



President's Report to the Senate
January 24, 2018 Regular Business Meeting
Jack Wilson, GSO President

The Tax Bill

Over the month of December, the GSO urged graduate students to continue calling Congress, specifically Rep. John Katko, urging them to remove provisions harmful to graduate students during the joint House-Senate Conference Committee reconciliation process. The strategy implemented by the GSO was part of a larger effort organized by the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students (NAGPS). In addition, we sought out support from the administration and from the Syracuse community in opposing these changes.

The offending changes were:

- Repeal of Section 117(d), which would make tuition remission taxable income
- Repeal of Section 127, which would remove a \$5,250 income exemption for employer-provided educational assistance
- Repeal of the Student Loan Interest Deduction, which allows us to deduct up to \$2,500 from interest payments on student loans
- Repeal of the Hope Scholarship Credit and Lifetime Learning Credit, which allow for \$2,500 and \$2,000, respectively, in deductions for tuition and educational expenses.

These efforts were successful. The final version of the bill that was passed into law included none of the offending provisions. Our efforts in Syracuse helped convince Rep. Katko to co-sign a letter opposing these changes (attached), as requested by this body at the December Special Meeting. Thank you to everyone who contacted John Katko, Chuck Schumer, Kirsten Gillibrand, or your home Representative and Senators.

Off-Campus Transportation

This semester, grads living in Westcott should have access to Price Rite on Erie and grocers nearby through the Euclid Shuttle and East Campus Bus Route. If you use these services, please let us know what is or is not working about them so we can recommend improvements to the administration.

Several students near Nob Hill have lost bus access through CENTRO, necessitating a 15min walk to the Nob Hill stop. The Chancellor has been made aware of these concerns. The Chancellor and I meet between the time of this writing and Jan 24th and I hope to have a status update on this by the meeting, proper.

Ombuds Office

The administration has made public assurances to the University Senate that this will be opened by

the end of the academic year. I have contacted LaVonda Reed asking for a meeting on details of what and when.

Employee Health Insurance

Talks on whether to move graduate employees from the employee to the student health insurance plan are continuing. The Executive Board sits on the working group coming to grips with the issues involved. We expect for the working group to make a recommendation on whether or not to proceed with the transition, and if so in what manner, in the coming weeks.

Issues raised:

- Net impact on coverage for the grad employee population
- Individual differences in coverage
- Issues specific to families, LGBT students
- Mental Health Coverage
- Insurance costs for employees, nonemployees
- Coverage Provider
- Recognition of graduate employees as a true & valued part of the University labor force
- Transition processes to/from the employee and student health plans: when, whether to offer choice, grandfathering, etc.

If there are any other topics or concerns, please let us know. We expect a transition plan to be presented to the Senate for consideration sometime this semester.