

UNDER the DOME



FEBRUARY 16, 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.

Bill Activity Highlights

SB 361 passed the Senate this week and addresses **prevailing wage** in West Virginia. Currently, prevailing wage is calculated by the West Virginia Division of Labor (DOL). Under the new compromise version of this bill, the task of calculation is transferred from the DOL to WorkForce West Virginia. WorkForce West Virginia will receive assistance from economists at West Virginia University and Marshall University. This is a positive opportunity for WVU faculty to be a resource to the West Virginia Legislature. This bill also exempts projects under \$500,000 from prevailing wage rates.

HB 2005 (Alternative Certification of Teachers) passed the House of Delegates and is now before the Senate for consideration. There are approximately 700 teacher vacancies in West Virginia, and this bill is designed to assist in providing teachers in areas where the need is most critical.

SB 3, the premises liability bill, was signed into law by Governor Tomblin this week. The bill codifies existing common law relating to property owners not being held liable for the injuries or death of a person trespassing on their property.

Other Hot Topics

Many pieces of legislation are already making progress through the legislative process. Hot topics include: deliberate intent, comparative fault, punitive damages, non-partisan election of judges, medical professional liability and charter schools.

WVU Fellow at the Legislature

WVU student Dillon Muhly-Alexander is a Judith A. Herndon Fellow this year at the West Virginia Legislature, working in the office of Senate President Bill Cole. The Judith A. Herndon Fellowship allows undergraduates to participate in the 60-day session and assist a sole legislator from either the Senate or the House of Delegates. The interns are required to perform research and various staff functions. He is a native of West Union studying geography and geology, and is a Foundation Scholar.

Lunch and Learn

Last week's WVU Lunch and Learn brought representatives from the Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design and WVU Extension to Charleston. Professor and Associate Dean Tim Phipps and Interim Director of the WVU Extension Service Steve Bonanno spoke about new educational programs and ways faculty and staff give back to the state. The next Lunch and Learn will be February 25 and will feature Interim Dean Greg Bowman from the WVU College of Law and Matt Harbaugh, WVU's Director of Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Commercialization. Bowman and Harbaugh will discuss law and entrepreneurship at WVU.

For questions or more information, contact Sarah Smith, WVU's associate vice president for state, corporate and local relations, email: ssmith13@mail.wvu.edu; phone: **304-400-4963**

WVU and WVU Extension Day

The Capitol was a sea of gold and blue on Friday, February 13, as more than 40 colleges and programs set up interactive exhibits in the Capitol to showcase WVU programs and opportunities. More than 300 youth and adult volunteers from across the state in WVU Extension's 4-H program also attended. The young people learned about WVU by visiting the exhibits and learned about the legislative session by watching the House and Senate in action and visiting with their delegates and senators. West Virginia University President E. Gordon Gee, along with Provost Joyce McConnell and Interim WVU Extension Director Steve Bonanno accepted proclamations in the House, Senate, and from the Governor, proclaiming the day as WVU and WVU Extension Day. In the Lower Rotunda, WVU Extension celebrated 100 years of West Virginia 4-H camping with exhibits that showcased the strong history of 4-H in the state and showed present-day STEM activities. Dr. Gee, McConnell and Bonanno participated in the first 4-H Council Circle ever held in the Capitol. As always, the Flying WV cookies were very popular.

In addition to meetings and participating in the activities of the day, President Gee took his Geemail microphone along, gathering interviews with Legislative leaders, WVU faculty and students, and 4-H youth. Stay tuned for a Gee Goes Under the Dome Geemail!

Coming Up

This week, Dr. Gee will return to Charleston for meetings at the Capitol and will headline the Charleston Area Alliance Annual Celebration.

Take A Look

A photo gallery showing some of the images and activities of WVU at the Capitol is on the State, Corporate and Local Relations website — www.staterelations.edu. Photos from WVU Day will be posted this week.