



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

AFT-West Virginia, AFL-CIO



Standing 55 Strong...From Statehouse to Schoolhouse

January 17, 2019

State of the State Reaction

AFT-WV President Fred Albert applauds the Governor for holding to his promise of a 5% pay increase for school and public employees and upping his commitment to PEIA funding to \$150 million.

“The Governor spent a sizable portion of his remarks discussing education, and that’s an encouraging sign. A competitive salary and benefits package is essential to attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers and service personnel. I hope the leadership in the House and Senate are committed to standing with the Governor to invest in our education system.”

The union also supports the Governor’s proposal to allow employees to bank accrued leave time as an initiative that will add value to an employee’s benefits package as well as reduce absenteeism.

All in all, the Governor’s pay proposal and \$150 million dedicated to PEIA is a good start to the session, but ultimately, it’s in the legislature’s hands to pass these initiatives.

AFT-WV’s Tele Town Hall

On Thursday, January 10th, AFT-WV hosted a live teletown hall, where members received a phone call and were invited to participate in an interactive phone conversation. AFT-WV President Fred Albert and Vice-President Tega Toney fielded questions from members across the state. WV AFL-CIO President Josh Sword led a discussion on PEIA and AFT’s Bob Brown served as the event emcee. AFT-WV will likely be hosting additional town hall discussions during the legislative session.

If you did not receive a phone call from AFT-WV to participate in the town hall, please call 1-800-222-9838 to update your phone number in our records.

AFT-WV Martin Luther King Day Events and Legislative Lobby Day

Please join us Monday, January 21, 2019 as we celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and continue the activism of 55 Strong!

Several activities are planned for the day and we hope you can join us for them. Parking is available nearby the church at Laidley Field.

- **9:30 AM** - *Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration at Asbury United Methodist Church, 501 Elizabeth St, Charleston, WV 25311. Immediately following the program, we will march to the Capitol for the ringing of the Liberty Bell at the State Capitol.*
- **Noon- 1:30 PM** - *Lobby your Legislators: Meet with your representatives at the Capitol and share your concerns about education*
- **1:30- 3:30 PM** - *Lunch/reception at Asbury United Methodist and historical Martin Luther King, Jr. reenactment by Arley Ray Johnson*

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session!

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This Week Under the Dome

While the Governor came out of the gate quickly with multiple proposals for education, the pace has been slower for the House and Senate during the first full week of the session.

Bills of note that advanced or were introduced included:

SB 1- Free Community and Technical College for In-State Students

This bill would establish a “last-dollar-in” program that would cover tuition for students wishing to attend a community and technical college two-year program. The state would provide additional money for the student after federal Pell Grants or any other kind of financial aid are applied. Students would also need to apply for a degree program where there is a workforce need, which would be determined by the state Department of Commerce. The proposed program would require drug testing every semester to ensure the student is ready to enter the workforce drug free. There would also be an eight-hour community service requirement. Students who complete the program would be required to work in the state for two years or pay the money back to the state. *Passed Senate Education; pending Senate Finance*

SB 327- Differential Pay for Math Educators

This is the Governor’s bill to provide a one-time \$2,000 payment to teachers who take specialized mathematics courses developed by the state Department of Education. The bill would create a system where current math teachers get some additional instruction so they could teach other areas of math. *Bill introduced; pending Senate Education*

As a veteran math teacher, AFT-WV President Fred Albert shares the Governor’s desire to improve math achievement, but believes differential pay will only shift the problem to other content areas.

“Instead of creating pay disparity between subject areas, let’s look at other options the state can employ to attract educators in shortage areas. Simply throwing a stipend at one content area isn’t a long term solution to fill the hundreds of vacancies that exist statewide in numerous subjects. We need to look at how we got to this crisis level and address the root of the problem,” remarked Albert.

Still Waiting...

Salaries & PEIA

At press time, bills to address the 5% pay proposal or \$150 million funding commitment to PEIA have not been introduced.

Sick Leave Accrual

In his State of the State, Governor Justice proposed adding value to accrued sick leave for education employees. He offered no specifics on the bill, and it has not yet been introduced. Therefore, AFT-WV would like to hear from employees on what accrual options would be most attractive.

Please take our survey on sick leave accrual at <https://t.co/8WjMosWkKs>. Your answers will be presented to policymakers in hopes of crafting legislation that truly reflects what school employees would like to see pass.