

03/23/2021

Executive Committee

For Immediate Release



RECOGNITION OF YOUNG AMERICANS FOR FREEDOM

Dear Valpo Students,

Throughout my term as Student Body President, I have often said that it is my job to uphold the popular will of the Student Body. This duty to represent my constituents comes with the responsibility to ensure that the Student Senate respects the Constitution and Bylaws that have been written and maintained by elected student leaders for decades. Article I, Section A, Clause 2, Subsection d of the Student Senate Constitution states that the Student Body President has veto power over the actions of the Student Senate. With both the popular will of the student body and my oath to uphold the Student Senate governing documents in mind, I have chosen to veto the denial of recognition of the student organization Young Americans for Freedom (YAF).

The Student Senate's vote on 3/22/2021 to deny YAF recognition violates Bylaw XVII, Section A, as YAF meets every requirement to become a recognized student organization listed in this policy. Additionally, the university's General Counsel informed Vice President Foor and I that Valpo's chapter of YAF has not broken the university's non-discrimination policy through their actions as an unrecognized organization.

Denying recognition for YAF would not only disregard the Student Senate's governing documents, but it would negate the Student Senate's ability to hold YAF accountable as well. I am fully aware of the petition signed by over 2,500 people (many of whom are my constituents) asking the Student Senate to deny YAF recognition and "condemn" the organization for their transphobic Instagram content. Without recognizing groups as formal student organizations, there is no way for the Student Senate to truly hold unrecognized organizations accountable for their actions, let alone "condemn" them. Recognizing YAF means that they must now follow the same policies that we use to hold other student organizations accountable on campus.

- This includes Bylaw XVI, Section B, Clause 5: "The Administration Committee shall adjudicate all conflicts between student organizations." If any recognized student organization were to have a conflict with YAF (or any other recognized student

organization) they could bring this conflict to the attention of the Administration Committee for it to be resolved. The Student Senate regulates the funding of all recognized organizations as well. Recognized organizations are not automatically given a budget. It is up to the Senate to decide whether or not an organization is worthy of funding. If Senators wish to implement additional regulations regarding student organizations, it is within their purview to amend the bylaws and do so. In fact, there are several bylaw proposals already being drafted to further regulate the behavior, funding, and membership of recognized student organizations.

Personally, I vehemently disagree with many of the values and actions of YAF's national organization. I am also disappointed that YAF's executive board posted content questioning the existence and rights of the trans and non-binary community on their Instagram page. I can share these views with you all thanks to Valpo's value of freedom of speech for our students. Dialoguing across differences allows us to become the leaders in church and society that Valpo has promised to make us.

As always, I encourage Valpo students to reach out to me at senate.president@valpo.edu with any questions or concerns. It is an honor to serve as your Student Body President.

Sincerely,

Kaitlyn Steinhiser
Student Body President
senate.president@valpo.edu