



73rd Student Senate
Student Life and Academic Affairs Committee
July 19th, 2021 at 6:00pm | Zoom Meeting ID: 999 774 3849

Call to Order: 6:00

Members Present: Chair Murray, Vice Chair Nemeth, Senators Garcia, Remler, Botel, Moore, Branch, Barrett, Knyazeva

Members Tardy:

Members Absent: Senator Rodriguez

Guests: Brandon Gabay, Brooke Cohen, John Dion

Announcements:

- Chair Murray: None.
- Vice Chair Nemeth: I apologize for having my camera off, I got my wisdom teeth out this morning.
- Guests:
 - Brandon Gabay: Resolution 18 is very harmful to the Jewish community, my mental health, and the mental health of Jewish students on campus. It hasn't just impacted the Jewish community, but Senators in this committee since February as well. Please vote no on Resolution 18. There's no reason for it to be here anymore. SLAA has already voted no on it once. Thank you.

Committee Business:

- Resolution 18 sponsored by Senator Gonzalez - Calling on the FSU Administration and Board of Trustees to review and withdraw investments from corporations deemed unethical by the FSU student community.
- Resolution 43 sponsored by Senator Roy (P), Marcus (Co) - Condemning Florida House Bill 233, which bars conversation of critical race theory in Florida's public schools.

Old Business:

- Resolution 18 sponsored by Senator Gonzalez
 - **RESOLUTION 18 IS TABLED**

New Business:

- Resolution 43 sponsored by Senator Roy (P), Marcus (Co)
 - Opening Statement:
 - I'm proposing this as my first resolution, so I'm looking forward to any feedback on it. I wanted to propose it because there's been decisions and bills signed by the Florida legislature and the governor that directly pertain to public universities and FSU. The first is HB233 which deals with requiring that whenever we go through the application process for money through the state legislature, our professors and students are expected to submit their political affiliations. This is concerning. University professors don't know if it's better to identify with a certain party to expect more funding, and I consider it a breach of oversight. It's allegedly for ensuring diversity of thought, but they passed another thing through the Board of Education that Governor Desantis pushed to ban critical race theory in schools. I'm sure many of you have heard of this. Critical race theory has been taught since the 1970s to show how different communities are impacted by laws. It shouldn't be banned. It's like banning intersectionality to show how women are impacted by different policy decisions. It's not used to teach against America, but to teach about America so that we can learn and have a different future. Thank you for your time. I'm looking forward to your comments.
 - Technical Non-Debatable Questions:
 - **Moore moves to enter round-table discussion; Nemeth seconds**
 - Round-Table Discussion:
 - **Moore motions for a non-committee member to speak; Remler seconds**

- Dion: Thank you all for allowing me to speak. First of all, I have great respect for Senator Roy and nothing I say is reflective of his character. I also will only be speaking to denouncing HB233. I won't be speaking on critical race theory. This survey is not only about politics, it's about freedom of expression. It focuses on many identities and viewpoints that students have, and it assesses if they're comfortable in expressing them. This includes gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, veteran/military status, physical/mental impairments, and the part at the end is political beliefs. I'm going to go through the resolution a bit.
 - The resolution says that there are no insurances that the survey will stay anonymous and there's no clarity about who can use the data and for what purpose, but there is precedent for this type of legislation. There were identical bills passed in Colorado and North Carolina. The bill outlines that the FSU Board of Directors, which includes a member of the faculty Senate, controls how the survey is administered. If they follow precedent, as I expect they will, the survey will be anonymous and optional. Once the survey is administered and the FSU Board of Directors receives the results, they will apply a statistical formula to determine whether action is necessary to ensure viewpoint diversity. If so, the course of action is left up to that board.
 - The next part of the resolution says that there are concerns that universities will lose state funding due to political beliefs. State and university funding is left up to the Board of Governors, and that board has the power to increase or decrease funding for any reason they see fit without having to state the reason. If we're concerned that we're going to lose funding, we need to denounce the power the Board of Governors have rather than denouncing this bill. The board can meet at any time to pull our funding, and they don't need a survey to do so. The survey has nothing to do with the power to pull funding.
 - The next part of the resolution deals with concerns about recording lectures and disrupting class time. When this bill was in

committee, no professors spoke up to say that it was disruptive. Senator Rodriguez, the sponsor of the bill, stated that there were no comments about the issue as well. I think the bill does good things because it allows us to record the lectures that we're paying so much for, and it makes sharing these videos on platforms like Youtube illegal without the professors consent. It confines the use of the lectures to personal use only.

- The last point in the resolution is that no definitive evidence was provided to prove the necessity of the survey. The bill analysis clearly states where they got justification for the survey. These include 2017 National Survey of Student Engagement, The First Amendment on Campus 2020 Report by Gallup, The College Free Speech Ranking by College Pulse, and a study conducted by The Foundation of Individual Rights and Education. The summary of the results are in the bill analysis. Some interesting points were that only 3 out of the 11 state universities in Florida that The Foundation of Individual Rights and Education evaluated had policies that did not inhibit free expression. 60% of students could recall at least one time during their college experience when they did not share their beliefs out of fear of how others would respond. Only half of students surveyed felt that their institution was supportive of different political ideas.
- In closing, I think this survey will give valuable insight to our university. It's not confined to political beliefs, it surveys people's comfort of expression. The Student Senate should aim to provide viewpoint diversity. Each of us represent a large group of students with vastly different viewpoints, and as representatives, we should support a survey to make sure they all feel safe expressing themselves. Thank you for your time. I will post links to all of the sources I mentioned tonight. If anyone has questions, I'd be happy to answer.

- Barrett: I have a point of information for Senator Dion. I haven't had the opportunity to read through the bill fully, so I was wondering if the survey is compulsory or if it's mandatory reporting.
- Dion: The bill mandates that all Florida universities conduct a survey, but it doesn't say how. It's left up to individual universities' Board of Directors to decide if they're going to administer the survey through an outside company, administer their own survey, and so on. The only thing the bill does is mandate we hold the survey. It does not mandate how it is conducted, what the questions will be, or what will be done with the results.
- Barrett: I think Senator Dion made some very logical arguments. While the bill may come off as negative or targeted, I have faith in the Board of Directors and our university to conduct a survey that doesn't discriminate, and it might answer a lot of questions that are valued bipartisan. Disclosing political beliefs may be scary, but getting a gauge on how people feel about expressing themselves could be valuable information.
- Nemeth: I had a question for the sponsor. When I was reading through the resolution, I was a little confused on the organization. The first part deals with HB233 and critical race theory was added at the end. Why did you decide to put both of those issues in one resolution rather than splitting them up into two?
- Roy: I worked with a few people while composing this resolution, and both issues came up hand in hand because they're both contradictory to each other. The things I've been working off of have been comments by Ron DeSantis and comments by a few of the Florida House and Florida Senate Republicans who said that it would be used to determine funding. I can send some articles that reference that. However, I would be open to any amendments. My concern is that there is no detailing on how they're going to conduct the survey. For the university professors, that was something that I had seen some comments on, but I haven't seen any actual professors speak against it. Basically they're combined because of the critical race theory issue not being included in any other legislation, but I'd be open to an amendment and reconsidering based on how the

Florida Board of Governors defines the tests and what they consider mandatory. I apologize for the confusion. I will entertain any motions regarding the removal of anything about HB233. My concerns were about the Board of Governors decisions. It's been hinted that the survey will be strict and the results will be used to determine how much funding we'll receive based on "diverse thought," a phrase that's been very concerning. However, critical race theory is the biggest thing I want to address with this resolution.

- **Moore calls to question**
- Nemeth: I want to read through the resolution one more time before we make any decisions.
- Nemeth: My thing is that if a big portion of this resolution is supposed to be about critical race theory, I would want to see more discussion in the resolution about critical race theory. I feel like it's just thrown in at the end, but I agree with the foundation of the resolution if that makes sense.
- Roy: It's my first attempt at this type of legislation because I usually just focus on finance, but I do think these issues are worth addressing. I wanted this to be a way for people to add on in deliberations. I'm open to amendments to change anything about HB233, but I just wanted to see how the Senate would want to address this. It's one of the reasons I wanted to bring this to SLAA, and I'd even table or make changes that this committee thinks best represent the Senate.
- Nemeth: I really appreciate that. I was going to suggest tabling as well. I wish I came more prepared with amendments because I really like the foundation of this resolution, but if I'm correct, our last meeting of the summer session is this Wednesday.
- Roy: My understanding is that it would be tabled until the next Senate session.
- Murray: Yes.
- Barrett: Is there a way to separate this resolution into two distinct parts? I know they can go hand in hand, but I think the merits of each should be debated individually. It's hard to pass a resolution when you agree with

one section and not the other, or vice versa. I think it would be best to debate both of these issues as different resolutions.

- Nemeth: I agree.
- Moore: I was going to say the same thing as Senator Barrett. I want to look into making HB233 and critical race theory two separate resolutions or into tabling this to further explain both of them. They're related, but could be further elaborated on.
- Roy: I know this resolution has already been labeled through the calendar as discussing critical race theory, it doesn't even mention HB233. If this resolution was tabled, I can revise it to be more focused on that and propose a new one about HB233 for more discussion/debate from SLAA and Senate.
- **Barrett moves to table Resolution 43; Nemeth seconds**
- **RESOLUTION 43 IS TABLED**

Unfinished Business:

- Resolution 18 sponsored by Senator Gonzalez - Calling on the FSU Administration and Board of Trustees to review and withdraw investments from corporations deemed unethical by the FSU student community.
- Resolution 43 sponsored by Senator Roy (P), Marcus (Co) - Condemning Florida House Bill 233, which bars conversation of critical race theory in Florida's public schools.

Closing Announcements:

- Chair Murray: This is our last meeting of the summer, so I just wanted to say that I loved being your Chair and getting to know you guys.
- Vice Chair Nemeth: I just wanted to say that I'm so proud of us for getting some good conversation and debate going for our last meeting. I'm happy I got to spend the summer with you all, and I'm happy you got to experience SLAA.

Next Meeting: N/A

Adjourned: 6:25

Chair Murray

Signature of Chair Murray