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For Immediate Release
February 21, 2024

University teachers and students say,
“Keep government out of our classrooms!”
as Indiana House Education Committee passes SB-202 on party line vote.

Dozens of university teachers and students gathered today at the Indiana Legislature House Education hearing on Senate Bill 202. Their message was clear to committee members: “Keep big government out of university classrooms.”

Advocating for over 150,000 Indiana students and 9000 faculty, faculty senates at Ball State, Indiana State, Indiana University at Bloomington and South Bend, and Purdue University West Lafayette, Fort Wayne, and Northwest have passed statements opposing Senate Bill 202. AAUP chapters at Ball State, Indiana State, Purdue-West Lafayette, Purdue-Fort Wayne, Purdue-Northwest, and Indiana University-Bloomington have all passed statements opposing S.B. 202.

Concerned citizens sent over 7,500 letters opposing the bill to the House Education Committee members in the last week. Faculty, students, and administrators statewide see S.B. 202 as government interference in education, and include concerns regarding legislative appointments to governing boards; politically-motivated penalties in teaching evaluations including for tenured faculty; budget regulations which threaten diversity programs at all state universities; and a provision encouraging student complaints against course material they find “offensive and disagreeable.” Letter-writers expressed concerns for the accreditation of professional programs, for researchers’ abilities to compete for federal grants, and about how the best and brightest faculty will choose to bring their ideas, passion and skill for teaching, and patent and startup ideas to others states than Indiana.

The House Education Committee voted (6 yes, 4 no, 3 excused) to adopt S. B. 202, which will now move to the full House for hearing and then a vote. The committee passed several amendments, making the House version of SB 202 different than the bill the Senate passed; if it passes the House, it will go to conference committee to resolve the differences.
Dr. Moira Marsh, (Indiana University-Bloomington librarian and President of the Indiana AAUP State Conference), added, “S.B. 202 is bad for students, bad for higher education, and bad for Indiana. It will create an atmosphere of suspicion in the classroom and on campus, subject faculty to discipline by inexpert people, and create a brain drain from our state. Indiana’s public universities are world-famous, and the AAUP is determined to keep them that way. We will keep fighting to keep this costly and damaging bill from becoming law.”

Dr. Stephanie Masta (Associate Professor in Purdue University (West Lafayette)’s College of Education, and President of AAUP Purdue) said, “We are very disappointed with the outcome of the House Education Committee vote. S.B. 202 will have long lasting, harmful effects on Indiana’s public colleges and universities and will not accomplish the goals and tasks the author purports it to accomplish. We will continue to work with our business, education, and community allies across the state to defeat S.B. 202.”

Dr. Ben Robinson, (Associate Professor of Germanic studies and immediate past president of AAUP Indiana University-Bloomington), also noted that S. B. 202 “repudiation of academic freedom is a debacle for Indiana.”

The Indiana Conference of the American Association of University Professors (INAAUP) promotes cooperation among AAUP chapters at Indiana institutions of higher education. It works for the betterment of higher education in the state through promoting academic freedom, shared governance, and the rights of faculty.

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP), with over 50,000 members and 500 local chapters, champions academic freedom; advances shared governance; and organizes to promote economic security for all academic professionals. Since 1915, the AAUP has shaped American higher education by developing standards and procedures that uphold quality education.

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