



WRAP-UP

The Newsletter of the West Virginia Legislature

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Volume XIX, Issue 5 | February 13, 2008

Legislature's Page Program Educates and Involves State's Youth

by Jessica Wintz

Every day, dozens of youth visit the Capitol to see the legislative process firsthand and participate by serving as pages. These boys and girls continue a tradition that spans virtually the entire length of West Virginia's history.

Records in the 1866 Senate Journal and the 1868 House of Delegates Journal show the appointment of two to three young men, ages 13 to 18, to serve throughout the entire regular session for \$2.50 a day.

Now, 140 years later, the duties of legislative pages has changed, but they continue to serve lawmakers by volunteering for a day at the Capitol -- keeping session floor traffic at a minimum by running errands and learning about the legislative process.

The West Virginia Legislature's Page Program has become a successful and important program that takes place during the regular legislative session. The program not only serves legislators but also provides a gateway for the public to experience their government at work.

"It is always good to get young, bright people engaged in the process," House Majority Leader Joe DeLong said. "It gives them access to government, and, after they have been here for the day, they may be more likely to get involved later."

The program gives students who are 12 or older from West Virginia's public and private schools an opportunity to serve as pages in the Legislature. As part of their visit to Charleston, students receive a tour of the Capitol before taking to the floors of the House or Senate. They are also given a certificate of service signed by the respective clerk and their sponsoring senator or delegate, a photograph with their lawmaker and a page program book that provides information on every legislator, the legislative process and the Capitol.

Lawmakers interested in sponsoring students contact schools in their districts



West Virginia Legislature's Page Program

For over 140 years, students have had a front row seat to observe floor debates.

photo: Martin Valent

to request pages. The schools later get in touch with the appropriate lawmakers with the names of the children interested and establish when they can visit the Capitol. If students are interested in paging for a specific lawmaker, they also can contact the respective clerk's office to book a certain day. There is a huge interest in the program according to House Clerk Gregory Gray.

"It's a good program because children are exposed to their government," he said. "The more exposure to the process, the better."

Pages serve members of the House and Senate in a variety of ways. They can be asked to bring in a cup of coffee or to obtain a piece of legislation. If a note needs to be passed, a page will see it is delivered. While they are performing their duties on the floors of the chambers, they get a firsthand learning experience regarding the role state legislators play.

"They really get to experience history," said Senate Clerk Darrell Holmes. "They get to hear the bills that are introduced, see the bills that are passed and just receive information that is not available in school."

The West Virginia Page Program doesn't just assist lawmakers, it provides the opportunity for young people to expand their knowledge and see government in action. Students who serve as pages also have the opportunity to meet with lawmakers from their districts and across the state. This time allows them to share their thoughts and concerns.

"A lot of what children read in their West Virginia History classes becomes more real," H. Truman Chafin, Senate Majority Leader said. "To come into the chamber is just an awesome and inspiring room. You learn more in one trip to the Capitol than you do in a thousand West Virginia History classes."



In the House

As of 4:00 p.m., Wednesday, February 13, the 36th day of the 78th Legislature, 1,154 bills have been introduced in the House. Of these, 12 have passed this week and been sent to the Senate for consideration. Bills passed this week include:

House Bill 4032 would allow employees and employers to use a direct deposit system using an ATM card or other means of electronic transfer for the payment of employees' wages.

House Bill 4059 would allow a school bus operator to be eligible for continued employment if he or she is issued a passenger endorsement on his or her driver's license through the Division of Motor Vehicles' intrastate waiver program for diabetes. The operator would have to submit the information required for the waiver to his or her employer and remain in compliance with the conditions of the waiver.

House Bill 4069 would require applicants to pass a vision screening conducted by the Division of Motor Vehicles in order to be eligible for license renewal. A driver's license would not be renewed for a per-

son whose eyesight cannot be corrected to conform to minimum vision standards. This bill would become effective on January 1, 2009.

House Bill 4120 would prohibit complaints in personal injury or wrongful death actions from stating specific dollar amounts or figures effective July 1, 2008. It also would permit party defendants in such actions to request written statements of the nature and amount of damages being sought.

House Bill 4137 would require a municipality or county to be notified in writing by an insurance company when a claim for total loss is filed within that county or municipality.

House Bill 4329 would allow the Division of Motor Vehicles to offer an optional two-year registration for Class G vehicles. The fee for the two-year registration would be double a one-year registration fee.

House Bill 4337 would authorize the Board of Barbers and Cosmetologists to increase fees for one year. For 2009, such fees would be \$50 for a licensing exam, \$35 for a license, \$100 for a reciprocal license and \$25 for a student permit.

House Bill 4348 would give statutory authority to the Office of Miners' Health, Safety & Training to charge fees for necessary tests, certificates and mine safety publications.

House Bill 4388 would allow the Supreme Court to maintain a domestic violence database containing certified copies of protective orders issued in West Virginia and other states. Anyone who has obtained a protective order would be able to register that order with the database.

House Bill 4423 would prohibit a purchaser of scrap metal from knowingly purchasing or possessing a stainless steel beer keg, or part of a keg, for the purpose of reselling as scrap metal unless the purchaser receives the keg from a beer manufacturer, authorized representative or a seller with proof of lawful ownership.

House Bill 4478 would prohibit the transfer during the instructional term of any aide, paraprofessional or interpreter who is assigned to work with a student who has an individualized education program (IEP) that requires one-on-one services.

Completed Legislative Action (Week of Feb. 6 - 13, 2008)

Senate Bill 459 will clarify the rule making authority of the School Building Authority. This bill will also authorize the implementation of two sets of rules approved by the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability (LOCEA); the seven rules of the School Building Authority and the PROMISE rule of the Higher Education Policy Commission.

House Bill 4147 will allow the Speaker of the House and the Senate President to designate parking during legislative and interim sessions in areas where the Department of Administration had previously authorized parking.

A Sampling of Bills Introduced In the House

House Bill 4460 would require property owners to disclose the previous existence of a crystal methamphetamine lab on a property. Failure to disclose such information would make the sale or lease of the property voidable.

House Bill 4462 would increase the amount of support that is received for dependent children who survive State Police officers killed in the line of duty from \$150 per month to \$500 per month.

House Bill 4467 would make it a misdemeanor to falsify educational or academic records or to knowingly misrepresent academic or educational records to obtain a benefit for that individual or another party.

House Bill 4474 would require a registered nurse to be present as a circulating nurse in each operating room during surgical procedures. These nurses would have to have the qualifying education, license and experience in operating room nursing.

House Bill 4483 would prohibit any sex offender on supervised release for a term of 10 years to life from loitering within 1,000 feet of a school, childcare facility, school bus stop or other child safety zone such as a playground or swimming pool. A sex

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In the Senate

As of 4:00 p.m., Wednesday February 13, the 36th day of the 78th Legislature, 662 bills have been introduced in the Senate. Of these, a total of 5 have passed this week and will go to the House for its consideration. The bills that have passed this week include:

Senate Bill 242 would allow drivers who have less than 14 points on their licenses and complete a defensive drinking course to deduct three points from their license.

Senate Bill 298 would expand the definitions of imminent danger and the physical well being of a child in regards to child abuse. This bill would add parents or guardians who habitually abuse drugs and alcohol to a list of situations that endanger a child's welfare.

Senate Bill 481 would authorize physician assistants with proper mental health certifications to conduct examinations arranged by a community mental health center designated by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Resources in regards to a patient's mental health hygiene.

Senate Bill 512 would change the number of members on the Records Management and Preservation Board for county government entities from nine to 11 members.

Senate Bill 627 would specify any terrorist threat as a felony regardless of whether a person actually intended to commit a terrorist act.

A Sampling of Bills Introduced In the Senate

Senate Bill 588 would forbid soil or waste earth and rock covering a mineral deposit to be placed permanently in or within 100 feet of any stream. This would not apply to the placement of coal processing waste.

West Virginia Legislature's Web site

Designed to strengthen your connection to West Virginia's legislators and the laws that govern this state, the West Virginia Legislature's Web site provides you with access to various resources, including contact information, legislation and educational materials. The Legislature's online Bulletin Board maintains prompt information during legislative sessions through the Legislature's Calendars, Meetings, Abstracts, Indexes and Journals. Citizens also can view the entire West Virginia Code, interactive district maps, committee agendas and membership information at: <http://www.legis.state.wv.us>

Senate Bill 589 would require towing services, their vehicles and operators to be subject to Public Safety Commission safety rules. Towing businesses would also be required to record the starting and ending time; the rate charged to each customer; the name, trade name, address and telephone number of the towing service; the name and address of the owner of the towed vehicle; and the vehicle information on each invoice.

Senate Bill 592 would provide a one-time supplement of 4 percent of a person's monthly annuity benefit for annuitants within the Deputy Sheriff Retirement System who have been retired three to five consecutive years. In the event of an annuitant's death, surviving beneficiaries considered eligible based on the retirement date of the deceased may claim the supplement.

Senate Bill 595 would establish goals and objectives for public and higher education in 2020 titled Vision 2020. This bill would clarify elements of the accountability system for public higher education and create a committee to study capital projects and maintenance needs of buildings involved with higher education.

Senate Bill 608 would add sexual orientation to the categories covered by the Human Rights Act. Age and sexual orientation would also be added to categories protected by the Fair Housing Act.

Senate Bill 609 would allow for the creation of the West Virginia Innovation and Development Act. It would allow the Economic Development Authority (WVEDA) to give \$2 million dollars annually to invest in seed and venture capital and other equity investments to provide support to entrepreneurs. Also, the WVEDA would be allowed to award another \$5 million dollars in credits annually for investments in qualified investment companies.

Senate Bill 610 would allow schools to be open on Saturday and remove the provision stating that special classes held on Saturdays must be voluntary.

Senate Bill 612 would increase the number of people on the West Virginia Racing Commission from three to five and require that less than four members be of the same political party. This bill would also require that one member be from the West Virginia Greyhound Owners and Breeders Association and another member be a representative of the National Horsemen's Benevolence & Protective Association.

Senate Bill 613 would require the design, construction and use of domestic and commercial liquefied petroleum gas-consuming equipment to be certified. This bill would also require all equipment involved in the delivery of liquefied petroleum gas to function according to the instructions designated for that piece of equipment by its manufacturer. Equipment alteration or repair would be prohibited unless completed according to the manufacturer's prescribed procedures. This bill would also protect persons involved, but not participating, in the act of selling, supplying, handling or transporting liquefied petroleum gas from civil liability.

Senate Bill 615 would allow a licensed optometrist to prescribe vision correction devices that also dispense drugs that would ordinarily be applied externally to the eye or taken orally.

Senate Bill 625 would authorize the State Board of Education to set amounts for and collect review fees from publishers wishing to have their instructional and educational materials adopted for use in West Virginia.

Senate Bill 631 would include antique and classic trucks in the classification of antique and classic motor vehicles.

Senate Bill 632 would encourage restaurants to provide nutritional information on their menus, including signboards that drive-through customers order from. Participating restaurants would be given permission to display a universal logo that would reflect the availability of caloric information.

offender who violates this prohibition would be required to serve all or part of the term of supervised release in prison without credit for time previously served on release.

House Bill 4484 would revise the current criminal offense of stalking to incorporate the provisions of the National Center for Victims of Crime's "Model Stalking Code for the State." A person would be guilty of stalking if he or she engaged in conduct that would cause a reasonable person to fear for his or her safety or the safety of a third person or suffer other emotional distress. If found guilty of stalking, a person would be charged with a misdemeanor and jailed for up to six months or fined up to \$1,000. In addition, an individual would be guilty of a felony if he or she violated any court order prohibiting contact with the victim, the victim was a minor, the defendant used or threatened to use force or a weapon or the defendant was convicted for a stalking violation within the previous five years.

House Bill 4498 would limit the liability for repair costs to automobile owners when they hit a deer on a state highway. The person who hit the deer would not be liable for repair costs exceeding \$200, regardless of the amount of the deductible required under his or her motor vehicle insurance policy.

House Bill 4505 would allow fireworks displays on public school property upon approval of the State Superintendent of Schools and the State Fire Marshall. Public schools and County Boards of Education would not have to obtain a bond for a fireworks display.

House Bill 4514 would require the White-water Commission to establish a fee for each customer transported by a licensed commercial whitewater outfitter through a study zone of the Gauley River. The fee would be used to stock the Gauley River with trout during the spring and fall seasons of each year to help relieve the loss of fishing opportunities resulting from the additional water volume on the Gauley River.

Senate Bill 637 would require the West Virginia State Board of Education to develop a CPR and First Aid curriculum that would be taught in the required health courses of all secondary schools.

Senate Bill 645 would exempt city and county hospitals from the requirement to file or publish reports, which is an audit requirement for local government offices.

Senate Bill 647 would give sheriffs and their designees the right to view the information contained in the State Board of Pharmacy's database, which contains privileged information regarding patient health records.

Senate Bill 656 would allow persons to obtain a single license for hunting, fishing and trapping as of July 1, 2010. This bill would also require that the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources receive 1 percent of the General Revenue Fund each year.