



AFT-West Virginia 2017 Legislative Update

Please
Post

Friday, March 31, 2017

STILL NO BUDGET AS END OF SESSION LOOMS

Despite repeated attempts by Governor Jim Justice to engage in serious negotiations with legislative leaders, there is still no agreement on a budget. Instead, legislative leaders chose to play political games by spending time on paycheck deception and moving the teacher pay raise into the pension refinance bill. Legislators have 8 days left in the 2017 Regular Legislative Session to pass a budget and avert a state government shut down on July 1.

Paycheck Deception

[SB 239](#) requires annual reauthorization for voluntary payroll deductions requested by employees, including union dues, credit unions and banks, Christmas club accounts and charities. On Thursday, a public hearing was held in the House chamber, with representatives from business, the WV state police association, non-profit organizations and labor organizations speaking against the bill. AFT-WV President Christine Campbell was among those who spoke against the bill, calling it a "waste of taxpayer money."

AFT-WV Opposes



Public Education Funding Cuts

[SB 609](#) would cut state pre-K through 12 public education funding by \$79.3 million and automatically raise counties' regular levy property tax rates to make up for the loss. The bill would enable county school boards to opt out of the local tax increase if they're willing to take the significant financial hit. Counties without levies would take a significant financial cut. The bill has passed the Senate and awaits action in House Finance. **AFT-WV Opposes**

Crossover Day provides a sigh of relief (maybe)

Wednesday was Crossover Day at the Legislature, referring to the day when bills must be passed from their originating chamber. Bills not passed from their originating house by Crossover Day are likely dead; however, there is always the possibility of proposals being added into active bills. No bill is truly dead until the clock strikes midnight on April 8th.

Bills that did not cross over include:

PEIA- Eliminating 80/20 Split

[HB 2871](#) The original version of this bill eliminated the mandated employer versus employee cost share (80/20 split) for PEIA coverage and set a maximum cost sharing threshold of 60/40. **AFT-WV Opposed**

Privatizing PEIA

[SB 555](#) called for the dissolution of PEIA and privatization of employee health insurance. **AFT-WV Opposed**

Refinancing Teachers Retirement System

[HB 2817](#) would have refinanced the unfunded liability of the Teachers Retirement System, ultimately costing the state over \$1.5 billion. **AFT-WV Opposed**

School Vouchers

Committee Substitute for [SB 273](#) opened the door to school vouchers in WV, and the defunding of public education. The bill passed out of Senate Education, but was never taken up by the House Finance Committee. **AFT-WV Opposed**



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Notable bills that crossed over and are still alive:

Seniority

Despite thousands of calls and emails from education employees, SB 401 passed the Senate. [SB 401](#) permits county boards of education to disregard seniority in RIF/transfer decisions. The bill is awaiting action by the House Education Committee. **AFT-WV Opposes**

Standards, Testing & Constitutional Authority of the WV BOE

The original version of [SB 18](#) called for a new comprehensive statewide student assessment and was first amended to no longer specify a testing vendor. While on 2nd reading in the Senate, Senator Rucker proposed an amendment that grants the legislature full control of determining academic standards for WV schools. After extensive debate about the constitutionality of the amendment, the amendment passed and SB 18 passed the Senate. The bill is pending action in House Education. **AFT-WV Opposes**

Education Standards

[SB 524](#) prohibits using Common Core standards and calls for implementation of outdated, out-of-state standards. AFT-WV would like to thank the members for voicing their concerns to legislators about the need for consistency in standards implementation. Amended and passed Senate; pending House Education. **AFT-WV Opposes**

Transfer Process

[HB 2738](#) changes the transfer process of school personnel. Thanks to the efforts of our endorsed candidates in the House Education Committee, HB 2738 was amended to reinstate seniority. This bill had bipartisan opposition and narrowly passed the House. The bill is now pending action in Senate Education. **AFT-WV Opposes**

Governor's Education Bill

The committee substitute for [HB 2711](#) restructures the state's regional agencies, the state Office of Education Performance Audits and the requirement that public schools have 180 separate instructional days. The bill passed the House and awaits action by the Senate Education Committee. **AFT-WV Supports**

School Calendar

[SB 242](#) makes changes to the school calendar, including increasing faculty senate from 4 to 6 meetings. It also allows extra daily minutes to be used for make-up of lost days due to inclement weather and requires that reimagining student instructional days be exhausted prior to using accrued minutes for lost instructional days. Passed Senate with amendments; pending House Education. **AFT-WV Supports**

PEIA Finance Board

[SB 221](#) changes the composition of PEIA Finance Board from 10 to 8 members and eliminates the seat on the Board designated for organized labor. It also changes criteria for Board members to prevent education, public employee and retiree groups' elected leaders and lobbyists from serving on the Board. Passed the Senate; pending House Government Organization.

AFT-WV Opposes

Employment in Areas of Critical Need

[HB 2637](#) relates to employment of retired teachers and prospective employable professional personnel in areas of critical need and shortage. The bill includes speech pathologists and nurses. Passed House; pending Senate Education. **AFT-WV Supports**

Want to get a play by play of education committee action? Check out @aftwv on Twitter. You don't need to monitor our tweets all day, simply check out the threads from each committee meeting at your convenience.

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