

Group of students petitioning to cut GLSO funding

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Saying sexual preference is a personal conviction akin to religious or political affiliation, a group of about 12 Iowa State students are petitioning to deny student funds to the Gay/Lesbian Student Outreach.

But representatives of both GLSO and the Government of the Student Body, which allocates student money to the group, said Tuesday they don't think the petition drive will affect GLSO funding.

One of the students circulating

the petition, Pat Burds, Biol 4, said, "GSB is very careful not to fund groups in the realm of personal conviction, such as religious or political organizations, but GLSO seems to fall into this personal convictions category."

"If members of a group have a specific ideology they are trying to promote, then they should go out and finance it themselves. I don't want to be a proponent of one sort of lifestyle, no matter how small a stipend from my activity fees are going towards that group," Burds said.

GLSO PRESIDENT Laura

Runyan said the group receives GSB funds only to help educate students.

"Any information GLSO provides is supported by the scientific community and Iowa State is, after all, an educational institution," she said.

The GSB Senate, which is responsible for distributing more than \$700,000 in student activity fees, has funded GLSO for the past three years. The group will go before the GSB Finance Committee at 10:30 a.m. Saturday to request almost \$1,000 in funding for next year.

GSB Finance Director James

Gavin said he "seriously doubts" whether the petitions will have any effect on the finance committee's funding recommendations to the senate.

The petition states, "recognizing GLSO advocates a controversial and morally questionable lifestyle, and that we, as students, are against promoting this lifestyle with our student activity fees, we hereby petition the GSB to zero fund GLSO."

Gavin said, "I think it's important to remember that these students also pay activity fees and have a right to the money, too."

Runyan said the petition "serves

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as an eloquent illustration" of the need for GLSO. "Possible religious arguments regarding the morality of our organization aren't pertinent to whether or not we receive student activity funds," she said.

GSB Sen. Jacki Bennett (OCA), a former GLSO president, said the whole matter is ridiculous.

"There are a lot of gays and lesbians at Iowa State who also pay those same fees. GLSO has every right to receive student funding," Bennett said.

"You can't base funding on morals because then you only get

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into differences of opinion. And just because you don't agree with a group isn't justification not to fund them," she added.

BUT BURDS SAID funding GLSO is setting a dangerous precedent "because then any group engaged in various sexual activities and advocated a specific sexual preference could rightfully go to GSB tomorrow and demand funding. And where does GSB draw the line?

"We simply can't fund every individuals' ideology. If that were the case, we could all just keep the money we put into student activity fees and call off GSB," Burds said.

GLSO tries to educate students "to their way of thinking," he said. "What if someone else has a different idea of how sexuality should be expressed. I think it becomes a sort of religion with some of these people," Burds added.

Bennett said she isn't surprised by the push to end GLSO funding. "This same movement also started a few years ago. It seems like as soon as GSB funding time comes around this issue always pops up.

"Every time GLSO goes before the committee for funding, that's when there's the biggest attendance because it seems everyone has an opinion on the matter," Bennett said.

THE MOVEMENT TO stop GLSO funding may just be "backlash" because religious groups don't get GSB funding, Bennett said.

"I like to hear what people have to say, but to squelch a group that is trying to give support to people is wrong, I don't care what the group stands for," she said.

"When they go through the finance process, it comes down to whether the group deserves funding and whether it's a viable group, and if they are then they usually get funding."

Burds said group members plan to take the petitions to Saturday's finance hearings and present them to the committee. "We're going to collect, count and tabulate the results by housing area and college the students are in and present them to the committee," he said.

"By tabulating those results, we'll be able to find if senators, who ultimately approve or deny what the finance committee recommends, are voting for or against their constituents."