

UNDER the DOME



FEBRUARY 9, 2016

Welcome

Under the Dome is an update on actions and activities of the West Virginia Legislature, provided during the regular legislative session and interim sessions for West Virginia University faculty and staff by WVU's Office of State, Local and Corporate Relations. This issue provides a review of legislation critical to WVU, the budget and additional legislative activity.

Protecting WVU Tech

A bipartisan group of House and Senate members have introduced bills to ensure the continued viability of WVU Tech. **HB 4310** (sponsored by Delegates John O'Neal, Bill Anderson, Lynne Arvon, Mick Bates, Paul Espinosa, Barbara Fleischauer, Cindy Frich, Brian Kurcaba, Tim Miley, Eric Nelson and Joe Statler) was introduced last week. A companion bill, **SB 386** (sponsored by Senators Jeff Mullins, Bob Beach, Craig Blair, Ed Gaunch, Mike Hall, Jeff Kessler, Roman Prezioso, Charles Trump and Bob Williams), was introduced as well.

WVU Extension Service

SB 403, relating to Cooperative Extension Workers, was introduced Wednesday by Senators Kent Leonhardt and Bob Williams. This bill seeks to amend §19-8-1 of the WV Code. Current code was written in the 1960s, and this legislation updates code to reflect the current organizational function of WVU Extension Service agents. The bill was assigned to Senate Government Organization.

Right to Work

SB 1, Establishing West Virginia Workplace Freedom Act (commonly referred to as Right to Work), was amended and passed the House 54-46 on Thursday after five hours of debate. The Senate concurred with the House's amendment Friday and sent the final bill to the Governor, who has announced that he will veto the bill.

Prevailing Wage

HB 4005, which repeals prevailing wage, passed the Senate on Thursday after two hours of debate. The vote was 18-16, along party lines. Governor Tomblin has announced that he will veto the bill.

Other Legislative Activity

More than 1,400 bills have been introduced in the State Senate and House of Delegates. So far, high-profile bills include:

Charter Schools

HB 4011, Providing for the Authorization and Oversight of Public Charter Schools, establishes a charter school system in the state. It was introduced on January 20 and assigned to House Education.

Tobacco Tax

SB 420, introduced by Senator Jeff Kessler at the request of Governor Tomblin, increases the tax on cigarettes, tobacco products and other related goods, such as e-cigarettes.

Firearms

HB 4145, which is commonly referred to as the “Constitutional Carry” or “Permitless Carry” bill, provides for open carry rights of firearms to West Virginia citizens and provisional concealed carry permits to 18-20 year olds. The bill retains concealed carry permit processes for reciprocity rights with other states. The bill is expected to pass the House this week. It will return to the Senate for approval of the amendments. **SB 314** is a companion bill in the Senate.

Election Reform

SB 5, Requiring Voters Present Photo ID When Voting, was introduced and assigned to Senate Judiciary.

Judicial Reform

SB 9, Creating Intermediate Court of Appeals, was introduced and assigned to Senate Judiciary and Senate Finance.

Transportation and Infrastructure

HB 4009, Letting Our Counties Act Locally Act, was introduced and assigned to House Roads and Transportation. This bill, whose lead sponsor is Delegate Joe Statler of Monongalia County, would generally allow counties to use a one percent sales tax to fund the construction of new roads and bridges and upgrading of current roads and bridges. The bill passed committee, after being amended, on January 27 and goes to House Finance for consideration.

Uber/Lyft

SB 430 and **HB 4305**, authorizing transportation network companies to operate in the state (also known as the Uber bill), were introduced at the request of Governor Tomblin. They are expected to have bipartisan support and pass both houses this session. **HB 4228** is a similar bill. It passed the House Roads and Transportation Committee on Tuesday.

Religious Freedom Restoration Act

HB 4012, titled the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, passed House Judiciary last week after being amended. The bill is expected to be considered by the full House this week.

Common Core

On Thursday, the House Education committee held a public hearing on **HB 4014**, which prevents the State Board of Education from implementing academic assessments and standards, commonly referred to as “Common Core.” A number of bills have been introduced this year related to this issue. Gypsy Denzine, dean of the WVU College of Education and Human Services, spoke at the public hearing. Dean Denzine and the College researched, assessed and analyzed data collected through the State Board’s Academic Spotlight review in 2015.

The Budget

The House Finance Committee and Senate Finance Committee have announced budget hearings for the Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC). Those hearings are:

Senate Finance Committee

House Finance Committee

Room 451-M

Room 460-M

Monday, February 8 at 3 p.m.

Wednesday, February 10 at 2 p.m.

For questions or more information, contact Travis Mollohan, director, State, Corporate and Local Relations, email: tmolloh1@mail.wvu.edu; phone: **304-400-4963**

Legislative Calendar

30th Day (February 11, 2016) – Halfway mark of session.

41st Day (February 22, 2016) – Last day to introduce bills in the State Senate.

42nd Day (February 23, 2016) – Last day to introduce bills in the House of Delegates.

47th Day (February 28, 2016) – Bills due out of committees in house of origin to ensure three full days for readings.

50th Day (March 2, 2016) – Last day to consider bill on third reading in house of origin.

60th Day (March 12, 2016) – Final day of session. Adjournment at midnight.

Upcoming Events

WVU and WVU Extension Day at the Capitol	Friday, February 19, 2016
Pharmacy Day at the Capitol	Monday, February 22, 2016
Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol	Thursday, February 25, 2016

Fast Facts

- There are 49 WVU alumni serving in the Legislature.
- Governor Tomblin received his undergraduate degree from WVU.
- Three of the five justices on the West Virginia Supreme Court graduated from the WVU College of Law.

WVU at the Capitol

Travis Mollohan and Rocco Fucillo, both from WVU's State, Corporate and Local Relations, will represent WVU at the Capitol during the 60-day session. They will answer questions, monitor progress of issues and bills that involve WVU and help to coordinate requests from members and legislative staff.

If you, your colleagues or your students are planning to make a visit or presentation on behalf of WVU, please contact Travis or Rocco before you go. They can facilitate your visit and ensure that all WVU efforts are coordinated — to create a stronger presence and unified voice.

Contact info: Travis Mollohan (tmolloh1@mail.wvu.edu) or Rocco Fucillo (rpfucillo@mail.wvu.edu).

More Information

To learn more about the Legislature, including district maps, bill tracking, committee assignments and a daily summary of legislative activities, please visit www.legis.state.wv.us/index.cfm.

To keep track of introduced bills, committee hearings and the legislative calendar, please visit the Legislative Bulletin Board at www.legis.state.wv.us/Bulletin_Board/Bulletin_Board_menu.cfm.

To learn more about WVU's legislative initiatives, please visit staterelations.wvu.edu.