

SOP Report 2/28/17

Thank you, Chairperson. This is going to be the most serious and lengthy report this committee has given and prepared this year. First, I jokingly apologize to everyone's attention spans in advance, but please bear with me as closely as you can during the next five minutes because we all hopefully find this important, and, if SOP's actions year-round haven't already served as a learning experience, we do hope our current endeavors resonate strongly in you all as they do for us, regardless of your personal culture, opinions, or uncertainties. By the end of the report we hope you all understand more about the process surrounding SR#2539 and what is being done. I will also provide this report upon request following the meeting. You may email me at pdrake2@uwyo.edu.

Before getting into the topics everyone who has gathered tonight is expectedly concerned with, there are a few brief house-keeping items to address coming from SOP.

Elections Outreach

Secondly, soon there will be a few topics we will place before the Senate to be considered as initiatives for the elections ballot. Past questions have included gaining student input on transportation and parking at UW, and we hope to give the next student senate and our administration some significant data showing if students are interested in certain issues and how they are willing to take action. At this time, while a few topics have been discussed, they will remain fairly broad until more research and deliberation is completed. In a similar fashion to this report, expect to hear more about these in detail next week before the break.

Facilities Luncheon Planning

The final logistic task to currently report is one of the largest endeavors SOP hopes to complete by the end of the year, which is providing recommendations for the future of certain demanding student concerns, those including the future of the Union through its visioning process, transportation and parking, snow and ice removal, and also understanding the infrastructural logistics of the bill presented before us last week. A portion of tomorrow's SOP meeting will be dedicated to planning a luncheon meeting with Facilities staff and University administration recommended to the senate by the Vice President of Administration, Mai. Given the current work underway at UW, our primary focus during this meeting is to understand and prepare legislation in making strides for guiding the future of the Union visioning process and making sure the vested students are getting what they want and need in coming years. Please send Senators Wetzell, Defebaugh, and myself any info you think will help guide us. This will help prepare a summary package going forward and can ensure working with UW administration, staff, developers, and students in the best manner possible.

SR#2539

Concerning Resolution #2539, I'll begin by saying our entire goal is wanting to start the dialogue before pursuing any specific legislation, which as I will discuss, includes even the piece of legislation we have been presented with currently. Much of this commentary that follows has been adapted from the multitude of conversations of the committee and our current research, but by no means encompasses everything.

First and foremost, our hearts go out to anyone that is ever victimized in the pursuit of equal rights or cultural support on any basis. Fighting for yourselves and being yourself is clearly harder than anyone could imagine, yet from the countless examples of people who have found weighty and impactful words, I hope you all know individual strength and community support are real. I don't typically quote anything, but on principle of all UW students we ought to reflect upon the UniReg (8-1) which states: "Admission and programs of the University of Wyoming are offered to all eligible people without regard to race, gender, religion, color, national origin, disability, age, protected veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, creed, ancestry, political belief, or any other applicable protected category." Keeping this in mind, in no way do those of us in SOP hope or tolerate for discrimination becoming a result or perception of the actions we would like to pursue.

Concerning the feedback we have received so far, SOP hears your impacts and takes responsibility for how tabling the #2539 resolution logically appears as a loss to this LGBTQIAA+ community. Since Wednesday we have received a variety of feedback from the whole community about tabling the bill, and are excited how passionate the campus has become. From this feedback, two of these main concerns are that ASUW has not solicited adequate feedback from specific groups about the resolution, and additionally confusion about the action of tabling itself, which for clarity is in part due to the former reason.

For anyone who wants to know the parliamentary procedure, the motion of “tabling indefinitely in committee”, will remove a bill from the current agenda of the full senate, and does not lead to discussion or vote unless the committee forms a new recommendation. Therefore, the bill remains on the committee agenda until either the committee moves for a recommendation or until our administration ends. To restate this, simply the motion pauses the legislative process without providing opportunity for untimely motions to be considered on the bill such as passing or failing without having checked facts or opinions. Once a new recommendation on the bill is formed, the process would resume as normal, giving the opportunity for debate on the floor and a 2/3 vote for ratification, including the consideration of the amended language that has been submitted by the author. The nature of recommending to table this action is until we have accessed far more of our resources.

As needed as support is for the community, we want to make sure this resolution is specifically what the LGTBQIAA+ community wants. Simply speaking, it's very difficult to know how to do the best for everyone, if action is guided by only a few community members. SOP therefore is pursuing community support by discussing appropriate methods, options, and perspectives. At this time, without involving more members of campus, SOP has acknowledged a few reasons that the proposed bill may not currently be the approach to be taken from a policy perspective. However, be aware we recognize the intent of the bill is that the Pride flag will in fact be flown in support of the LGTBQIAA+ community during the month of June, particularly on June 12th, and we do hope to show that support within our community, specifically on the core campus of UW, in the most appropriate manner. To be very clear about the strength of our stance, while some students have indicated wishing to fight against flying the Pride flag on campus at all, as the student senate, perhaps that is the line we will be drawing, as we also recognize the strength of the community in support of the action and hope they continue to join us in the conversations.

We encourage you to attend our committee meetings at 1:00 pm in Union room 202 on Wednesdays. We would love to have your voice. For anyone unable, but wished to make the meeting, you are always welcome to reach out to us through means including email, WyoVocal, surveys to provide opinion and feedback through our phone app Uwyo Guide, with links found on WyoWeb and free on the app stores, or find representatives in the ASUW office. You can also ask senators to attend your meetings as well. As long as we keep talking, it helps ensure for everyone that UW never becomes a place for fear and instead harbors growth, discussion, and action.

After one of the most intense meetings the committee has had this semester, there's no contention that this is a big deal for the community and it is completely natural to be both angry and lost for words given the wake of feedback suddenly coming our way. To every one of us gathered here tonight, invite the feedback as there are plenty of people who are afraid of taking a stand and offering their voice in the first place. As a piece of advice, those people must be sought and warmly welcomed; try to thank them as well for talking with you even if you don't agree. Moving forward, SOP agreed that the best course of action was that we should not be too quick to put any band-aids by immediately attempting to apply new solutions after turning down the resolution despite its good intention, and furthermore that we work to reach out to impacted parties that are comfortable working with us to address current concerns. Know that we openly, without promising any specific recommendation, are committed to discussing and understanding the perspectives and options we have found, and acting far before the term ends.

SOP encourages senators to reach out to find meeting times and talk with student groups, but also professors in the LGTBQIAA+ academic community, and coordinators for programs including SAFEZONE and Veteran's Affairs. We hope to share this information with the other senators so that you can join us in those conversations later this week. If you can find at least one meeting over the next week at your choice, email someone in SOP to help organize the input. One upcoming meeting that we would like to announce is the UMC Roundtable on Thursday evening at 6pm in the Business Building room 08. While some people have declared our first steps are not enough, we assure everyone we agree on that point and there are members of the senate that have gone sleepless in enacting those steps.

As a reminder to senators, I will reiterate a very important point that was discussed last week; that when we have students contact their senators, as many of us as possible should contact them back. Don't assume once is good enough. Outreach, listen, observe, and collect. In fact now is the time, not just for SOP, but everyone, to do the one thing all representatives, and people, should do. Communicate.

For the sake of time, I have included more clarification concerning the coming recommendation of "tabling indefinitely in committee" in the written report. They include a few things developing the scope and current progress of the committee with this issue.

- An important note leading to table the resolution at this time is that once the title of any bill has been submitted the title of the bill may not be modified in any manner and therefore the language within the bill cannot be changed conceptually. Therefore, considering the title of SB #2539 was "ASUW Support for LGTBQIAA+ Pride Flag Flown in Prexy's Pasture for the Month of June", we were in no way able to suggest pursuing any other recommendations.
 - This is true even considering that the new language would have made the bill more open in terms of desired location, but then is going against the intent presented within the title of the bill.
 - Hence SOP did not support the specific language of the title considering suggestions of alternate locations, options, and needs without significant consult of the LGTBQIAA+ community.
- Another note of importance is the flag code at UW. Wyoming Stat 8-3-110 (1997) indicates that Federal Flag Code, P.L. 94-344 is the Wyoming state flag code.
 - Section 7, (f) pertinently states: When flags of States, cities, or localities, or pennants of societies are flown on the same halyard with the flag of the United States, the latter should always be at the peak.
 - Based on the Wyoming statute alone, would allow posting the flag on the same halyard as the American flag, which leaves the committee with the option of moving to untable the resolution and act on if considered appropriate otherwise.
- While much more outreach is still needed, since tabling the bill in committee, there has been a variety of opinions and recommendations sought from our constituents, UW administration, and others in the community. During these there have been a variety of comments made forming, including:
 - That the Pride flag should not be flown for the entire month of June.
 - We still need an operations quote for raising and lowering the flag.
 - Poles often have ratings that either need to be reviewed or would need to be structurally analyzed to determine if four flags can be flown.
 - Fighting to change policy for one instance invites changing policy for consecutive instances, as we noted during the past week, this includes actions that offend.
 - Many groups indicated they felt not consulted concerning the bill, and this was a primary reason for tabling the original bill, so that we may ask them what support looks like in their eyes, whether that is in fact satisfied in this manner or not.
 - We have received consult that some people do or do not feel represented by certain pennants, including the American Flag itself.

- Other appropriate locations and multi-sided recognition measures have been recommended by various members of both the LGTBQIAA+ and general community that we would like to consider before providing a recommendation of any.
- The bottom line is that SOP sincerely hopes legislation and action is pursued showing support of the LGTBQIAA+ community including suggestions by directly involving that community in question.

This goes back to the only thing I feel truly confident in saying on behalf of the senate, is that in no way should we ever intend to shut our doors to our peers, or anyone else. We encourage that you speak out, contact your senators, and tell us exactly how you feel. I would like to briefly and sincerely thank all people that have taken time to reach out specifically to the committee and senate, or to intelligently voice their opinions publicly regardless of their interpretation or support of the resolution. Again, this has included a variety of students, media authors, and administration, and they haven't gone unnoticed or unaddressed. Their work is forming the framework of our goals and the options available to us.

Thank you, Chairperson.

Regards,
ASUW SOP

