

# UNDER the DOME



FEBRUARY 1, 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, Corporate and Local Relations. This issue provides a review of legislation critical to WVU, Higher Education Day at the Capitol, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Day at the Capitol, the budget, legislative activity and vacancies and appointments.

## Protecting WVU Tech

A bipartisan group of House and Senate members have introduced two 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 Wednesday. 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 Monday.

## 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 West Virginia Code. Current code was written in the 1960s, and this legislation updates code to reflect the current organizational function of WVU Extension Service agents.

## Innovation and Entrepreneurship Day at the Capitol

Last Wednesday, the Legislature welcomed participants of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Day to the Capitol. The event, sponsored by TechConnect West Virginia and the TransTech Research and Business Development program, is a showcase of groups and companies that are working to advance innovation and entrepreneurship across West Virginia. Several entities and personnel from WVU, including the College of Law's Entrepreneurship Clinic, the LaunchLab, and the BrickStreet Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, were present and spoke with many legislators and state officials about the critical role they play in helping individuals and businesses succeed.

## Higher Education Day at the Capitol

January 19 was Higher Education Day at the Capitol. WVU, WVU Tech and Potomac State College were represented by students, faculty and staff. President Gee joined other higher education leaders from across the state and met with several legislative leaders to discuss important issues facing WVU and our state. The House and Senate passed resolutions and the governor signed a proclamation honoring the contributions of higher education.

## Right to Work

**SB 1**, Establishing West Virginia Workplace Freedom Act (commonly referred to as Right to Work), passed the State Senate January 21 on a party line vote: 17-16. It was debated in House Judiciary on January 29 and passed 13-10-2. The bill moves to the full House of Delegates for consideration.

## Prevailing Wage

**HB 4005**, which seeks to repeal prevailing wage, passed the House of Delegates on January 27. The vote was 55-44-1. It will be debated in Senate Government Organization committee on February 1 and is expected to be taken up by the full Senate later in the week.

## Other Legislative Activity

More than 1,200 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.

### **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 passed House Judiciary on Wednesday. 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 1 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.

## The Budget

The 2017 budget presented by Governor Tomblin uses no money from the State's Rainy Day Fund. It also calls for no additional cuts from higher education.

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  
Room 451-M  
Monday, February 8 at 3 p.m.

House Finance Committee  
Room 460-M  
Wednesday, February 10 at 2 p.m.

## Energy Institute

Brian Anderson, director of the WVU Energy Institute, visited the Capitol on January 28. He met with several key legislators and State officials, including Finance chairs Senator Mike Hall and Delegate Eric Nelson, Energy chairs Senator Greg Boso and Delegate Woody Ireland, Senate Majority Leader Mitch Carmichael, Monongalia County Senator Roman Prezioso and Larry Malone, Governor Tomblin's Director of Policy. Anderson discussed the Institute's valuable research and policy work.

## 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.

## Vacancies and Appointments

The West Virginia Supreme Court heard oral arguments on January 19 regarding the vacancy in the State Senate's 9th District – which is comprised of Raleigh County, Wyoming County and part of Mercer County – created by a member's resignation. On January 22, the court ruled 3-1 that a Republican should be appointed to fill the vacancy. The governor announced that he would follow the court's ruling and appointed Sue Cline of Wyoming County to the position. The new senator was sworn in on January 25, and the Republicans retain 18 members, while Democrats have 16.

## Upcoming Events

Hospital Day at the Capitol	Thursday, February 4, 2016
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

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

## 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](mailto:tmolloh1@mail.wvu.edu)) or Rocco Fucillo ([rsfucillo@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:rsfucillo@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](http://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 [http://www.legis.state.wv.us/Bulletin\\_Board/Bulletin\\_Board\\_menu.cfm](http://www.legis.state.wv.us/Bulletin_Board/Bulletin_Board_menu.cfm).

To learn more about WVU's legislative initiatives, please visit <http://staterelations.wvu.edu>.