



AFT-West Virginia 2014 Legislative Update

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March 12, 2014

Legislative session ends with late night madness

The 2014 legislative session was not without controversy. The chemical spill and water crisis dominated a large portion of the legislators, media, and public attention throughout the session. Other issues relating to firearms, reproductive rights, and the budget shortfall consumed many days of debate on the floors of the House and Senate. AFT-WV worked diligently to navigate the issues of the day, all while pressing to keep important education-related issues at the forefront of the legislative process. There were several great successes gained, and much left to work toward next year.

S.B.391 – Teacher salary increase passes after changes

Teachers and school service personnel will see an increase in base pay beginning July 1, 2014, once Governor Earl Ray Tomblin signs S.B.391, which was agreed on by the House and Senate in the late hours of the last day of Session. The pay raise bill became a political football early in the session, with changes made at each stop of the legislative process. Ultimately, teachers will receive a \$1,000 across the board raise, and school service personnel will see a 2% raise plus equity increase. The change represents a larger amount than Governor Tomblin proposed during his state of the state address. At one point during the process, a proposed increase required such a large amount of funding that the bill was at risk of being killed due to the budget deficit the state is experiencing. AFT-WV communicated with the governor and legislative leaders throughout the process, working to ensure the bill did not become so controversial that it would not pass. Though it is a modest raise, AFT-WV is pleased to have won the beginning step in recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers with the included goal of raising a starting teacher's pay to \$43,000 by 2019.

S.B.477 – AFT-WV gets planning period loophole fixed

AFT-WV President Christine Campbell directly involved in S.B.477 Conference Committee on last night of session.



S.B.477 passed the Senate with language crafted that created a **serious loophole** for administrators in providing the use of the entire planning period to be determined by the teacher.

AFT-WV worked directly with House Education leadership to remove the loophole, which originally stated:

“Administrators may not compel a teacher to attend meetings, training or any other work-related event during a planning period **except for occasional instances of conferences with teachers.**”

(Continued.)



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S.B.477 – AFT-WV gets planning period loophole fixed (cont.)

The clean bill passed the House Education committee and the full House and went to the Senate for agreement. The Senate did not agree with the House version, and the bill was sent to a conference committee in the late hours of the last day of session on Saturday, March 8. AFT-WV was actively involved in negotiating language that both legislative bodies could agree on, keeping focus to not allow another loophole to be snuck in to the bill. Once signed by the governor, the bill provides that **“Administrators may not require a teacher to attend meetings, training or any other work related event during a planning period.”** Teachers are free to choose to hold any meeting or school-related activity at their discretion.

H.B.3156 Ensuring confidentiality passes

AFT-WV spearheaded legislation to guarantee confidentiality between public employees and organizations that represent them. Certain school boards had begun issuing subpoenas attempting to gather confidential information discussed regarding the grievance process. AFT-WV fought to protect our members' rights in the grievance process working H.B.3156 through the House Labor and Judiciary committees and then again in the Senate Labor and Judiciary committees. The bill was laid over on the last day of session and appeared to be dead. AFT-WV leaders continued working with Senate leadership, and at 11:15 PM the bill was considered by the full Senate and passed. The house concurred at 11:45 and now awaits the governor's signature.

Senate Bill 409 and House Bill 4394 - Failed to pass

HB4394, which would have provided transparency in filling professional positions and require posting of critical shortage openings on a statewide job bank **was ultimately amended into S.B. 409, the governor's education bill.** The bill would have enabled a teacher with a valid West Virginia teaching certificate to receive certification to teach in an additional area of certification upon submission of a score on the appropriate content area test required of other teachers for certification in that area **regardless of whether additional course work was taken in that area.**

Unfortunately, the House and Senate failed to agree on the entire bill, and the session ended without the bill being passed. AFT-WV will continue working on these important issues next session.

H.B. 4283 - Raising the Minimum Wage Passed

The WV AFL-CIO worked diligently during the session on several issues. Raising the Minimum Wage was a key part of Labor's agenda. We are proud of the work all of our labor allies contributed to the session, and we will continue working together in solidarity to benefit working people.

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