

Western Washington University

Legislative Affairs Council

Wednesday, November 28th

VU 462A

Present: Natasha Hessami (ASVP for Governmental Affairs), Henry Pollet (Legislative Liaison), James Pai (ESC Advocacy Director), Katie Winkelman (ESP Director), Kayl Gillihan (SAIRC Coordinator), Brandon Lane, Bennett Massey, Maddie Rackers

Absent: Patrick Kissinger (Local Issues Coordinator), Colton Redtfeldt, Gabbi Nazari

Advisor: Leti Romo

Secretary: Grace Drechsel

Guests: Astrid Duenas (Board Assistant for Lobby Days)

MOTIONS

LAC-18-F-23 Approve minutes from the last meeting.

LAC-18-F-24 Reimburse Pollet for his travel costs.

Natasha Hessami called the meeting to order at 4:31pm.

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ADDITIONS AND CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

Pollet asked Hessami to remove the report from the REP Director from the agenda, since Harren could not make it today.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION LAC-18-F-23 by *Winkelman*

Approve minutes from the last meeting, 11/14.

Second: Rackers

Vote: 9-0-0

Action: *Passed*

IV. INFO ITEMS

a. WSA Dues

Hessami explained that a big reason why we charge a Legislative Action Fee is to pay our Washington Student Association dues. Schools are charged based on the number of full time students enrolled, so UW Tacoma is obviously going to pay less than UW Seattle. The dues max out at \$15,000. Our dues are around \$13,000, which we pay into installments. This is by far the biggest thing that we spend our money on. The operational costs of WSA consist primarily of executive director salary, office and maintenance fees, travel and supplies. All participating schools pay dues, so we have to pay them. The money is due by December 12th. We will pay \$6,570.90, and we will have another installment of the same amount during spring quarter. Hessami said that if anyone has any questions or grievances about this, to bring it to her attention before it is an action item next week.

b. ASWWU Legislative Agenda

Hessami said that she got a few responses back from the Google Doc that she sent out. Winkelman did some good work for environmental asks, and we added language concerning support for undocumented students (which is copy/paste from last year). We will work to figure out what legislation is looking like over December so we can be prepared. Massey made some changes to prepaid postage.

Also, the timeline that had been established a few weeks ago is not going to happen. We need to spend December (we being Pollet and Hessami) getting the information that's coming out of Olympia so that we can make sure the language and specific asks are reflective of what is actually going to happen. Hessami is thinking that the board meeting that is held after the break, something like January 12th, will be when the agenda is finalized by the board. This revised timeline gives us a lot more time.

Winkelman said that also, in terms of environmental asks, she went off of what people have been talking about on campus. By no means do we have to go with all of the asks presented, and we can just flesh out one. However, she decided to present all of them today.

Hessami said that we will also run the agenda by Joe and Becca, (the adult Henry's of the world). They have a much better gauge of what is happening in Olympia. Pollet said that after December 3rd and 4th when he is down there, he will have a better understanding of what, if anything, is going to need to be taken off the agenda.

Hessami said that she will send out the Google Form link again.

Massey had a question pertaining paid postage. He said it seems like we could probably just endorse the current house bill that is in for prepaid postage, because it is pretty much exactly what we are asking for. It seems like a solid bill, and exactly what we have talked about. Hessami clarified – so endorse the preexisting bill, but not put it on our final agenda? Massey said that we could lobby for endorsing the bill. Hessami said that she agrees with Massey, but to keep in mind that it is unlikely that prepaid postage will be a top priority, because support for undocumented students is sort of edging out prepaid postage. There are other issues that students are finding more pertinent, based on the results of the Google Form. Pollet said also – if we endorse a specific bill, then if there is a change in the bill, Pollet cannot lobby for something else without specific approval. For that reason, it may be better to just say that we support prepaid postage. It benefits us in some situation to not be tied to a specific bill. Pollet said that there will be a fight concerning prepaid postage and whether or not we should pay King County back.

About 100 people have responded to the Google Form, which served the purpose of finding out what students' top legislative priorities are. The clear tops were undocumented support, financial aid, and support for survivors, environmental protections, mental health funding, K-12 education,

and STEM expansion. This survey will be sent out to all students on Thursday. We will keep moving forward and editing all of them, but it looks like these items are going to be what's in the pamphlet. Keep in mind that if something isn't in the pamphlet, that doesn't mean we can't lobby on it. We also talked about having an insert for the WWU STEM Expansion, so that way we aren't taking away from issues like support for survivors or undocumented students, we are simply added on. Since all of the issues are pretty general college issues, except WWU STEM expansion, it makes sense to have that distinguishing factor.

Pollet said that if we decide to have an insert, we need to have a conversation about if we want to create our own language or just use the one-pager that Becca and Joe already have made.

Pai brought up that at last meeting, we floated the idea of combining all of the K-12 asks into one K-12 package. Are we still planning on doing that? Pollet answered that it looks like sex ed has some pretty strong backers, and from what he heard when he was last down in Olympia, the OSPI (Office for the Superintendent of Public Instruction) opposed this kind of action. There was a bill a little while ago that had some civic education in it, but that was enough for the office to say that they don't want to mandate beyond that state-wide. He isn't sure whether or not it would be beneficial, just because if we put sex ed with the other asks, we are more likely to get pushback from OSPI on Sex ed. If Sex ed is on its own, OSPI will be more in support of that. They will be less likely to support the other K-12 asks. Hessami pointed out that at the same time, we can pick and choose what we talk to legislators about in their offices. Pai said that his idea was about flexibility, and that when our respective lobby days roll around (ESP, ESC) at least we have established that these issues are important.

Lane said that what he is hearing is that it would be advantageous to have a k-12 package in the sense that lobbying would be easier for students, because they would be able to cover more of the pamphlet in the short meetings with legislators. It might be more difficult on the legislative end, but we could add some language in that we don't see these as being one major K-12 reform, but rather separate ones. Hessami agreed. Pai said in general, legislators know that our asks aren't all or nothing. Pollet said that also, most of the time it feels like the legislator latches on to one bullet point in those documents. Hessami said that Sex ed just has a lot more legislative backing and has been a bigger issue, so it is the one to talk about the most. Ethnic studies and civic education just don't have as much backing yet. This is why we pushed the agenda back to January – this is one of the things that we will need to parse out over winter break. Hessami told Pai to write a couple paragraphs and bullet points about Ethnic studies, because if it makes it onto the pamphlet, it would be in the K-12 package. Pai said that he has already started on the K-12 package, making 3 different paragraphs. He said that he could work with Brandon and Gabriella to parse out the language.

V. DISCUSSION ITEM

a. Environmental Legislative Priorities

Winkelman said that she wanted to run some of the Environmental priorities by LAC, since she comes from a more limited standpoint. She wanted to pick and choose a few of the priorities and get some input. She said that the legislature is full of people who want to get involved with environmental stuff and are in support of sustainability. At this moment in time, we can push a little bit harder for things (this was Resources and CTC's assessment of the current climate).

As we all know, 1631 did not pass. Senator Ranker is thinking of making a new bill that looks similar to carbon pricing. That could be cool, since it just failed, so people are, at the very least, talking about it. The other side of that – it has been branded as a not-so-good thing, and so people might have negative associations with it and just vote it down again. An alternative that Winkelman

has been following is carbon-free utilities. From Winkelman's perspective, it's not super awesome to lobby on something that just got shut down, but if this committee really wants to lobby for it, she is trusting of LAC. However, an alternative would be lobbying for carbon-free utilities, which would be forcing utility companies to take steps to be completely renewable by 2045. This has been backed by Environment Washington, etc. The goal would be to phase out natural gas and phase out of using L&G plants. Supporting this would be similar to supporting 1631, it just has a different outcome. It is a little less threatening to set a deadline for carbon-free utilities than to say that companies will be taxed as soon as the bill goes into effect, as 1631 did. Winkelman said that she hasn't fully investigated the social impact that carbon-free utilities would have, because obviously, from an ecological perspective, we want renewables, but socially, we don't know what that looks like yet due to the lack of data available.

The next piece is the Governor's Orca Task Force. The baby orca died, but even before that, this task force was put together to help protect orcas. There's a lot to unpack, and Winkelman and Resources are still sifting through all of the information, but a lot of it is budgetary asks, asking for money to be shifted and allocated to funding requests for dam removal and things like that. Also – dam removal is very much on the table, but not for the Snake River Dam. That is the one catch. They are working with tribal groups to talk about tribal fisheries. Conservation fisheries are a lot different than corporate ones, and they are economically and socially pretty good. Even further, the group is looking at vessel impacts and toxin usages, so things like banning/limiting farm pesticides, etc. There are a couple advantages to supporting this – the governor has already created this tax force, and a lot of people are very emotionally invested in the lives of baby orcas. The con is that it is difficult to sift through all of the asks, but we could pick and choose what we want to support. Using the branding of the Governor's Orca Task Force would be advantageous.

The fourth is tribal water rights. In order for tribes to get rights to the water in Washington, they have to go through the adjudication process and the federal government has to go in and find a reason to be divvying up the rights. Under this administration, chances are that we would not be able to pass a federal bill to get adjudication done. What we can do, and what the state of Oregon has done, is get the Department of Ecology to put together a funding request for pre-adjudication work to be done. This is a 1-2 year process where people do research, and then they put together a report that recommends that the federal government goes through with the adjudication process. Pollet clarified, the Washington State Department of Ecology or the National Department of Ecology? Winkelman said it's the State one.

Also, oil spill legislation. It is one of the recommendations of the Orca task force, and it has been adopted by a lot of other interest groups who are lobbying on this specific asks. It seems like there is a lot of push behind this. Right now, the loophole that exists is that oil tankers can be classified as a barge rather than a tanker, (they are basically the same thing but a barge is slightly smaller). This results in barges not requiring a tug escort, which can result in the ocean being polluted at higher rates. This legislation would require that either every boat carrying oil has a tug escort, or that tug escorts are at pinch points (where they make contact with the ground or islands). Again, the other side of the coin is that then we would essentially be saying, yes, please use these tug boats to burn more fossil fuels to prevent an oil spill from happening. It's a matter of weighing environmental impacts... that is one reason why Winkelman wants to bring these sorts of issues to the committee, so we can have some discussion.

The last two items are a little bit smaller, and there hasn't been legislation written about them yet, although there have been rumors that it's in the works. One is a plastic bag ban, and at this point in time with the momentum going from the straw ban, it is very likely that a plastic bag ban could pass. Pollet interjected that plastic bag ban legislation was actually announced today. Winkelman said that a ban is definitely something that we could lobby for.

Farm worker protection is similar to what Winkelman talked about in the Orca Task Force – basically, reducing the use of pesticides in order to increase worker’s health conditions. This is pretty much a health measure, basically all it is is asking corporations to stop using pesticides that kill or harm farm workers. There is also some discourse going around with blueberry farms right now, but Winkelman has yet to figure out what happening with that.

Pollet found some information on the plastic bag ban. The legislation calls to ban all plastic bag use in the state, and charge a 10 cent fee on paper bags.

Winkelman said that her goal with bringing these issues to the committee was first, to get some feedback on the ideas, and second, to see what people are feeling passionate about to figure out what the ESP can do to serve WWU. The ESP wants to go beyond its limited standpoint and figure out what students really want.

Lane said that one thing worth mentioning with the plastic bag ban is that, after the straw ban went into effect, there was discourse in the disability community that even though there was a provision in the straw ban that required restaurants to keep straws on hand, not all restaurants follow that provision, so that has been controversial. Lane said it wouldn’t surprise him if the same issues arose out of the plastic bag ban. Just something that we need to be thoughtful of.

Pai said that he thinks we should do the plastic bag ban. It seems easy and attainable. Rackers agreed and said it could be an easy ask that is heavily supported, and would balance out our harder asks.

Pollet said another part of the Governor’s Task Force is banning whale watching, and he was wondering what people thought about supporting that ask. Hessami said that that would absolutely not get support in the 40th and 42nd since that is a huge industry there. Winkelman said that whale watching is messed up, and a ban makes sense, but it’s a big part of the industry and economically, it’s not viable, and that piece would have a rough time passing. Pollet suggested more of a moratorium than a ban, but it’s something to think about when we are talking about the topics that are coming out of the Governor’s Task Force.

Hessami said that it’s difficult to parse out the asks of the Task Force, but maybe we could get a list of the asks and then pick a couple that we support. She could see that being reasonable, and piggy-backing off of the preexisting Task Force would be a good strategic move. She doesn’t think 1631 is a good move, because the voters just voted it down, but she sees how carbon-free utilities is a good first step. She said that we should think about reaching out to more Huxley students and professors to find out their take on this.

Lane asks if Winkelman knows if there is any provisions in carbon-free utilities that would prevent an increase on the cost of utilities. Winkelman responded that she isn’t sure, but that was something that Resources mentioned. She said that that’s an area where she’s a little hesitant to support carbon-free utilities. She said that the Orca Task force could also incorporate the farm worker protections ask, and people would be more likely to support that branding.

Hessami said that we can run all of this by Becca and Joe and get advice.

Pollet said that he will get more information on the plastic bag ban.

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

Duenas suggested maybe changing the language of “Civilian Oversight” on the Google Form that gauges student interest in different potential areas of focus for lobbying, because people may not make the connection to police accountability.

VII. ACTION ITEMS

a. Reimbursement for Travel to Seattle

Pollet reported that the event that he traveled down to Seattle for was cancelled, but he didn't know that until he arrived. They didn't include him on the cancellation email. The event got pushed to December 7th, which he will not be able to attend. He would still like to be paid, obviously, because he still traveled. This was for him to go down to Seattle, which would have been a really important meeting. He is also going down to Olympia all day on the 3rd and 4th. He will be going to a lot of committee meetings, talking with legislators, and trying to meet with other groups. Last time, he met with faculty union reps, WSA faculty, and other student pro-lobbyists.

MOTION LAC-18-F-24 by *Winkelman*

Reimbursement Pollet for his travel costs.

Second: Rackers

Vote: 8-0-1

Action: *Passed*

VIII. REPORTS

a. VP for Governmental Affairs

Hessami met with Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Committee for CSE. She is on this committee permanently as a student. The committee is working to keep CSE accountable for some of the bigger asks that are contingent upon us lobbying. The student leaders in CSE are still not feeling completely comfortable that CSE will follow through, so they are still kind of waiting.

b. Legislative Liaison

Pollet said he reached out to Disability Rights Washington to help get some ideas for DOC's Lobby Day Agenda. He also finished filing as a lobbyist today in order to prepare for winter quarter.

IX. ADJOURN

Hessami adjourned the meeting at 5:20pm.