

GPSA Presidential Statement on AB 22-36

After careful consideration, thoughtful feedback from graduate and professional students, my executive colleagues, and my staff, and intense discussions with myself, I've made the very difficult decision to veto [Assembly Bill 22-36](#).

I recognize the devastating and complex issues facing communities both globally and locally, including the tragedies in Gaza and those affecting Arizona's indigenous communities. As the President of GPSA, I want to reaffirm our collective commitment to speaking out against acts of extreme violence, human atrocities, colonialism, occupation, and genocide at home and abroad. My office and GPSA as a whole call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and Israel, the release of all hostages, and stand behind exploring solutions that first and foremost preserve human life and dignity. I extend this call to our greater Arizona State University administration and partners, and ask for your support in better meeting the needs of our Palestinian students.

I want to make it clear that the decision to veto AB 22-36 did not come lightly nor does it reflect support for anti-Palestinian groups. This action was solely taken with the utmost consideration for the protection and well-being of our entire graduate community. It is crucial to underscore that this veto is in no way an endorsement of parties or ideologies that advocate for genocide, violence, or any form of hate. Rather, it was a difficult but necessary measure to ensure the safety and unity of the community I have been entrusted to serve. Although this decision comes with a heavy heart, I firmly believe it is in the best interest of our community.

At GPSA, we are dedicated to supporting every graduate and professional student at ASU and ensuring *all* voices are heard and respected. Through a lens of impartiality and professionalism, we focus our efforts on addressing the immediate needs of students - from housing concerns to research opportunities.

Despite the noble sentiments of Assembly Bill 22-36, this legislation presents potential challenges. Our dedication is, and always will be, to prioritize the well-being and interests of our students. I believe it's essential to outline concerns regarding AB 22-36 and its potential impact on our ability to serve our student community effectively and in alignment with GPSA's overarching goals and values.

GPSA's most valuable public service asset is its direct distribution of various grants to graduate students for academic and professional enhancement opportunities. Each year, GPSA awards grants to thousands of students for conducting research, attending conferences, interviews, professional development trainings, workshops, and more. The financial regulations proposed in this bill would necessitate significant administrative oversight from an already overburdened grants management team, further complicating the application and distribution process. Having previously served as the Vice President of Internal Affairs, I personally managed the grants team and processes last year and understand its importance to our greater graduate

community. Now, I worry that such drastic changes to our financial requirements could have significant implications for students seeking funding for academic and professional endeavors, thereby dealing a heavy blow to this already overburdened system.

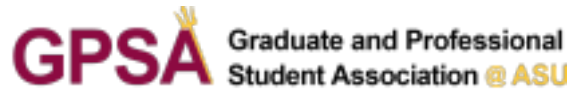
It is also crucial to highlight that approximately 25% of GPSA's budget does not come from the student services fee but through other ASU funding sources. Should this bill pass, it would impact not just our research and travel grants but also up to \$400,000 of other revenues. These funds have supported thousands of students throughout GPSA's history, and I fear that in our efforts to support our students, we might inadvertently harm them.

Furthermore, tens of thousands of students, both graduate and undergraduate, rely on scholarships and employment opportunities each year through [ASU's Starbucks College Achievement Program \(SCAP\)](#) to pursue higher education and, for many, break free from the cycle of poverty. While this legislation may not explicitly restrict these funds, its boycott of Starbucks could have far-reaching consequences that could inadvertently impact these grants and harm the students we all serve. It is our primary responsibility as an organization to ensure that our students are not hindered in their pursuit of experiences to learn, grow, and thrive at ASU and beyond. The mission and values of GPSA, as well as our jurisdictional authority, require us to steadfastly uphold this fundamental principle.

Although the regulatory mechanisms outlined in this bill set a concerning precedent, we must acknowledge the bill's recognition of broader geopolitical and social issues worldwide. While GPSA should remain non-partisan, it must not remain silently complicit. There is an opportunity for GPSA and its officers to play a more active role in educating and engaging the ASU community on these important matters. This could involve promoting individuals and student organizations involved in advocacy work for Palestinian liberation through GPSA's social media channels. GPSA, in collaboration with experts and community partners, can organize educational events and workshops to facilitate discussions on the ongoing conflict, various perspectives, and the BDS movement. Furthermore, GPSA can compile a list of local organizations accepting donations and providing essential supplies directly to Palestinians affected by the conflict. In this same vein, GPSA can curate a list of business vendors, empowering students and officers to make informed choices that support the Palestinian community.

I also call upon GPSA to establish a committee focused on indigenous peoples' education. The aim would be to organize monthly GPSA-sponsored events, featuring speakers and other educational activities all in the vein of ensuring these atrocities are not silenced. The Office of the President is willing to allocate funds from its annual budget to create this committee. Conversely, GPSA may legislate a separate "conflict" fund to support groups from all backgrounds affected by ongoing conflicts globally.

These initiatives are designed with the dual purpose of equipping students with the necessary information to make informed decisions and enhancing their sense of agency, both on an



individual level and within their student organizations. By facilitating access to a diverse array of perspectives and resources, we aim to empower students to navigate complex issues with confidence and autonomy. This approach not only supports their academic and professional development but also fosters a culture of informed engagement and active participation in the broader community.

This veto is not the end of the conversation on this legislation, nor is it meant to be. The GPSA Assembly can override my decision with a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) vote at the March Assembly Meeting on Friday, March 15th. So, I urge the GPSA Assembly to elicit feedback from constituents on their final decision concerning this bill, and I encourage graduate and professional students to contact their [Assembly members](#) to express input. You have a right to be heard!

Sincerely,

Megan McCaughan, GPSA President