

Western Intersectional Lobby Day: Ethnic Student Center

Legislative Priority: **Police Accountability**

The Associated Students of Western Washington University recognizes that excessive force wielded by law enforcement affects all communities by fostering distrust and resentment. Not only are individuals 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, are particularly likely to be targeted by law enforcement officers. A 2015 DOJ report found that, “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 are still deleteriously affected, as they continue to witness members of their communities and loved ones suffer.

Therefore, we recommend:

- Adoption of the recommendations put forth by the Joint Legislative Task Force’s requiring:
 - The establishment of meaningful police accountability structures that, among other things, ensures that there is **a safe mechanism to submit formal complaints about officers**
 - **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.**
 - 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.
 - 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.

Legislative Priority: **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.

Therefore, we recommend:

- Public support of 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 blatant profiteering of GEO Group has led to poor conditions, human rights violations, and numerous incidences of hunger strikes, suicides, and deaths.
- Amend HB 1079 and RCW 28B.15.012 to lower the residency requirement for instate financial aid and tuition from three year to one year, thereby ensuring as many undocumented students have access to higher education and opportunity as possible.

Legislative Priority: **Support for Survivors of Sexual Assault**

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. While 1 in 5 womxn and 1 in 16 men are sexually assaulted while they are in college, only 10% of 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. 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. We also believe that, as a whole, we have a responsibility to alleviate the burden faced by survivors of sexual assault as much as possible. 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.

Therefore, we recommend:

- Support 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.
- Allocate resources so that specialized personnel, resources, and training for staff members can be implemented at universities leading to an improved ability to respond to sexual violence and involved parties.
- The development and implementation of a mandatory, state-wide training program for all university faculty, staff, and administration.
- Clarification and transparency surrounding 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.

Legislative Priority: **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 that the State of Washington adheres to the strictest standard of human and worker dignity and secures the future prosperity of our state.

With this, we recommend:

- Closing the overtime loophole for farm and dairy workers, making them eligible for overtime pay and a fair compensation for time worked.
- 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 spray application
- Pass the Keep Washington Working Act, as endorsed by the Washington State Labor Council
- Institute a state-level ban, such as those passed in Hawaii and California, of chlorpyrifos to protect local communities and habitats

Legislative Priority: **K-12 Ethnic Studies**

The students of Western Washington University recognizes and strongly believes that Washington State public school system and its curriculum must represent the historically marginalized communities of the state. 45% of students in k-12 are students of color while 89% of K-12 teachers are white. Historically, curricula have contained persistent gaps in perspective from populations that have dealt with discrimination and bias, particularly communities of color. Many underrepresented students do not see their histories and experiences reflected in the school system nor do they have role models who share similar backgrounds and experiences. Students, regardless of their background, should have a firm educational understanding of the experiences of different ethnic groups in the U.S., including the historical injustices they have endured. Ethnic studies is not divisive. It allows for students to develop a critical understanding of the problems in their world, including finding ways to pursue decolonization, freedom, and liberation. It is meant to help students bridge gaps between groups, which leads to stronger academic outcomes and healthier communities. Furthermore, research has indicated that students benefit from well-taught and well-designed ethnic studies curriculum. According to a Stanford study, ethnic studies implemented in a high school improved student grade point average by 1.4 points and attendance by 21% for at-risk youth. These curricula work and a failure to implement such a curriculum is a disservice to communities across Washington state.

Ethnic studies curricula have already been implemented in numerous school districts within and outside of Washington. HB 2845 directed the Oregon Department of Education to convene advisory groups to develop ethnic-studies standards into existing statewide social-studies standards. The bill required the department to select 14 individuals, each from a diverse background, who will advise the state on where it fails to recognize the histories, contributions, and perspectives of ethnic minorities and social minorities. Ethnic studies standards will be adopted by 2020, with implementation in schools set for 2021. In 2016, California passed Bill AB-2016, which created opportunities for all high school students to have ethnic studies curriculum by 2019. In 2017, Seattle Public Schools began work to expand its ethnic studies curriculum, including a combined citizen and staff task force. The Seattle School Board unanimously passed a resolution in support of ethnic studies on June 28, 2017. This progress should not be limited.

Therefore, we recommend:

- The implementation of an Ethnic Studies curriculum within K-12 schooling.
- Support and pass SB 5023 to develop a model ethnic studies curriculum for grade K-12.
- Create an ethnic studies advisory committee comprised of educators of color who specialize in teaching and implementing ethnic studies curriculum, students, and appropriate community stakeholders to advise, assist, and make recommendations to the Superintendent of Public Instruction regarding the development of the model ethnic studies curriculum.
- Support school districts in successfully implementing ethnic studies standards.
- Support school districts in the hiring and retention of a diverse and representative staff, particularly those of color and those who themselves are a part of marginalized communities.