

Report of the Faculty Senate Government Relations Committee (former Legislative Committee)

Academic Year 2002-2003

Members: David Bemis (non-senator), Barbara Dewey, Marianne Custer, Mark Harmon, Ken Kimble, Bill Lyons, Candace White (chair), Elizabeth Clement (student), Ben Sanders (student), Sam Morton (graduate student), Tom Ballard (ex-officio)

At the first meeting of the Legislative Committee, it was decided that our charge was broader than communicating with the State Legislature, as our name implied. The committee voted unanimously to change the name of the committee to the Government Relations Committee. The proposed change was approved by the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate, and the vote in favor of the by-laws change passed in the Faculty Senate on March 3, 2003. The charge of the committee was broadened to “*presenting information and assessment of campus needs from a faculty viewpoint to government entities at the local, state, and national levels....*”

The committee worked very hard before the November 2002 elections. White, Harmon and Lyons worked closely with Elizabeth Clement (SGA president) and Sam Morton (GSA president) to sponsor Voter Awareness Week, Sept. 16-20. Several hundred students registered to vote during the week.

The committee co-sponsored a debate between Tennessee State Senate candidates, Bill Owen, and Tim Birchett on Oct. 8 in the University Center. Mark Harmon moderated the debate. Attempts to schedule debates between Bob Clement and Lamar Alexander and between Bredesen and Hillary were not successful due to the candidates' busy schedules.

White met with David Patterson, chairman of the Faculty Affairs Committee and Misty Anderson, AAUP president, to compose a list of questions for Alice Woody, Associate General Counsel about UT Fiscal Policy 135 (Information Technology Resources) and about the Little Hatch Act. White wrote an article for the Faculty Senate newsletter about the Little Hatch Act and election and campaign concerns. (Patterson wrote a subsequent article from the interview about the IT policy.)

Committee member Bill Lyons chaired the Legislative Intern Committee and White served on the committee. A reception was held in December at the University Club for the Knox County delegation and selected interns.

Finally, members of the committee explored the possibility of the formation of Political Action Committee to collect and distribute money to candidates whose platforms would be helpful to UT. It was decided that there was not widespread support for a PAC after the outcome of the November election, and that such an initiative would be better coming from independent faculty members outside the formal structure of the Faculty Senate. This idea is not dead, but was not pursued by the committee.