



**Western Washington University Associated Students**  
**Legislative Action Council**

Tuesday, January 16th, 2017 5:00 PM VU 567

**Members:** *Present: Ana Ramirez (VP of Governmental Affairs), Rosa Rice-Pelepko (AS Legislative Liaison), Nicholas Horvath (Graduate Student), Victoria Matey (ESC Rep), Casey Hayden (Assistant Director of Student Representation & Governance), Jordan Van Hoozer (ESP Environmental Justice Coordinator), Emma Scalzo (REP Organizing and Outreach Coordinator), Zoe Evans-Agnew (Student at Large), Peter Condyles (Student at Large), Hannah Sear (Student at Large), Greta Merkel (Student at Large), and Natasha Hessami (Student at Large).*

*Absent:*

**Advisor: Casey Hayden**

**Secretary: Chloe Callahan**

**Guest:**

*Ana Ramirez called the meeting to order at 5:07PM.*

**I. Introductions**

Ramirez had the committee go around and share what their Western Lobby Day highlight was.

**I. Information Items**

**A. ESC Lobby Day Funding Request**

Ramirez clarified that this funding also included the Environmental and Sustainability Programs (ESP) and Disability Outreach Center (DOC) Lobby Days. Matey said they would be taking 75 students down to Olympia that year. Including the Ethnic Student Center, DOC and ESP. Each group would all have different agendas, but would be lobbying the same day. ESP was already finalizing their agenda items. Matey was working on finalizing the ESC agenda and was hoping to have the agenda finished within the following two weeks. She explained that the ESC agenda would be brought to Presidents Council for approval instead of the Board of Directors. She asked for \$10,000 for hotel rooms, charter buses, meeting rooms and food. Ramirez said she was sure the Legislative Action Fund budget could afford the \$10,000 in the budget. Natasha asked if there was any other budget requests that the fund needed to cover for the rest of the year. Ramirez said local lobby day during spring quarter would need funding. Matey pointed out that local lobby day would need less funds because it didn't include traveling expenses. Ramirez asked Matey if she wanted to update the funding request to round up to \$10,000. Matey said she would make that change. She also stated the budget was close to what the ESC and ESP had asked for the previous year, but this year they would be accommodating 25 more students.

Hayden asked if Matey could explain the difference between Western Lobby Day and this lobby day with the ESP, ESC and DOC. Matey said she was guiding most of it at the time, but the three offices were all meeting weekly to organize the event together. She said the ESP office would be scheduling the buses and food. She was working with Dee Mooney, DOC Coordinator, to help in agenda formation because it would be their first year participating. She said she was taking care of a lot of the logistical pieces: hotel and travel justification. Hayden asked how they were breaking down the attendance of the 75 students within the three offices. Matey said each group would be taking 25 students, which was similar to how they had done it in the past.

### **B. Legislative Action Fund Funding Request**

Hayden said the proposal was similar to the previous years, but the request was for less money because Anna Kemper had trimmed the budget. He said it was a lot cheaper to put on Local Lobby Day, about \$1,200. He stated the \$200 was a hold for the speaker, but they would figure out who it was when Kemper got back from her study abroad. He stated the Lobby day would be mid-April.

## **II. Discussion Items**

### **A. Western Lobby Day Review**

Ramirez asked for feedback in regards to peoples meetings with legislators and the Lobby Day as a whole. Scalzo said she had really good meetings, but there was a representative that misunderstood the student unionization agenda item and didn't seem to be listening to what they were saying. Matey felt the training was not very effective because the meeting room was too small and people struggled to hear the presenters. She thought there should have been more training to prepare the students. She liked the one pagers on the agenda items and thought they were helpful. Matey said one of the Representatives ended up leaving the room when they brought up undocumented students. Evans-Agnew said she enjoyed the experience and felt her meetings went well. She thought the training was helpful, but knew some students were still unsure about what lobbying actually entailed. Rice-Pelepko said she was unclear on how she could have been most helpful. She thought in the future it would be better to have clear roles on what the Legislative Liaison should be doing. She had talked to Joe Timmons and had heard good things. Matey enjoyed how she could see the other, non-Western groups, lobbying and would like to see Western organizing with them in future year. She noticed that other groups had shirts printed to show what group they were lobbying with and thought that could be something Western did in the future. Hayden said he had talked with Nora about the same idea and thought the Western Votes shirts could work. Hayden asked if they should actually practice a mock lobby meeting during the training session. Matey said they had done a mock lobby meeting for ESC and ESP lobby day in the past. She said the groups had a training meeting before they went down to Olympia so students had time to do research on their own. Horvath wondered if the students had time to assess who the legislator was before they attended the meeting to know what approach to take in the meeting. Ramirez said there was time in training to research the legislators. Scalzo

thought the organizers of Western Lobby Day did a great job of thanking students for attending. Hayden wanted to thank Nora Harren, Chloe Callahan, Sabrina Houck, and Ana Ramirez for working together to make Lobby Day happen in a shorter time period than in previous years. Jordan Van Hoozer asked how lobby day worked. Scalzo explained that the group of students went down to Olympia and spent a day training and learning about the agenda. The next day they spent all day having 15 min meetings with legislators to talk about the agenda. Hayden asked what would be happening with the notes taken during the legislative meetings. Ramirez said she was working with Rice-Pelepko on that issue.

## **B. Legislative Session Update**

Rice-Pelepko gave a general update on her training with the WSA Liaisons. She explained the liaisons split into groups and she was on the Vote, Support for Undocumented Students, State Need Grant & Tuition Team. She was also on the Support for Survivors and Unionization teams, but they were not very active because they did not have bills and would become active later in the session. She personally testified on the Washington Voting Rights Act HB1800, HB1488, expanding need eligibility for undocumented students for the college bound scholarship and HB 2595, Automatic Voter Registration which they have been working on for a while. The previous week she testified on SB 6101 which would help provide free education to families that make less than 70% of the median income. This would be implemented over five or six years. She wanted to hear what everyone thought about SB 6101 and SB 5821, which was a series of tax exemption repeals that would fund the State Need Grant. She also asked for feedback on SB 6131, tuition waivers for Native American Students. The Evergreen State College Liaison was working on this and wanted support. Rice-Pelepko thought it was relevant to the Western tuition agenda item to support decreased tuition and support funding specific communities. Another bill she had heard Western students talk about in the past was HB 1265, providing tax relief to females by exempting feminine hygiene products from retail sales and use tax. Hessami asked what the tax exemptions were and what groups they would be effecting. Rice-Pelepko said one was a tax deduction for Professional Employer Organizations (PEO), firms who are contracted by businesses to outsource employee management tasks, such as employee benefits, payroll and workers' compensation, recruiting, risk/safety management, and training and development. This contract is defined as a "coemployment relationship", specifying that it is an "ongoing relationship rather than a temporary or project-specific one." She summarized the organizations were similar to temp agencies that would lease employees to other companies. She said a lot of this had increased because of the logistics and implementation of the Affordable Care Act and using it to get around paying for employee benefits. B&O tax exemption for financial institution investment conduits or securitization entity income. She said the primary beneficiaries of these exemptions are real estate lenders and their customers, who utilize these investment conduits and securitization entities to pool mortgage loans and mortgage-backed securities. She explained the last tax

exemption was for international banking facilities, at the time freeing banks received a tax deduction in Washington. Hessami asked if there was a clause regarding the type of tribal affiliation or percentage of blood Native American an individual had to be to qualify for the tuition waiver, SB 6131. Rice-Pelepko said it would be federally recognized tribes but did not know anything else. Hayden asked what they could do to support her in her job as the Legislative Liaison and how she wanted to receive support for bills and input from students. Rice-Pelepko said she would be open to written feedback or thoughts. In the future it would be helpful for people to review the bills and information before the meeting so they could provide feedback. Hessami and Evans Agnew liked the idea of getting the information before with clear action items for the Legislative Affairs Council members to be prepared to talk about. Rice-Pelepko said she had supported SB 6101 and asked the committee to review it in more detail for the following meeting. Matey said, in regards to the carbon tax, a representative mentioned how Washington produced a small amount of carbon, .003% carbon emission, and didn't feel like there would be a lot of money coming from that tax. Rice-Pelepko asked if anyone would be interested in researching the carbon tax. Hayden noted it would be important to look at the Carbon tax before Environmental Lobby Day. Evans-Agnew said Representative Jake Fay was apprehensive about the bill because the tying of education and carbon pollution seemed to be inversely related, since the group wanted to see an increase in tuition and the carbon tax encouraged a decrease in carbon emissions. Rice-Pelepko mention the State Need Grant (SNG) advocacy day would be February 4-5<sup>th</sup> and people could register and attend for free. Hayden asked how many students would be ideal for Western representation. Rice-Pelepko said they wanted students that received the SNG and would be willing to provide testimony for committees. She said to aim for 5-6 students, enough to fill an AS van. Hayden asked if it was a day trip. Rice-Pelepko said there was one day of training and then one day of lobbying, similar to Western Lobby Day. Hessami explained the SNG was for the states lowest income undergraduate students, depending on school size dictated how much need your received. Rice-Pelepko said the SNG was drastically underfunded. Out of all the Western students eligible for the grant only 30-35% of students didn't receive it. The students that didn't receive the grant were not notified and most were unaware they qualified. Horvath asked if this advocacy day applied to graduate students. Hessami said the SNG only applied to undergraduates. Rice-Pelepko asked if someone would organize the advocacy day or find someone to plan it. Ramirez committed to finding someone to plan the trip. Rice-Pelepko said HB 1488 and 5074 regarded increased aid for undocumented students, she was hoping it would be passed through the Higher Education committee the following day. She asked if someone would be willing to reach out to the undocumented community to provide testimony if they felt comfortable. Matey said she would bring it up in the first Blue Group meeting. Scalzo would be hosting an event that week around affordability issues to collect student testimony. Scalzo stated their main problem was they needed more people to volunteer to sit at the table between 9 am to 4 pm during the

event. Rice-Pelepko said she wanted the members of the committee to email their legislators about the Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) bill, HB 2595. The WA Voting Justice Coalition was asking people to hold phone banks in support of AVR. She suggested the LAC bring one or two friends to an event to plan a phone bank on the issue.

### **III. Reports**

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

Ramirez said she had mostly been working on Lobby Day since the start of the quarter. She also said that Becca Kenna- Schenck shared Ramirez' personal testimony for HB 1488 and SB 5074

#### **B. AS REP Organizing and Outreach Coordinator**

Scalzo encouraged members to come to the Cookies, Coffee and College Affordability event to participate and provide testimony.

#### **C. AS Ethnic Student Center Internal Coordinator**

Matey said she had been working on the ESC agenda and was excited because there were a few bills that directly impacted students of color. She especially like SB 6131 and planned to present it to Presidents Council. She said during the Persons of Color Caucus at Western Lobby Day, students had mentioned they wanted to lobby on the marijuana industry and how it disproportionately affected people of color.

*Ana Ramirez adjourned the meeting at 6:17PM.*