

UNDER the DOME



OCTOBER 17, 2016

Welcome

Under the Dome is an update on actions and activities of the West Virginia Legislature, provided during the regular legislative session, interim sessions and special sessions for West Virginia University faculty and staff by WVU's Office of State, Corporate and Local Relations. This issue provides a review of recent interim meetings, budget estimates, gubernatorial appointments and other matters.

Revenue Estimates

Revenue Secretary Bob Kiss announced that State tax collections are \$81.2 million short over the past three months. The State expects to take action to close the new shortfall. Possible measures that could be taken are more across-the-board spending cuts, cuts directed at particular agencies, use of one-time funds or withdrawals from the State's Rainy Day reserve fund or other State accounts.

Interim Meetings

The Legislature held interim meetings in June, August and September.

August Interims

- During the August interim session, the Legislature heard from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the West Virginia National Guard and the West Virginia Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management on recovery efforts from the historic June floods, as well as long-term operations to rebuild communities. Higher education, especially WVU, has participated in discussions with these entities on long-term recovery needs for the Mountain State.
- The Joint Committee on Government Organization and Operations conducted a review of the Legislative Auditor's report on HEPC.
- The Joint Standing Committee on Energy heard a presentation from Dr. Paul Ziemkiewicz, Director of WVU's Water Research Institute. Dr. Ziemkiewicz conducted a study concerning the safety of waste from fracking wells.
- The Legislative Oversight Commission on Education Accountability heard from HEPC on tuition and fees for 2016-2017, as well as the report on Vision 2025: Strategic Plan for Science and Technology.
- The Council on Finance and Administration heard a summary of revenue and final budget data for FY 2016, as well as the status of long-term debt and major capital improvements and bond issuance.
- The Joint Select Committee on Tax Reform heard a presentation from Dr. John Deskins, WVU's Director of the Bureau of Business and Economic Research, on personal income tax modeling and the motor gas and diesel tax.
- The Joint Standing Committee on Finance heard a report on the management of the State vehicle fleet and reviewed the status of gaming revenues.
- Additionally, the Legislature announced the formation of a new committee – Government Accountability, Transparency and Efficiency (GATE) – which plans to review the operations of State agencies, as well as plan for potential budget cuts or efficiencies in the coming fiscal year.

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

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September Interims

- The Joint Committee on Education heard HEPC and CTC's response to the Legislative Auditor's report on their operations.
- The Select Committee on Infrastructure heard from the Division of Highways on highway projects and maintenance plans.
- The Forest Management Review Commission heard from WVU Professor Kathryn Gazal (Davis College of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Design) on the managed timberland taxation rule.
- The Joint Standing Committee on Finance heard from Revenue Deputy Secretary Mark Muchow and Budget Director Mike McKown on an end-of-fiscal-year budget update.

Special Session

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin called the Legislature into special session during September interims to fund the State's flood relief efforts. The Legislature passed House Bill 201 to fund \$85 million as part of the State's match for federal funds to assist with the recovery.

The next interim meetings will be December 4-6. The last interim session will be January 9-11, 2017.

Executive Appointments

Governor Earl Ray Tomblin appointed two new members to the WVU Board of Governors – W. Marston "Marty" Becker and Taunja Willis Miller. The governor also reappointed J. Thomas Jones and James R. "J.R." Rogers. During September interims, the Senate confirmed the governor's appointments.

Gubernatorial Debate

Bill Cole, Republican nominee for governor, and Jim Justice, Democratic nominee for governor, participated in a statewide debate on October 4 in Charleston. The debate aired on West Virginia Public Broadcasting stations and was the first of two debates between the candidates. On October 11, the two met again.

BBER's Economic Outlook Conference

On October 4, the College of Business and Economics (B&E) and the Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) hosted the 23rd Annual West Virginia Economic Outlook Conference in Charleston. BBER Director John Deskins and B&E Dean Javier Reyes spoke to the attendees, which included members and staff of the Legislature. Details on the event can be found at be.wvu.edu/bber/wv_eoc.htm and a copy of the report can be found at be.wvu.edu/bber/pdfs/WV-Economic-Outlook-2017.pdf.

WVU at the State Capitol

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

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

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 staterelations.wvu.edu.

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