

Fall 2015

During the fall 2015 semester, I did not really know what my place/role was in student government. The Missouri legislature meets from January through May, so there was no legislation to monitor. Thus, I spent the semester becoming acclimated to student government, its committees, and the issues that it cares about. The only tangible work I did was with Zach Hollstrom. I researched medical amnesty laws in general and in Missouri specifically and I was in contact with Rep. Steve Lynch to provide Zach and his committee the information they needed to write a resolution in support of House Bill 1569 (2016).

Spring 2016

To start off the spring semester, I created a google sheet where I put all of the bills from both the Missouri House and Senate that I thought could pertain to public higher education or the interests of one of the committees on student government. I then sorted the bills into different tabs for each committee and told members on the body to look through them and if they thought they would like to write resolutions about any of them, I would help research the topic. I updated this google sheet periodically as more legislation was filed and as it moved throughout the process.

As the semester wore on, I eventually stopped updating this google sheet. I did not receive much interest in legislation from other members on the body, plus my attention was elsewhere directed by four (and then five) particular pieces of legislation.

My biggest contribution to student government this year was handling the response to legislation that would remove the ban on concealed firearms at public institutions of higher education. This response included 1.) a public information forum, 2.) a debate, and 3.) a student-wide survey.

1. I organized a public forum for February 9 in MG 1000. Director of DPS Sara Holzmeier came and talked about what the current laws are regarding concealed carry and how the proposed laws would affect campus. The room was filled with an estimated 80 students in attendance. We conducted a straw poll afterwards and recorded 15 students in favor of the proposed bills and 27 against.
2. I organized a debate for February 11 in VH 1000. Jake Buxton and Chester Pelsang argued for the new laws and Parker Conover and Zach Hollstrom argued against them. Truman's debate coach, Prof. Craig Hennigan, moderated the debate. The format was as follows:
 - a. Resolution: The Truman State University student body should support Missouri Senate Bills 589 & 731.
 1. Affirmative argument---4 minutes
 2. Cross examination--1.5 minutes
 3. Negative argument---4 minutes
 4. Cross examination--1.5 minutes
 5. 2nd affirmative argument--4 minutes
 6. Cross examination--1.5 minutes
 7. 2nd negative argument--4 minutes
 8. Cross examination--1.5 minutes

9. Negative rebuttal--2 minutes
10. Affirmative rebuttal--2 minutes
11. 2nd negative rebuttal--2 minutes
12. 2nd affirmative rebuttal--2 minutes
- 13. Audience Q&A--20 minutes**

At the end, both sides got a chance to answer questions from the audience. There were about 139 people in attendance. We took a straw poll afterwards and recorded 53 students in favor of the proposed bills and 48 against.

1. After these two events, I finished the survey that President Molly Turner had been working on. I created it on survey.truman.edu and had it sent out to the entire student body. The survey garnered 1646 responses. I reported the findings to the student government. The most important question was "Do you think people with concealed carry permits should be allowed to carry their concealed firearms on Truman's campus?" The breakdown of responses was as follows:
 - Yes: 406
 - No: 1049
 - Neutral: 131
 - Don't Know: 60

After all of these things, I continued to update the student government about the legislation's progress for the rest of the semester. I co-sponsored a resolution with Matt Cooper voicing the opposition of the Student Association to the proposed legislation.

Reflection

I am satisfied of my contribution to student government this year. I think I could have done more aside from the concealed carry issue if I had not had such a busy semester. For example, I would have liked to try my hand at writing resolutions about other legislation. However, even if my only contribution was my handling of the response to the concealed carry issue, I am still proud of that. It is an important issue which demanded a well thought-out response, so I think I provided a valuable service to Truman's student government and association by handling it. I think it was a case of being the right person at the right time.

For future legislative directors, if planning a debate, I recommend longer response times for debaters to answer questions from the audience. I also recommend more free form questions, even if then the risk is run of an audience member ranting. We had Prof. Hennigan running the question and answer portion of the debate according to a firm structure and it did not really work the best. It wasn't disastrous, but it probably would've been better to just have people stand up and ask their questions and let the debaters have as much time as they needed to respond.