

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 108 563

HE 006 802

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TITLE Student Lobbying in the 1970's.
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.76 HC-\$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Educational Finance; Educational Legislation; Federal
Legislation; Financial Needs; *Higher Education;
*Legislation; Staff Utilization; State Legislation;
*Student Government; *Student Leadership; *Student
Organizations

IDENTIFIERS National Student Association (NSA); *National Student
Lobby (NSL)

ABSTRACT

During the late 1960's, many student activists become frustrated with the short-term lobbying efforts in Washington, D.C. Students realized the need for a national student advocacy movement that would work directly on legislative concerns and would truly be a continuing presence in the nation's capital. At the same time, a network of fledgling student organizations was beginning to spring up on state capitals and on campuses around the country. Then in 1971 a group of students from California who felt challenged by the need at the national level formed a coordinating committee for a national student lobbying organization. This document discusses the recent activities of those lobbying groups. Topics covered are: the new tactics of the groups that employ small full-time staffs of professional student representatives instead of the large-scale student demonstrations of the 1960's; the new emphasis on financial issues; the work of the National Student Lobby (NSL), a full-time student lobbying group; the state lobbies in California, Illinois, Colorado, Montana, and New York; and trends for the future.

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STUDENT LOBBYING IN THE 1970's

by Jay Henderson

During the late 1960's, many student activists became frustrated with the short-term lobbying efforts in Washington, D.C. in protest of the Indochina war. The biggest of the short run efforts was called the "Continuing Presence in Washington," which, ironically, folded after one year.

Students were frustrated because they were shut-out of the system and could find no practical way to produce change. Students realized the need for a national student advocacy movement which would work directly on legislative concerns and would truly be a continuing presence in the nation's capital.

At the same time, a network of fledgling student organizations was beginning to spring up in state capitals and on campuses around the country for precisely the same reason: students were tired of speaking but not being heard.

Then in 1971, a group of students from California who felt challenged by the need at the national level formed a coordinating committee for a national student lobbying organization. These students had been encouraged by their successes in obtaining "student power" in voter registration and election drives, such as the effort which put Representative Ron Dellums of Berkeley in office for the first time.

Now, in 1975, the National Student Lobby representing students in over 40 states, spends full time, and the National Student Association spends part time lobbying Congress and administrative agencies in Washington, D.C.. In addition, students are actively lobbying state legislatures in 28 state capitals. The budgets and degrees of professionalism of these student lobbys vary widely but one common thread runs throughout -- a shift from ad hoc to organized student power.

New Tactics

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The student lobbying movement represented an alternative tactic for student voices during the end-the-war days when other students centered their tactics on large scale demonstrations.

But because the Bread-and-Butter issues of today are less controversial than the Indochina war, the mobilization of large groups of students is much more difficult than in the past. In fact, the trend is towards small, full time staffs of professional student representatives, permanently located in offices near the centers of legislative and administrative activity with a clear focus on a specific handful of issues.

These lobbys generally take the same shape and depend on the dynamics of

1. an organized structure which is permanent and registered as a lobby to protect student interests,
2. being student financed and student controlled,
3. having a permanent staff aided by student interns (rather than being run by an overburdened student body president),
4. reflecting a consensus of opinions among students (usually determined by some form of a referendum or poll),
5. being a non-partisan organization that does not endorse political candidates, but rather takes stands on specific issues, and
6. having a well-oiled communications network which keeps information flowing between the individual student, the state organization and the national organization.

Some lobbys also depend upon organizing themselves according to type of student -- public or private schools student, a student from a state multi-campus public college, a 2 year institution student lobby as compared to a 4 year school's organization. In this manner, lobbys can often better represent the specific interests of a particular type or classification of student.

New Emphasis on Issues

Now that the Indochina war has come to a close, more students are concerned with the issue that has faced students for hundreds of years -- how to pay the bills to get through school..

This issue takes on more visibility now because the costs of going to school have risen at twice the rate of overall inflation during the past 10 years. This means that 55% of all freshmen are now forced to apply for financial aid.

It means that the traditional no or low tuition state University -- and also some newer 2 year community colleges -- are under increased pressure to raise tuition.

It also means that the gains of civil rights of the 1960's for increased participation in colleges by low income and minority students are endangered.

A four year public college education today costs \$8,000. By 1980 that figure will reach \$16,000 and by 1990 the total will exceed \$33,000 for an education in a public college and \$56,000 for an education in a private college.

Because of the recently stepped-up importance of how much money a student needs to get an education after high school, the majority of student lobbying organizations concentrate heavily on the subjects of financial aid, tuition increases, University budget costs and other topics which are related to the overall price tag of an education.

But, there is still a strong student lobbying emphasis on "opening up the political system," which is seen in lobbying for the 18 year old vote, 18 year old majority rights and legislation to increase voter participation and registration.

Not all the issues, though, are to be found in the Congress or state legislatures. Many hot items are covered in local and federal administrative agencies. In Washington, when Congress passes a law, the administration working for the President must write the regulations which interpret how the new law is supposed to be applied. Obviously, this is an area where students have to spend much time lobbying.

The recently completed National Task Force on Student Aid Problems is a good example. Each year Congress appropriates money to be doled out to students as financial aid. But times, somewhere along the line, the money fails to reach the student. As many people

involved admit, the aid situation is hopelessly messed up. The purpose of the Task Force on these problems, was to make solid recommendations to the Congress and the Ford Administration as to what could be done to solve these problems. The National Student Lobby had students from several states participating in this Task Force's year-long deliberations.

One big issue involved is the interpretation of the new Privacy Act, which, among other things, says that the government cannot ask for the sex of a student on a form for financial aid -- that would be an invasion of privacy. Unfortunately, another law which is supposed to defend against sex discrimination, requires that the government collect complete information as to how many males get financial aid in comparison to how many females -- this is in order to ensure women get as much aid as men, or at least they are not discriminated against. In this case, the government and the school which wants to give away money are caught between a rock and a hard place.

National Student Organizations

One of the student lobbys which represents students on these and similar issues in Washington D.C. is the National Student Lobby, NSL has a full time staff of five and between four and seven interns. NSL's budget is around \$100,000 a year.

NSL spends most of its time fighting for lower tuition, higher levels of funding by the federal government for student financial aid and other dollars and cents benefits for the eleven million college students in the country.

NSL's goal is that every person has a right to education after high school and that no person shall be denied that right for financial reasons.

Much of NSL's philosophy hinges on students being the ultimate consumers of education -- therefore they should have a role to play in every aspect of the education process that affects them. Students are saying that what is good for students is good for the country.

Students are not alone in this battle. They have some strong defenders in key positions in the Congress. Representative James O'Hara, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education, has repeatedly said in support of students that the goal of Congress is to make available a free postsecondary education for every student who wants one.

During its initial year 1971-72, NSL set out to establish a record of accomplishment. Its top educational priority was Congressional passage of a major new federal student aid program. The Basic Grants program was narrowly adopted in 1972 with strong grass roots support by NSL, even in the face of opposition by most of the colleges, who were opposed to giving student aid directly to the students.

The Basic Grants program in 1975-76 is the key for over one million students to receive \$785 million in addition to previous student aid programs. Basic Grants this year will range from \$200 to \$1400 (average grant \$780), based on the student's or the student's family's "financial need." Student aid is important not only for those students who receive it, but also for all other students because aid helps keep down tuition.

Other NSL accomplishments include passage of Congressional support for students on boards of trustees at colleges, defeat of legislation that would have set an across-the-board minimum wage for all students at 85% of the basic federal minimum, passage of the recent 22% increase in G.I. bill benefits, and initiation and leadership of the fight to establish reduced air fare transportation rates for many types of consumers including those under 22 and over 65.

In the 1975 Congress, NSL won a vote of 259-143 on an amendment to the Appropriations bill which increased Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants by \$110 million, which means 157,000 low income students will not be forced out of school in the 1975-76 school year.

Based on the work NSL has done during the past four years and based on the principle of equal access to the educational and political systems, NSL's legislative priorities for 1975 include

1. increase the Basic Grants program by \$400 million to the full amount intended by Congress in 1972,
2. increase the College Work Study program by \$119 million for an additional 200,000 student jobs with average annual wages of \$500 at a time when unemployment is approaching 9%.
3. enactment of legislation which would authorize voter registration by mail and thereby increase access of student and others to the political system, and

4. student participation in the administration and grievance procedures of student aid programs -- NSL proposes to require establishment of a Student Resources and Information Board on every campus which receives federal aid. The purpose of the Student "RIB" is to furnish students a mechanism to speak for themselves about financial aid and inform all students of their financial aid rights. 1975 is a crucial year for student aid because major revisions in aid administration will not be considered again until 1980.

From time to time, the National Student Association also gets involved in lobbying for students on these issues.

NSA has been especially active in lobbying the Berkeley amendment to the privacy act into law. This amendment protects the right to privacy of students by allowing them access to their own school records.

NSA also lobbys the issue of financial aid to students. The organization testified before recent Congressional hearings on student aid programs from now until 1980; it is a member of the Advisor Council for the National Association of Student Aid Administrators; and NSA's staff has been involved in the introduction of legislation which would allow a student to defer repayment of a Guaranteed Student Loan if that student could prove hardship or unemployment.

In general, issues lobbied by NSL and NSA fall into one of three categories -- issues affecting students as students, students as young people and students as citizens. Using this method of classification a short list of subjects would include 1) as students: collective bargaining and minimum wage on campus, 2) as young persons: gasoline rationing and air fare discounts based on age and 3) voter registration, consumerism and the environment.

State Lobbys

Student lobbys at the state level have grown out of intermittent activities of state-wide student body president councils which have existed for years in almost every state.

Supported mostly from student government funds, the state lobbys act as advocates at the state and institutional level on issues with which students are concerned.

California

The grandfather of all organized student lobbys is the Associated Students of the City of California -- generally considered as among the most effective student

organizations in the country and rated as one of the most influential professional lobbys in the state of California.

The U.S. Student Lobby office, just two blocks from the Capitol in Sacramento, has a staff of three full time lobbyists with an operating budget of \$54,000, over 85% of which comes from student organizations on the nine campuses of the University of California.

Among its many accomplishments are the achievement of student representation on the exclusive Board of Regents of the University of California and the persuasion of the often embattled Governor Ronald Reagan to create a special fund to give priority to teaching rather than to research.

The U.C. Student Lobby is currently active in amending a collective bargaining bill to ensure student participation in college-faculty bargaining. Under such an amendment a student representative would be allowed to attend negotiations, make comments, receive all information and issue an "educational impact statement" to the public before the conclusion of negotiations. The U.C. Lobby staff is also working on student housing, child care on campus and increasing a rather bleak University budget.

The California Student Lobby works with the California State University and Colleges Student Presidents' Association which was active during the 1950's and 1960's coordinating many of the activities of students such as athletic events and folk music concerts. CSUCSPA now addresses itself to the problems of students on boards of trustees and representation within the legislative and executive branches of the state government.

Illinois

In Illinois, the Association of Illinois Student Governments ran a voter registration drive in the 1974 election which registered 22,500 new student voters. The voter drive cost the lobby about \$6,000, including nearly \$1,500 spent for get-out-the-vote buttons distributed statewide a week before the election. "College and University students in Illinois recognized it as in their best interest as students to cast ballots," said drive director Russ Davis. In proclaiming the drive a success, Davis noted that the three month effort had included 22 Illinois campuses.

Davis said the largest mobilization of student voters in Illinois history was accom-

plished through the use of thousands of voter registration data cards, heavy use of campus media outlets, posters and a corps of 300 volunteers on campuses throughout the state.

"This registration effort and the voter turnout provided AISG and the students of Illinois with what is commonly known as political clout," Davis said. "The voter drive proved the willingness of student leaders to accept responsibility and provide true leadership in the face of limited resources."

AISG completed a statewide hearing on administrative problems in financial aid in the spring of 1975. Similar hearings were held in academic year 1974-75 in Wisconsin, Colorado, and California, and hearings will be held this fall in Texas, Georgia and New York. These hearings are held under the sponsorship of the College Scholarship Service Student Committee and the National Student Educational Fund.

In its history, AISG has written several bills. One bill ultimately became law allowing the sale of beer and wine at on-campus locations. Another AISG-drafted bill currently being considered would lower the age required for individuals to run for school boards from 21 to 18 years.

Former AISG director Doug Whitley, now executive director of the National Student Lobby, found himself in the strange situation of having to kill one of his own amendments recently. The way Whitley tells it AISG had found a member of the state legislature sympathetic to the concern of Illinois students on the manner in which a student's independent or "emancipated" status was determined. Under Illinois regulations, an undergraduate has a difficult time gaining independent status and thus becoming eligible for larger amounts of student aid. Whitley's amendment, however, suffered repeated attempts by the sponsor to water down the language to such an extent as to make any substantive change impossible. The sponsor evidently wanted a statement of principle without committing the legislature to and specific resultant increases in financial aid. When push came to shove in the hearing room, Whitley had to recommend that the committee disapprove the amendment. "Second best would not have done the job," Whitley said. "When the sponsor tried to cut a deal with me at the committee table, I had lost faith in him because of

what he had done earlier, so I recommended disapproval. It was hard but we (AISG) gained the respect of the committee. In the long run that will be worth a lot more than that one amendment."

AISG employs three full time staff members and operates on a \$30,000 - \$40,000 budget based on a per-student assessment of thirty cents. AISG represents 240,000 out of the approximately 378,000 college students of Illinois.

Colorado

The Colorado Student Coalition emerged in the past year out of a coming together of the Colorado Student Lobby and the Colorado Student Alliance. The merger of the two groups occurred when their issues began to overlap too much. The resulting organization employs two full time staff persons and operates on a budget of about \$15,000 yearly.

CSC is now working on a Governing bill which would put a voting student on every board of trustees in the state except one. The bill, written by CSC, has passed the House of Representatives and is now pending in the Senate.

CSC is also working this year to gain student control over student fees. (Here is an issue which every state student organization faces in the legislature.) If their negotiations to gain control fail, the CSC is contemplating a boycott of student fees next fall.

Montana

The Montana Student Lobby scored a major victory for students last March by guiding a collective bargaining bill through the Montana state legislature. Montana thus became the first state in the nation to enact a bill giving students the right to play a role in the collective bargaining process between the faculty and administration at public colleges.

Bruce Nelson, a University of Montana graduate student led the fight for the landmark bill. Nelson's three person staff in the state capital sought wide support for the bill and carefully avoided having it branded as an anti-union measure.

At least twenty other state legislatures are currently considering similar collective bargaining bills that would affect higher education students. In as many as seven states bills are given a good chance of passage.

Students have been working in many states to secure legislative recognition in the collective bargaining process similar to the role won by the Montana students.

New York

The Student Association of the State University (SASU) of New York is perhaps the largest of all the student organizations and certainly one of the most organized. SASU's budget is around \$70,000 yearly. SASU has a staff of eight paid employees and an average of seven interns to help out with the work load.

One of SASU's major accomplishments is the successful passage through the state legislature of an amendment to the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) which saved students of the State University of New York approximately \$8 million in increased tuition costs. SASU has also been successful in thwarting SUNY from raising room rents in campus facilities.

During the recent gubernatorial campaign, SASU obtained commitments from Governor Carey to hold the lid on SUNY tuition for another four years, to retain mandatory student activity fees and an agreement that the Governor would sign into law a governance bill which would give New York students representation on boards of trustees and college councils.

SASU is now working on just such a bill to give students a seat on boards and councils. The bill authored by SASU has 40 State Senators as sponsors out of a possible 60. A similar bill passed the State Assembly last year by a large vote -- 133 to 1 and is expected to do the same this year. It appears New York will soon join the ranks with students in other states who speak for themselves on University Boards.

SASU is also working on increasing the SUNY budget above the legislature's recommendation and is working on the administrative implementation of the postcard voter registration law which was enacted last May.

Next year SASU hopes to concentrate on gaining exemption of college textbooks from sales taxes.

According to SASU President Danny Kohane the reason for SASU's existence is simple. Kohane argues that "students have no power other than their numbers. If they wish to bring about real student-oriented change, they must be able to influence decisions. Lobbying is just another way of bringing that about. Lobbying is money and votes."

Trends for the Future

The foundation for active student state and national lobbying organizations can thus be found in many capitals and on many campuses around the country. In addition to those lobbys mentioned above, students are increasingly influential in Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Texas, Tennessee, Iowa, Washington, Minnesota and other states.

If you think about it, students constitute a larger constituency, spread over more states and into more cities than almost any other lobby. For example, the student constituency of eleven million college students is almost as large as the AFL-CIO's constituency of fourteen million. The potential of students, organized eleven million strong behind a nationwide advocacy movement with a unified purpose can be seen emerging from the existing web of student lobbys spread across the United States.

As Professor Samuel Kellams of the University of Virginia recently observed, "the focus of student activism seems to be shifting away from the campuses and towards the state capitals."

"This shift is occurring because of the tremendous rise in the cost of an education over the past few years," believes Peter Coye, coordinator of the College Scholarship Service Student Committee financial aid hearings and one of the founders of the National Student Lobby. "As the cost of college education increases, the roles of the federal and state governments becomes more important. As increasing financial burdens are put on the federal and state governments, student come to realize they have to deal with the state and federal office holders to keep down their own education costs."

This trend will undoubtedly continue and student will find themselves more and more involved in the debates, economic and political, which will occur in the state and national capitals.

Another trend amongst student lobbys for the next several years will be the increased importance attached to the annual money crunch situation which traps students between the forces of increased costs and decreased money available.

The annual spring "double crunch" will bring, as it did this year, student disruptions on campuses. In 1975 the first half of the crunch came in February and March with the

announcements of the largest tuition increases in history, typically \$200-\$500 in tuition alone at many private colleges. The announcements had a sobering, even stunning effect of every student.

The second half of the crunch came in March and April when many student financial aid offices ran out of money and were not able to commit funds for the fall.

The explosion came when many students realized they would not be able to come back to school in the fall. Along with negotiations and demonstrations with College budget officers, the students realized they also had to speak to state and federal legislators to increase financial aid.

This trend, which not only involves student survival but also their access to the political system and their aspirations for a better society, will repeat itself in the spring of 1976 thus focusing more student attention on the need for lobbying.

From now until 1980, students will be accelerating their involvement in lobbying to protect their status as students, as young persons and as citizens.

The demand for this right is fairly new. It can be traced back to the Free Speech Movement of Mario Savio and others in California during the 1960's. Many legislators still assume that students have no long term vision and thus are incapable of responsibly representing other students who may follow in their place the next year.

"You can't put students on boards of trustees; they do important things on those boards and students are not ready," one Colorado legislator intoned during a recent debate.

But the student lobby movement is testimony to the fact that the legislator was wrong. A student lobby can do more than just inform students of the decisions being made that affect them. A lobby can actually bring students a chance to become involved and be heard.

As students come to feel a part of the process that affect them, the student lobby movement will become a self-regenerating thing. As students become a part of the movement, more student power will accrue to the various lobbys and more students will be attracted to participate.

Through the mechanism of student lobbying, the apathy and alienation with which students have been charged in recent years can be transformed into positive force for change.