

UNDER the DOME



APRIL 17, 2017

In Review

This issue of Under the Dome provides a review of the final weeks and last day of the regular legislative session. Bills and actions that pertain to WVU, higher education and the State budget are highlighted.

The Budget

On the last day of session, the House and Senate passed a budget bill — **HB 2018**. The legislation passed the Senate 22-12 and the House 63-37, mostly along party lines.

The \$4.1 billion budget includes using \$90 million from the State Rainy Day Fund, which brings the fund at approximately 13% of the state's general revenue fund. The budget also cuts \$140 million from DHHR's medical services line item budget.

Higher education institutions were cut approximately \$30 million. The smaller regional institutions were cut by 4%, while WVU and Marshall were each given a higher reduction. The budget contains an estimated reduction of \$15 million for WVU.

West Virginia Public Broadcasting was given a \$1 million cut, while fairs and festivals were funded at 80% of their FY2017 level. The budget includes no pay raises for state employees, including teachers, and no new revenues, which Governor Justice asked for in order to fund his Save Our State fund for infrastructure and economic development.

Late Saturday night during a press conference, Governor Justice announced a potential deal between himself and the Senate President. However, the deal did not materialize as the House and Senate debated the budget bill that passed.

On April 13, Governor Justice vetoed **HB 2018**. It is expected that the governor will call the Legislature into another special session in the next few weeks.

Legislation Passed

Of the 1,802 bills that were introduced during the 2017 session, only 262 bills passed both the House and Senate. Some major bills that passed include:

SJR 6 – The Governor's Road to Prosperity Amendment of 2017, which will allow for the public to vote on a billion-dollar bond to build and maintain roads and bridges

SB 25 – Creates a Farm-to-Food Bank tax credit

SB 76 – Creates the WV Second Chance for Employment Act

SB 221 – Changes the composition of the PEIA Finance Board

SB 239 – Limits the use of wages by employers and labor organizations for political activities

SB 386 – Creating the WV Medical Cannabis Act, which would allow for the use of medical marijuana by prescription

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

SB 441 – Expands the Municipal Home Rule Program

SB 523 – Converts state employees to a biweekly pay cycle

SB 634 – Allows the Department of Health and Human Resources to enter into certain agreements with the state's medical schools (WVU, Marshall and WV School of Osteopathic Medicine)

SB 687 – Revises the Coal Mine Safety Act of 2016 and the Stream Water Quality Standards

HB 2001 – Relates to ethics and transparency in government

HB 2002 – Establishes procedure for parental notification of abortions performed on unemancipated minors

HB 2428 – Establishes additional substance abuse treatment facilities

HB 2459 – Changes the healthcare certificate of need process

HB 2519 – Medicaid Program compact

HB 2522 – Nurse Licensure compact

HB 2646 – Terminates the WV Women's Commission and discontinues its functions

HB 2711 – Abolishes the Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs)

HB 2935 – Creates a state flood protection plan

HB 3080 – Requires the instruction of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution

HB 3093 – Establishes the Broadband Enhancement and Expansion Policies

To review all bills that passed the Legislature during its 2017 regular session, please visit: www.legis.state.wv.us/Bill_Status/Bills_all_pass.cfm?year=2017&sessiontype=RS&btype=bill.

Public Health and Public Safety

WVU faculty and staff, along with State and Local Relations office and WVU Medicine personnel, were instrumental in advocating against two bills that would have directly impacted public health. **SB 537**, which would have allowed for a religious or personal exemption from mandatory immunizations and vaccinations, passed committee but did not pass the Senate. **SB 549**, which would have allowed for 21 years of age or older to operate or ride a motorcycle without a helmet, passed committee but failed during a lengthy debate before the full Senate.

Additionally, several bills allowing for the carry of guns on college campuses were introduced. These bills did not see action this session. However, it is expected that they will be introduced in 2018 and considered by the Legislature

Institutional Flexibility and Freedom

HB 2542, which provides flexibility on personnel to higher education institutions, passed the House on February 28 and the Senate on March 14. Governor Justice signed it into law on March 23.

HB 2815, the governor's higher education reform bill, which gives increased freedom to higher education institutions from the Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC), passed the House on March 28 and the Senate on April 6. It is expected that the governor will sign it into law soon.

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WVU at the State Capitol

Travis Mollohan and Rocco Fucillo, both from WVU's State and Local Relations, represent WVU at the State Capitol during the legislative session. They can answer questions about any issues addressed by the Legislature.

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More Information

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

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