

AS Constitution Amendment: Spring Elections for the Student Senate

The referendum, “Do you believe that Student Senate elections should be in Spring Quarter?” received 88% Yes and 12% No votes in Fall 2020 ASWWU Elections.

A “Referendum” is a proposal/question to change something in the ASWWU. They have different authority levels, with Level 1 meaning that the general student body is directing the ASWWU to make that change. Because this referendum received at least 51% of Yes votes, it is a direction/mandate by students to edit our AS Constitution to change Student Senate elections from Spring to Fall. However, any AS Constitution edits must be approved by the general student body. Therefore, we are revisiting this issue for approval as an “Amendment,” (an edit to the AS Constitution). The proposed amendment is simply copied and pasted from the Executive Board elections section for transparency reasons (so they have the same language). Please see below for the proposal and reasoning. In summary, 1) Students have no representation for five months and WWU administration has been making decisions without student input in the Summers 2) There is a power imbalance between the Spring-elected Executive Board and Fall-Elected Student Senate although they are equal student government branches meant to serve as checks and balances. 3) One person, the Chair of the Student Senate, unfairly overworks for 21 people, substituting all yet-to-be-elected Senators for five months. 4) The current timeline actually wastes student dollars. However, we can set the Student Senate up for success by investing in representation all year long.

Original language:

ARTICLE V: ELECTIONS

A. General Elections:

2. Student Senate elections shall be held during fall quarter. Terms begin immediately following certification of the election and end the Friday of spring finals week of the same academic year. Election results shall be acknowledged by the Executive Board.

Proposed language:

ARTICLE V: ELECTIONS

A. General Elections:

2. Student Senate elections shall be held during spring quarter. Terms begin on the Saturday of spring commencement and end the Friday of spring finals week after one academic year. Election results shall be acknowledged by the Executive Board.

The Referendum and Amendment reasoning:

“Imagine not having state or federal senators for five months. No way, right?”

With the current ASWWU Student Senate elections, this is the reality. This Summer, WWU administration made decisions from classes being online/in-person to adding more credits for GUR's, lacking student representation. In a task force to fulfil BSO demands, all members were white faculty without BIPOC faculty or student input. Our AS President Malik Ford once told me, “Nothing for us without us.” Your voices aren't being heard and decisions about your future are being made without you.

My case: 1) You have no representation for five months during the pandemic and anti-racism movement. 2) There is a power imbalance between the Spring-elected Executive Board and Senate even though they are equal student government branches meant to be checks and balances. 3) The Chair of the Student Senate has to (over) work for 21 people, substituting all Senators for five months, which is unfair and inequitable, especially for future Chairs of marginalized backgrounds. 4) The current timeline wastes student dollars; currently, Senators train until January, leaving only five months of real change.

However, we as students could invest in better representation rather than the current inadequate timeline. It may cost more, but the Fall elections design wastes student dollars. Even WWU's deans have agreed to financially support the Senate to alleviate the cost, investing in student representation. If we move elections to Spring, Student Senators can create effective change year-round. You can be heard all year long!”

Constitutional Amendment:

Do you approve the proposed language, “Student Senate elections shall be held during spring quarter. Terms begin on the Saturday of spring commencement and end the Friday of spring finals week after one academic year. Election results shall be acknowledged by the Executive Board,” in the AS Constitution?