

To: Indiana University Student Government Congress

From: O'Neill SPEA Representative Louis Gallegos

Subject: Three Years of Service in Review

Honorable Members of Congress,

As I get ready for my last meeting, I've been reflecting on what these three years have meant to me. I've seen our campus at its best; students coming together, supporting each other, and refusing to let indifference shape our community. I've also seen tough times, when students felt ignored, when things moved too slowly, and when the gap between what students needed and what the university could offer felt too big. Still, I leave this Congress feeling proud.

In these three years, I've learned that your service here isn't just about what gets passed. It's about whether you're willing to stand up, speak honestly, do the work, and keep going even when you hear no. Some of my bills didn't pass. Some ideas stalled. Some things took much longer than I hoped. That's part of the job. If your bill fails, don't think your work didn't matter. It did. Failure here often just means you tried to make a real change.

I've also learned that Congress should always remember its purpose. We are here to represent students. We cannot let ourselves be subdued by what is easiest for IU administration, by bureaucracy, or by the quiet expectation that students should settle for less. Working together is important, but student government loses its meaning if we're afraid to speak up clearly and strongly. In hard times, we have to keep going; not because it's easy, but because students deserve strong representatives. For those who will serve after me, here's my advice.

First, remember that every student at IU Bloomington is your constituent, even if they don't know who you are. Take that responsibility seriously. Don't wait for the perfect issue to come to you. Go out, find a problem, learn about it, and bring back a real solution.

Second, talk to people outside this room. The best ideas don't come from guessing; they come from listening. Listen to students, staff, survivors, cultural groups, advocates, and anyone directly affected by inaction. Congress works best when it's informed, not cut off from others.

Third, don't mix up being polite with being effective. You can be respectful and still stand your ground. You can work with others and still make sure your voice is heard. You can follow the process without using it as an excuse.

Fourth, keep your records, notes, and history organized. Too much good work is lost when people leave without sharing what they've done. If you create something valuable, make sure the next person can keep it going.

Fifth, don't let Congress become less than it should be. Congress has real power—use it. Ask questions, demand updates, write meaningful legislation, and stand firm when students need you.

Here are a few of my ideas I never got to pursue:

1. A public policy dashboard on the IUSG website that tracks major legislation affecting students' daily lives, identifies who is responsible for implementation, and is updated monthly so Congress can follow up instead of pretending passage is the end of the work.
2. A centralized financial aid and scholarship dashboard that helps students understand FAFSA, emergency aid, school-specific scholarships, and outside funding opportunities without forcing them to dig through different websites.
3. A truly useful student resources hub that puts basic needs, health and mental health support, academic advocacy, legal help, cultural resources, and emergency assistance in one searchable place instead of scattering them across the university.
4. A plain-language public vote tracker for major legislation, so students can clearly see what Congress voted on, what it actually means, and how their representatives voted.

5. More durable partnerships with multicultural student organizations and underserved communities that do not depend on one motivated person carrying the burden alone.
6. Clearer pathways for constituent outreach, especially for students who never see themselves reflected in the usual campus leadership spaces and who should not have to enter those spaces before being taken seriously.
7. A partnership with the Student Health Center to build a Food as Medicine program that expands access to healthy food at free or reduced cost for students who need it. Additionally, bringing back the farmers market that the Student Health Center used to host on campus.
8. Stronger public advocacy from IUSG for IU to recognize the Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition and to stop treating graduate labor as invisible when the university plainly depends on it.

If I leave anything behind, I hope it's this: the belief that this Congress should be brave. Brave enough to speak the truth. Brave enough to try. Brave enough to fail and come back the next week with something better. Student government is never at its best when it is merely comfortable. It is at its best when it is accountable, courageous, and willing to fight for the people it serves.

Thank you for trusting me over these three years. Serving in this Congress has been one of the greatest honors of my time at Indiana University. I leave proud of what we've done, honest about what's left to do, and hopeful that those who come next will push this Congress even further.

Yours in service,

Louis Michael Gallegos

O'Neill SPEA Congressional Representative

BSPA 26' | Indiana University Bloomington