

# UNDER the DOME



MARCH 9, 2015

## Welcome

Under the Dome is a weekly update on actions and activities of the West Virginia Legislature, provided for West Virginia University faculty and staff by WVU's Office of State, Corporate and Local Relations.

## Session Status

**"Cross-Over Day"** was March 4. This refers to a point in the legislative session in which a bill must pass its house of origin in order to continue through the legislative process. Of the 1,607 bills introduced this session, 376 made it through cross-over day.

Governor Tomblin signed **30 bills** into law as of March 7, 2015.

**Saturday, March 14** is the last day of the 2015 Legislative Session.

## Activity on Key Bills

**HB 2568**, the Pain-Capable Unborn Child Protection Act, was passed by the Legislature and vetoed by the Governor. For the first time since 1987, the Legislature then overrode the Governor's veto and HB 2568 will become law.

**SB 14** would allow county school boards to authorize charter schools. The bill limits the number of charter schools to two per year and ten in the first five years. After lengthy debate, the Senate passed this bill, and it is under consideration by the House of Delegates. The bill passed the House Education committee and is now before the House Finance committee. A public hearing is scheduled for Tuesday morning.

**SB 357**, the Coal Jobs and Safety Act of 2015, has passed the Senate and the House of Delegates and is on its way to the Governor's Office for signature or veto. This bill is a comprehensive legislation addressing health, safety and environmental issues.

**SB 455**, which provides flexibility to higher education institutions on certain areas of procurement and payment services, has passed the Senate and the House Education committee. It is awaiting consideration by the House Finance committee.

**SB 454** criminalizes trademark counterfeiting and provides WVU and other higher education institutions with criminal recourse against those infringing on the institution's marks.

**SB 425** gives WVU, Marshall and the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine more authority on how they can invest their assets. This bill has passed the Senate, and has passed the House Education committee. It is currently under consideration by the House Finance committee.

## Undergraduate Research Day at the Capitol

West Virginia University students joined with other higher education institutions to present posters and abstracts at Undergraduate Research Day on March 4. The WVU abstracts represented a wide range of fields including biology, chemistry, engineering, geography, English and psychology. WVU had a record number of submissions this year. West Virginia University President E. Gordon Gee was the keynote speaker at the luncheon for the student scholars, which was held in the lobby of the Culture Center.

The WVU Honors College and ASPIRE Office, along with Marshall University, organized this statewide event with the help of faculty from other colleges and universities around the state. The day was funded, in part, by a grant from the Higher Education Policy Commission Division of Science and Research.