

The Legislator

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<p><i>What Happened to Debate?</i></p> <p>Natalie Bryner- My mock committee was unproductive, but a select few delegates participated in intense debate. During the first debate only three minutes out of the allotted fifteen minutes of pro/con debate elapsed. At that time Chair Lori Rice and the caring adult role model decided to have a discussion on the "Condemned Get a Choice Act." Overall, the discussion was productive and helpful for the bill sponsor Brel Saiber.</p> <p>Many delegates stated that debate was not fun and that they hope Model is not at all like this year's Mock. Is there a way to keep debate going? Is there a way to keep everyone in the committee involved without having to force them? Hopefully we will find these answers at Harrisburg.</p>	<p><i>Press Program Gets Off to Good Start</i></p> <p>The Eastern reporters began their day in the library discussing ideas for changes to the newspaper. This year's newspaper will be entitled "The Legislator." (This encompasses all aspects of the program since Lawyers interpret the law). More serious journalism was one of the changes suggested. A drop box for Letters to the Editor will be placed in the Rotunda. In accordance with Barry Martin's suggestion, ads will be sold to delegates for one dollar (proceeds to go to the scholarship fund). They will then appear in the newspaper. (Ads include "Good luck on your Bill Johnny" and "You look great today Mary.") Finally, each reporter was given a specific chamber (Blue House, Judicial, Lobbyists) to cover to ensure a more well-rounded newspaper. The seven reporters worked well together and their competency and work ethic ensure the success of this year's Press Program.</p>	<p><i>Gubernatorial Primary Results</i></p> <p>WEST Appleton-1 Cairns- 2 Tonini-3</p> <p>East Quickel-1 Gellatly-2</p>
<p><i>Meet Your Lobbyists</i></p> <p>Natasha Evanko- Today I spoke with Jonathan Buggy and Stephen Sypult, two lobbyists for the School Boards from Homer Center. They described to me the job of a lobbyist. They reported that during Model they will voice their opinions during committee sessions. They do not, however, debate bills in the House or Senate. The boys also research the bills they want passed or failed in order to persuade delegates to vote in accordance with their wishes. Jonathan informed me that lobbyists break into small groups while speaking on bills. I asked the duo if they have already found bills that they feel strongly about. Stephen was quick to tell me that he feels very passionately about the "Anti-Angel of Death Act"; he would like to see it passed. When asked why they wanted to become lobbyists, the boys both agreed that they enjoy voicing their opinions, but they do not like sitting in the House or Senate. Stephen also volunteered that he was "opinionated to the point of being asinine, vocal, boisterous, and passionate about debate."</p> <p>I asked what our two new lobbyists were looking forward to about Harrisburg and they responded by saying that their Harrisburg [experience] is very different from other people's Harrisburg. I'm sure they'll have a great time.</p>		

A Day in the Life of a Youth and Government Reporter

Ben Schwartz-After a brief morning session and workshop with the other reporters, I had the privilege of witnessing Sarah Gellatly’s committee. The session was opened with a ‘lollipop’ game in which delegates were given a lollipop and asked to speak about it. Among the profound comments were ‘it’s green’ and ‘it tastes like root beer’.

The first bill debated was on Judicial Reform. The act was authored by delegate Judith Frank, and while her opening speech slowed the onset of debate to a point of silence, eventually delegate Jazmine Peck called a point of constitutionality on the bill. Her point was accepted by the Chair, but debate continued with the agreement that the sponsor would alter the bill. (The act was amended in the afternoon session.) By the end of the debate the room seemed fairly torn on the legislation.

The second bill was Representative Hatalla’s on lowering the drinking to eighteen, but due the lack of logical debate a large number of delegates wished there were no drinking age at all. The sponsor seemed nervous, but her well-written, logical speech helped persuade delegates to favor her bill. After a period of limited debate, things began to pick up. Unfortunately, Chair Sarah Gellatly continually reminded delegates when a Motion to Move to the Previous Question was in order, as if to persuade them to end debate. Other than this annoyance, her professionalism and knowledge of Parliamentary procedure made her a fine Committee chair.

After this bill, Reporter Kristen Danzi relieved me of that room assignment and I headed back to the library to check on progress so far. At this time I was approached by Governor Judd Kennedy and Chief of Staff Liz Parker with the exchange of information and thoughts. The Governor, in consistence with his performance the rest of the day, was pleasant and well-spoken. After the meeting I headed to Chair Sumeet Khetarpal’s room to observe.

I arrived in time for Conlan Boyer of East Shore YMCA’s bill. The sponsor’s pragmatic opening speech and convincing tone seemed to gain him support. After mediocre debate the chamber seemed divided. Chair Sumeet Khetarpal seemed shaky, and although there were several flaws in his knowledge of parliamentary procedure, his confidence and apparent devotion should make him a fit committee chair for Model.

I then headed to get some coverage on Matt Johnson’s committee. During a debate about tractors on roads, delegate Marlin Foreman offered the day’s first glimpse of genuine humor. Chair Matt Johnson obviously has had some experience with chairing; his authority and thorough competence was channeled through polite reminders to his chamber.

After lunch the join session began. Speaker Lea Cobaugh presided over orderly debates. Lt. Governor John O’Donnell also presided, although the delegates became antsy. (One roamed freely around the chambers carrying crutches and a suit coat, others left and entered at will). Governor Judd Kennedy gave a speech about civic engagement, and Barry Martin announced that Tony Quickel was victorious in the gubernatorial primary. The session was adjourned.

Heiserman Chairs amidst Battle of the Sexes

Kayla Kinslow- The committee session chaired by Andrea Heiserman was “an extremely comfortable environment” reported one delegate. There were laughter and smiles as the icebreaker began. The tension seemed low at the beginning of the session, but as debate began it mounted. All in all, Heiserman and her delegates were very friendly.

An apparent battle of the sexes occurred throughout debate as the “Female Empowerment Athletic Act” came to the floor. This bill states that only female athletes may play female sports. To each person in the committee, it was a hot topic, but amidst high emotions Heiserman kept her chamber in order with friendly congeniality rather than intimidation.

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More on Our Youth Governor Candidates

Laythan Foster Jr.- Each year it is important to acquaint ourselves with the gubernatorial candidates before we decide who will lead our program. I decided to get to know some of the Western candidates today.

Delegate Matthew Appleton says he would “like to bring the Judicial Branch into the program, make it more visible to the other delegates. All the time we find the Legislative Branch being talked about, but people need to be familiar with the Judicial Branch.”

Danielle Cairns announced, “My goals for the Youth and Government Organization are to hope to bring everyone who’s a beginner into the club more, and to have more opportunities, and get them to relax and feel comfortable.”

When asked if she would support allowing freshman to be lawyers she said, “If a freshman wanted to be a lawyer he/she could attend meetings with lawyers, and would have an introduction course into the program along with being in the Commonwealth [House]. Then maybe the freshman could choose the Legislative or Judicial Branch side of YAG for following years”. Notice no mention of the Press Corps.

Andy Tonini said he wants to strengthen drug prevention ideas and that he wanted to do some work on Education and Capital Punishment; he wants to work on hot issues that are interesting.

Anti-Angel of Death Act Enlivens Debate

Sam Roth- Delegate Natasha Evanko’s “Anti-Angel of Death Act” was debated in committee during the Western Mock Convention. This bill, dealing with the elimination of the death penalty, touches upon one of the most controversial issues in Youth and Government. It abolishes the death penalty in any form from our Commonwealth.

The bill proved to be an excellent promotion of involvement in debate, provoking several arguments on both sides. Those in favor of the bill argued that the death sentence (with all the court time that it requires) is actually more expensive than paying for a life-term in prison. The opposition brought up the need for drastic punishment for such drastic crimes as murder.

Though the issue of the death penalty may seem overdone, it sparked truly excellent debate amongst the delegates and encouraged more people to speak because it was something they had thought about. If the model session’s debate is anything Mock’s, the “Anti-Angel of Death Act” will provide much opportunity for debate and even more controversy at model.

Sackman Keeps Things Comfortable

Rachel Caldarella- The committee that congregated in Room 188 was headed by Chairperson Brenna Sackman, who started with an ice breaker and immediately created a comfortable environment. Once everyone was acquainted, things quickly got down to business. The majority of the time was spent debating and discussing bills. The first bill debated was the “Medication in Schools Act”, sponsored by Scott Landis of the Susquehanna Township delegation. In it, he presented the idea that school nurses should be allowed to administer over-the-counter medication to any student with a note signed by a parent or guardian permitting the student to receive it. Although debate began slowly, participation snowballed into passionate debate. Amendments to the bill were offered and due to the sponsor’s professionalism, the majority of delegates favored the bill. Two other bills, Spencer Johnson’s “Land Management Act” and Katie Gorton’s “Fair Prescription Drug Pricing Act”, were discussed.

The committee’s “outstanding personality” was Noel Whelan because of his interest in the debate topics and his frequent participation. He is a junior from the West Shore delegation, and this is his first year participating in the Youth and Government program. When asked his opinion of the program he stated, “I think it’s a great program to get involved in. I would encourage participation at a young age. Youth involved in government is very important.” Good, well-written, debatable bills were presented and debates ran smoothly. Look forward to great bills, and an awesome time at the Model convention.

Candidate has Broken Arm, not Spirit

Katelyn Karasack- Western YAG delegates who convened at Quaken Valley High School on January 24th may have noticed the cast on gubernatorial candidate Danielle Cairns's arm. Explaining that she broke her arm while cheerleading, there are a few other things that Danielle would like delegates to notice about her, including her positions on various issues.

Danielle considers herself to be a moderate leaning slightly to the left. While she supports capital punishment and is pro-life, she is willing to listen to anyone's opinions and consider them.

This consideration of others is displayed in Danielle's plans for the future of Youth and Government. If elected to the position of governor, she would like to implement a program helping freshmen, something "fun to keep them interested." This program could feature a crash course of each branch, detailing the activities of each to aid freshmen in choosing a position they would enjoy.

Danielle would also like to see breaks added to the Model Legislature schedule to give delegates more time to freely communicate. To help delegates get to know one another, Danielle suggests having more social events throughout the year.

As for debate, Danielle hopes that "people will want to talk." She would like to see discussions added to committee sessions and visits by the governor to local YAG clubs to help improve the quality of club debate.

Danielle wants all delegates to know that "everyone must try in order to succeed," and that she is willing to try and succeed as a 2005 gubernatorial candidate.

Running for Challenge

Amanda Balthaser- At the beginning of the Mock Session, Youth and Government members listened attentively as the three gubernatorial candidates delivered speeches. The third and final speech heard was delivered by Matt Appleton of Homer Center West.

He began with a brief history of his YAG experience. From his humble beginnings as a page to his valuable Administration experience, Matt feels that he is qualified to hold the prestigious office of Governor. His platform is one of moderate conservatism at the moment.

Within YAG, Matt would like to integrate the judicial program with the legislative branch. He feels that "no one really sees what's going on" with the lawyers and justices, and he wants to change that.

Another point in Matt's platform is that he wants to legalize gambling in PA in order to relieve property taxes. "Property tax is a hot issue right now," he explained. "Legalizing gambling would relieve some of that strain."

He is also concerned about healthcare. He would like to see Automated External Defibrillators installed in all public places. AEDs are easy-to-operate, life saving devices that can be used by anyone to shock a person's heart.

Matt's viewpoints on a few issues display his conservative beliefs. He is pro-life, against euthanasia, and for capital punishment. "No one should have the right to place a value upon someone else's life," he said.

Matt is actively involved in cross-country, track, varsity club, student council, Honor Society, and FBLA. He coaches elementary basketball and works at the Indiana YMCA as a lifeguard and swimming instructor.

He recalls his favorite memory as going to states for cross-country his sophomore year. He describes himself as fun, dependable, responsible, and says he always has been up for a good challenge.

In fact, his inspiration for running for governor was just that- the challenge. He dreams of having the ability to guide the YAG program where he knows it has the potential to go.

Matt would like to be more involved with Youth and Government. His experiences in the club have been great. During his final year, he wants to see the program really come together, and would love to be involved in making it happen.