

# ASWWU Legislative Agenda - DRAFT

## (1) State Need Grant Expansion

Western supports increasing the number of students who qualify for the state need grant by increasing the qualifications to include students below the 125% Median Family Income level and increasing the awards to cover fees that are not included in the current calculations. This would increase the access to higher education for people who are currently struggling to afford the staggering cost of higher education and would also reduce the number of students who would be forced to rely on student loans. Ranker introduced a similar bill in the last session that would increase the level of qualification to 100% MFI and awards for all qualified students to 100% so there is some legislative interest in this area.

## (2) State Need Grant Funding

Western supports fully funding the State Need Grant and forecasting this in future budgets per Washington Student Achievements Council recommendations. Students who qualify for the State Need grant deserve to be able know that they will receive the funds that Washington State has promised them and should not have their ability to attend higher education at risk at the whim of the legislature. In the 2016-2017 academic year more than 20,000 students did not receive the awards that they were qualified for due to lack of funds. The Washington Student Association supports the immediate full funding of the State Need Grant.

## (3) Housing

As many students across Washington State face housing insecurity we support measures that increase support for people experiencing this as well as rights for renters. Western supports repealing the state ban on rent control, allowing student to accurately budget for future leases without their landlords increasing rents at extreme rates. We support a fist in line law that protects students and other groups that have historically faced discrimination in housing. We also support requiring termination to be only for legitimate, documentable, reasons to protect the rights of tenants.

## (4) Support for Survivors

Western is concerned about the frequency of sexual violence on college campuses and how often these instances go unreported. While 1 in 5 womxn are sexually assaulted while they are in college, only 10% of students report assaults due to personal or institutional barriers. We believe that more students will be able to access support with increased funding at the state level, which will promote a safer campus and community

environment. Increased funding at the state level will permit universities to implement stronger and more effective support programs for survivors, creating campuses where survivors can complete their education with fewer roadblocks.

- Specialized personnel, resources, and trained staff members to improve the universities' ability to respond to sexual violence and involved parties.
- The development and implementation of a mandatory training program for all university faculty, staff, and administration.
- Clarification 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 community.
- Legislative interest toward the Washington Student Achievement Council in regards to assessing the effectiveness of current codes of conduct at
- Washington State universities that deal with sexual harassment and sexual assault in accordance with RCW 28B.110.030.

## (5) Prepaid postage

All counties in the state of Washington conduct elections by mail. In order for the ballot to be counted, voters must return the ballot to the auditor no later than 8:00pm on the last day of voting or they must mail the ballot to the county auditor with a postage stamp no later than election day (this election cycle exempt). Requiring voters to use their own postage reduces voter turnout in elections and creates a barrier to necessary civic involvement. Additionally, requiring voters to pay their own postage creates a poll tax creating a barrier to Washington residents' right to vote. Therefore, we are asking for the Washington State legislature to fund prepaid postage on all return envelopes for ballots. There is a bill in the legislature (HB 2378) that aligns with this ask.

## (6) Civilian Oversight Boards

Excess force by law enforcement affects all communities by fostering distrust and resentment. Not only are citizens deprived of their constitutional and human rights when subjected to excessive and often deadly force, their communities are likewise negatively impacted, resulting in decreased public safety and a virulent relationships between communities and law enforcement. Often times, abuses of power are not isolated incidents, but rather a symptom of systemic and institutional shortcomings.

Communities of color, disabled individuals, and LGBTQIA+ individuals, in particular are more likely to be abused by law enforcement officers. According to a 2015 DOJ report, "blacks (14%) were more likely than Hispanics (5.9%), and slightly more than whites (6.9%) to experience nonfatal force during street stops." (DOJ). Certainly, students who themselves are part of these communities are also subject to disproportionate rates of use of force by police, which will negatively impacts their academic, social, and mental wellness. Even those who have not directly experienced abuses of power may still be deleteriously affected, as they continue to witness members of their communities and loved ones suffer.

With this, we recommend:

- Adopt recommendations put forth by the Joint Legislative Task Force's requiring:
  - o the establishment of meaningful police accountability structures that, among other things, ensures that there is a safe mechanism to submit formal complaints about officers
    - o An objective investigation of those complaints is completed in a timely manner; makes findings; where there is a finding of misconduct, recommends appropriate discipline and/or training; and ensures that discipline is appropriately completed.
    - o Requiring that all instances of deadly force be investigated by external bodies (outside the department employing the officer(s) involved) with investigative competency and sufficient resources; and providing oversight and funding through the Attorney General's Office.
    - o Requiring law enforcement agencies to report the use of deadly force to the Attorney General's Office, and requiring the Attorney General's Office to collect data, on a standardized statewide basis, regarding the use of deadly force by law enforcement officers.

## (7) Sex Ed in K-12

Washington state sex education is currently not required for K-12 schools, and the curriculum used in schools that do choose to provide sex education does not teach about the importance of consent. Washington law on sexual health education states that "the decision as to whether or not a program about sexual health education is to be introduced into the common schools is a matter for determination at the district level by the local school board." (WAC 392-410-140). We believe this does not prepare students for healthy sexual relationships both in high school and in their adult life. Improving sex education in high school will result in a more informed college population.

- Improve and expand the Healthy Youth Act (RCW 28A.300.475) by including education on necessity of affirmative consent.
- Requiring comprehensive HIV and healthy sex education for all K-12 public schools in Washington State.
- Include mandatory discussion about LGBTQA+ identities and sexualities
- Expand the Healthy Youth Act to expand more on the idea of consent and why affirmative consent is necessary for any sexual encounter to take place. Simply requiring medically accurate information does not do enough to teach about the importance of consent for healthy relationships. The purpose of sex education is to teach about sex in a healthy, age-appropriate way that encourages students to be safe about their sexual health. By not including consent in curriculum, sex education is not meeting its intended goal.

## (8) Pre-Healthcare decision package

***Natasha will fill in this language. Contingent on faculty/administration response***

## (9) Support for Undocumented Students

The ASWWU recognizes 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 of Washington. Along with supporting undocumented students, we see it important to encompass and support the entire undocumented community.

We advocate to:

- Create a self-sustaining, state sponsored loan program for undocumented students similar to California's DREAMer Loan Program, partially funded by the state legislature and the universities
- Lowering the residency requirement for in state financial aid from three years to one year to ensure as many undocumented students as possible have access to higher education
- Support undocumented students' rights to work on campus regardless of DACA status
- Close the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma by revoking its business license due to the severe health and safety violations that have occurred there, under the ownership of the GEO Group. Poor conditions and profit motivation at GEO Group facilities have led to hunger strikes and deaths.

## (10) Environmental Protections

The ASWWU recognizes that the state of Washington ought to provide environmental protections that encompass all pillars of social and environmental sustainability to ensure the healthy and safe future of the residents of Washington State. While the state of Washington goes beyond national standards of sustainability, more environmental protections are necessary in order to mitigate the effects of climate change and set a standard in the United States.

We stand in firm affirmation:

- Of supporting carbon free utility legislation for utility providers to be 100% renewable by 2045, ensuring that LNG plants will be phased out in order to greater reduce the risk of toxic chemical spills in vulnerable communities, protect natural resources, and reduce carbon emissions
- Of funding requests put forward by the department of ecology to conduct pre-adjudication work regarding tribal water rights in Washington State
- Of a statewide plastic bag ban, banning plastic bags in the entire state of Washington
- Of protecting funding for the Model Toxics Control Act and passing the tax through another fiscal year to ensure that vulnerable communities are protected in the event of toxic spills and natural disaster.

\*\*\*super rough asks, and also I did not include much from the orca task force because they have a lot of backing and strategically we could support a lot of their asks but they seem pretty powerful on their own

## (11) Expanded Mental Health Funding