought. It'll probably take around a week. Moves to approve an amount not exceeding 750 to send Losa to the USSA meeting.

MOTION LAC- 15-F-12 by Ellison

Second: Selander Vote: 7-0-0
approved.

Action: Motion passes, funding approved.

VI. REPORTS

- A. VP for Governmental Affairs: Yesterday Josie and Patrick met with Becca and Joe. Talked about our proposals and their legislative agenda, which has been approved and is in place. The Student Success Package, which is increased support for student services, was on LAC's agenda last year as well as the administrations. It was not approved by the legislature. Of the regional schools

(Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, Evergreen State College, and Western) Western was the only school that didn't get the funding. We're combining lobby work with the admin which will provide a stronger lobbying effort in Olympia. Another agenda item of theirs is to have the state pay for our IT infrastructure and network updates which is currently paid for by the student technology fee. If that is something that's funded we could potentially reduce that student fee. They're also looking into automatic locks on all of the exterior doors on campus, which doesn't affect LAC as much. All of their proposals have fiscal impact and we are going into a policy section instead of budget session so it'll be a lot of hard work. Josie and Patrick visited ESC Presidents council and Steering Council, where they talked about agenda items and got some feedback. Viking Lobby Day planning has started, Patrick reserved hotel rooms. He is meeting soon with Nate Panelo to discuss engagement with ECS agenda and LAC agenda to create a more unified agenda.

- B. Legislative Liaison:** Josie, in reference to the meeting with Becca and Joe, is excited about the prospect of the state funding the IT. Which would mean the student tech fee has a lot of potential. He will be looking into research for different proposals. He'll be getting info up to date before the meetings. He also set up Google folders for general documents that everyone can look at. He reminded everyone to vote and said that there is a drop box in front of the bookstore. Also, there will soon be a bulls eye email sent out to all of campus to get feedback from students.
- C. Local Liaison:** McKenzie finished the voter info card, which looks great. She also got a local issues page on the AS website that tech gave her, where she put the voter info up. She is also handing them out at Print and Plant. It has all the info about all of the different proposition. She is going to the Tenant Waste Task Lorce meeting on Wednesday, which only has one student seat on it, to talk about the furniture on the streets.
- D. Western Votes!:** Western Votes is in the middle of Get Out the Vote efforts. Ballot drop box closes at 8pm. Western Votes phone banked on Monday and will do it again next Monday. There were some complications with Trick or Vote. They are now doing it outside the dining halls and talking to new students. Print and plant is happening starting today.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

- A. Vice Chair Conversation—Patrick**
Vice Chair fills in for Patrick when he can't make it to the meetings. Josie said that in previous experience they have mainly been responsible for supporting

different things going through the council. Patrick said if anyone has objections, it doesn't have to happen now. He then opened the floor for nominations. Lisa asked if self-nominations are okay. The rules of operation do not specify so Patrick says self-nominations are fine. Danny nominated Nora, she accepted. Then the nominations closed. It will be reopened for the period before the election takes place. Discussion will take place after that.

B. Student Delegation to the Oregon's Students of Color Conference—Patrick
Abby is trying to organize a delegation to go to the Oregon Student Association for the Students of Color Conference and is currently in the process of finding funding. They would like to have all the space in the rooms and vehicles that they're taking full. Patrick is proposing it as a potential funding request. Both OSA and Western are members of the USSA so there is a clear connection between us. Danny said the relevance is pretty clear and we're trying to drain the reserves so this would be a good way to do it. Patrick said it would be around \$600. Danny explained lowering the reserve threshold to Sarah. Patrick said it would probably require suspension of the funding guidelines in the rules of operations but it is something worth looking into.

C. Danny's Last Meeting—Danny
Danny said he took on too much this quarter and might reapply in the spring, but for now he is resigning from the council. Patrick said he probably won't have him removed from the membership until all the other spots are filled.

D. Motion to Adjourn the Meeting—Danny

MOTION LAC- 15-F-13 by Edgel

Second: Ellison Vote: 7-0-0

Action: Meeting Adjourned

The Meeting was adjourned at 5:04pm.