



WRAP-UP

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Civic Education Key to Public Participation

by: Wes Arnold

Civic education is essential to upholding the principles of democracy in America. A democratic society must rely on people's knowledge, skill and interpretation of the law in order to govern themselves efficiently. The primary opportunity for most American citizens to acquire the knowledge and dispositions essential for informed, effective citizenship is during their school years. Civic education, therefore, is vital to the preservation and improvement of American constitutional democracy.

More than ever, children need to become informed about how a democracy operates and what it takes to preserve a democratic government. In a time when outside influences threaten to disassemble American ideals, it is imperative that civic education is stressed as a necessary tool for informing Americans of the values and principles of a free society.

The West Virginia Legislature realizes the importance of civic education and offers a variety of programs and publications to promote it. The Page Program, Children's Day, a Children's Website and "How a Bill Becomes Law," which is a publication that teaches the process of law making, all provide assistance when trying to gain a better understanding of how state government operates.

The Page Program offers West Virginia youth the opportunity to help aid in the legislative process. They perform a variety of tasks including observing the floor sessions of both House and Senate. They do work for both Delegates and Senators, which includes delivering documents and running errands. This program offers children a chance to witness legislation and the process by which the Legislative Branch works.

The Legislature also has a Children's Day on February 19th that promotes civic education. Children are encouraged to visit the Capitol Complex, meet with their representatives and witness the lawmaking process. This allows children to gain a better understanding of what goes on inside of the Capitol



Students from Andrew Jackson Middle School, Emerson, Cabell-Midland, Chapmanville and Buffalo High Schools take time to explore the state capitol complex prior to serving as pages for the Legislature.

photo: Martin Valent

and how laws are made. Students are encouraged to visit the Legislature while in session, whether it be as part of Children's Day or through school field trips and family visits.

The children's website offered by the Legislature is a very informative site that provides detailed information in regard to lawmaking. The site offers a variety of exercises including historical trivia and State Capitol facts. The site also provides information about the three branches of government as well as a "did you know section." To access the website go to www.legis.state.wv.us.

The Legislature also publishes a brochure titled, "How a Bill Becomes Law," as part of the WV Legislature's Kids Club. This is a informative publication on the steps a bill goes through before it becomes law. It is important that children learn this process because laws are ideas that can help to make a positive change in people's lives. The brochure offers comprehensive pictures and detailed information that explains the process, so children can easily learn the path a bill takes to becoming law.

The teaching of civic education is very important. Young people need to become informed on how a democratic society operates and maintains itself in order to improve the process. Children must be guided by those values and principles of a democratic society and act upon them to preserve the democratic way of life in our communities and nation.

As of 4:00 PM, Wednesday, February 12, 2003, the 36th day of the 2003 Regular Legislative Session, 508 bills have been introduced in the Senate. Of those, 17 bills were passed and will go on to the House for its consideration, including three sunset bills.

Senate Bill 170 would require informed consent for abortion, as well as other provisions. The bill would require a minimum 24-hour-waiting period during which time the physician performing the abortion would have to inform the woman of certain aspects of the procedure. The doctor would have to tell the woman the risks involved with having the abortion, the risks if she decided not to have the abortion, and the gestational age of the fetus. The bill would allow for an exception to be made in an emergency when the woman's life is in danger.

Senate Bill 204 relates to involuntary commitment generally. This bill would remove wording that would prevent an incarcerated individual from being subject to mental hygiene proceedings, such as a psychiatric evaluation.

Senate Bill 206 would authorize aides to supervise students who are undergoing in-school suspension. The bill also would provide for limitations such as allowing an aide to only pass out or take up class work but not actually teach the students in the class.

Senate Bill 336 would require health care professionals to use a standardized form for credentialing, recredentialing or updating information.

Senate Bill 342 would limit the time a driver's license may be issued to certain non-citizens. Anyone who is not a US citizen would only have a driver's license for the amount of time he or she is in the country, although it cannot exceed five years. The license would be renewed at the discretion of the Commissioner of the Division of Motor Vehicles.

Senate Bill 356 relates to insurance company holding systems and the Federal Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act. The bill would allow insurance companies to acquire or be acquired by depository institutions and would amend the period of time within which an action may be taken by the Insurance Commissioner upon a statement filed by a person who wants to get control of an insurance company. The bill also would authorize the Commissioner to share certain confidential information about the company with the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System or other appropriate federal banking agency.

Senate Bill 358 relates to the redomestication of domestic insurance companies. A domestic insurer can, upon the approval of the Insurance Commissioner, transfer its domicile to any other state in which it is admitted. When such a transfer occurs, the company would cease to be a domestic insurer and become a foreign insurer. The commissioner could only approve the transfer if he or she determines that it is in the best interests of the policyholders of the state.

Senate Bill 375 would allow the transfer of a contractor's license to a new business associate if the license holder is the principal owner, partner or officer of the company.

Senate Bill 381 would add professional surveyors to professional limited liability companies.

Senate Bill 388 would modify the requirements for the titling and registration of imported vehicles. An automobile would have to meet Federal Safety and Emissions Standards and the owner of the vehicle would have to be able to prove that the vehicle meets those standards before it could be sold.

Senate Bill 390 would remove the requirement that a person's social security number appear on a commercial driver's license (CDL). The license would still have to include the driver's name, eye and hair color, weight, gender, date of birth, address, signature and color photo.

Senate Bill 414 would authorize the Real Estate Commission to enter into license reciprocity agreements with other states.

Senate Bill 424 would authorize the Commissioner of Corrections to consent to the transfer of convicted offenders under Federal treaty. It also would require that the inmate be informed of his or her rights in words he or she can understand.

Senate Bill 447 would allow reciprocal agreements with Ohio regarding hunting and fishing. The measure would allow agreements established by the DNR whereby the residents of West Virginia and Ohio may hunt waterfowl and fish in and along tributaries on both sides of the Ohio River without additional licensing.

Sunset Bills passed by the Senate

Senate Bill 469 would continue the Contractor Licensing Board until July 1, 2006.

Senate Bill 470 would continue the Board of Manufactured Housing Construction and Safety until July 1, 2005.

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As of 4:00 PM, Wednesday, February 12, 2003, the 36th day of the 2003 Regular Legislative Session, 985 bills have been introduced in the House of Delegates. Of those, the following 16 bills were passed by the House this week, including five Sunset Bills and will now go to the Senate for its consideration.

House Bill 2008 would provide good-faith background checks for law-enforcement personnel. This bill would provide employer immunity from civil liability for disclosing accurate and truthful information about former employees. Any information forwarded or provided to another employer, about a former law-enforcement employee, would be considered to be provided in good faith.

House Bill 2190 would permit certain farm vehicles to use the highways between sunset and sunrise. These vehicles cannot travel further than 25 miles between land tracts.

House Bill 2239 would require foreign collection agencies to obtain a certificate of authority from the Secretary of State. This bill would remove the term "licensee" from the definitions and replaced the term's usage with "certificate of registration", and would require that along with a business franchise registration, a collection agency must also acquire a certificate of registration from the Secretary of State's office.

House Bill 2266 would include the State Fire Marshal and full-time fire marshals within the definition of criminal justice enforcement personnel for the purpose of authorizing the State Fire Marshal and full-time fire marshals to cooperate with and assist other law-enforcement agencies.

House Bill 2268 would name teachers and substitute teachers as professional educators and would address the critical

need and shortage thereof. This bill proposes changes in the Underwood Smith Teacher Scholarship to help address areas of critical need and shortage. The Underwood Smith program is designed to entice outstanding high school students to pursue teaching careers in the state.

House Bill 2281 would raise the allowable earnings limit of higher education faculty who retired under the severance plan. This bill would increase the amount of money that an employee, who is granted retirement and separation incentives provided under a higher education severance plan, may earn through contract employment with an institution of higher learning.

House Bill 2383 would require the state Department of Education to submit a comprehensive teacher certification plan to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability (LOCEA) for adopting prior to July 1, 2003. If the plan is not adopted by LOCEA, beginning January 1, 2005, each county would be responsible for certifying any teacher employed in that county and for determining the standards and qualifications necessary for certification.

House Bill 2669 relates to hazardous waste management. The bill sunsets the annual certification payment for facilities that manage hazardous waste based on the fiscal year for the next three years and terminates the hazardous waste management annual certification fee and the Hazardous Waste Management Fee Fund on June 30, 2006.

House Bill 2705 relates to the supervision of adult offenders and authorizes a compact for the supervision of adult offenders. It would have the state of West Virginia become a member of a new interstate compact, the Interstate Compact for the Supervision of Adult Offenders, which is being proposed to update and replace a previous interstate

compact, the Interstate Compact For the Supervision of Parolees and Probationers, originally adopted in 1937.

House Bill 2763 would allow auxiliary roof mounted lighting only when it comes as original equipment and for use only when the vehicle is off-road. These lights must be off and covered while the vehicle is on the highway.

House Bill 2802 would provide for a legal description in deeds creating an easement or right-of-way. The bill would require the description to be either in metes and bounds or by reference to an attached plat, by specification of the centerline of the easement or right-of-way, by station and offset, or by a plat or drawing which may not require a survey.

Sunset bills passed by the House

House Bill 2864 would continue the Office of Explosives and Blasting until July 1, 2004.

House Bill 2879 would continue the West Virginia Commission on Holocaust Education until July 1, 2009.

House Bill 2888 would continue the Board of Osteopathy July 1, 2006.

House Bill 2889 would continue the Board of Examiners of Psychologists until July 1, 2012.

House Bill 2916 would continue the State Geological and Economic Survey until July 1, 2007.

A sampling of bills introduced in the House

Consumer Protection

House Bill 2958 would require credit card issuers to provide adequate disclosure to consumers when soliciting credit card applications

Courts

House Bill 2893 would clarify that magistrates shall accept payment of fines and costs on a payment plan from an offender.

Health

Locating Bill Status

The Legislature's website has implemented full bill content and bill status. To track legislation electronically, use www.legis.state.wv.us and click on bill status.

For those of you who may know someone who would like to receive a copy of legislation in braille, the Legislature can now accommodate this request. Use the toll-free line to request a copy of a bill at: 1-877-56-LEGIS (1-877-565-3447)

(SENATE, cont.)

Senate Bill 471 would continue the Board of Pharmacy until July 1, 2008.

A sampling of bills introduced in the Senate

Animals

Senate Bill 466 would authorize expeditions for hunting black bear with dogs.

Boards and Commissions

Senate Bill 486 would require Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) to notify the Insurer's Board or Audit Committee of an adverse financial condition.

Child Welfare

Senate Bill 491 would authorize the Bureau for Child Support Enforcement to reduce monthly support payments when overpaid.

Communications

Senate Bill 489 would authorize the Parkways Authority to provide wireless communication coverage.

Corporations and Businesses

Senate Bill 465 would allow certain retail markup on cigarettes and beer.

Counties

Senate Bill 457 would allow counties adopting flood plain ordinance to designate an enforcement agency.

Culture and History

Senate Bill 459 would prohibit the renaming or rededication of certain monuments and memorials.

Domestic Relations

Senate Bill 453 would establish the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Team.

Fire Fighting and Prevention

Senate Bill 479 would prohibit municipalities from closing a Fire Department without State Fire Marshal approval.

Fuel

Senate Bill 468 would repeal the requirement that the Tax Commissioner report annually the amount of fuel tax collected.

Health

Senate Bill 458 would require hospitals to implement a plan eliminating or reducing medication-related errors.

Mines and Minerals

Senate Bill 492 would exempt tax for

materials and services used in coal preparation plants.

Taxes

Senate Bill 478 would enact the Tax Free Family Meal Act of 2003.

(HOUSE, cont.)

House Bill 2959 would prohibit health care providers from accepting gifts worth more than \$25 from a pharmaceutical company.

Higher Education

House Bill 2960 would change the name of Fairmont State College to Fairmont State University.

Law Enforcement

House Bill 2920 would increase certain benefits to dependents of a state trooper killed in the line of duty.

Motor Vehicles

House Bill 2917 would require the DMV to design and issue special registration plates for use by Democratic Executive Committee Members.

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