



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

AFT-West Virginia, AFL-CIO



Standing 55 Strong...From Statehouse to Schoolhouse

February 1, 2019

A UNITED FRONT

Organizations Speak Against SB 451 and Prepare for Future Action

Here's a play by play of what happened during a very busy week at the Capitol:

- On Monday, AFT-WV, WVSSPA, WVEA, and the three groups representing school administrators and superintendents held a joint press conference to oppose the bill.
- Later that afternoon, the Senate Leadership employed a procedural move to bypass the Finance Committee and take SB 451 before the Committee of the Whole.
- On Tuesday, the WV Board of Education held an emergency meeting to discuss the omnibus bill. After point by point discussion of the bill, the Board voted to support or oppose each initiative on its own merits. At an emergency meeting of the Kanawha County Board of Education held the same day, the BOE passed a resolution opposing SB 451.
- Also on Tuesday, AFT-WV held another teletown hall to discuss the omnibus bill and field calls from members.
- On Wednesday morning, the Senate Committee of the Whole began discussion of SB 451. Senators questioned Senate counsel and the only "expert testimony" presented to the committee was from two out-of state charter school advocates.
- On Thursday, SB 451 narrowly passed the WV Senate's Committee of the Whole on an 18-16 vote, with Republican Senators Hamilton and Mann voting "no" with the Democrats. The education omnibus bill was then read for the first time on the floor of the full Senate
- In case you missed it: The Beckley Register Herald published an op-ed by AFT-WV President Fred Albert. Read it at <http://bit.ly/2CRsJ3m>.
- Over the course of this week, numerous newspapers in the state have published editorials opposing the Senate's rushed process and lack of input by West Virginian education experts and taxpayers on SB 451.



Sissonville High teachers at the Capitol this week with AFT-WV President Fred Albert

- AFT-WV executive board and local presidents held a conference call on Thursday evening and local presidents were sent the official ballots with instructions for conducting an authorization vote.
- On Friday morning, AFT-WV, WVSSPA and WVEA held a joint press conference to announce the authorization vote process will commence in the counties, and results will be brought forth at a meeting of all local presidents next Saturday. If you missed the press conference, you can watch it at <https://youtu.be/ihrbcjyQ3Rw>. Ballots and instructions have been sent to local leaders of all three organizations in each county, who will disseminate to worksite reps. Worksite reps (of all three organizations, where applicable) will distribute, collect and certify the ballots for their location.
- SB 451 was on second reading before the full Senate on Friday afternoon. Second reading is the amendment stage, and the Senate Democrats attempted to modify numerous provisions in the bill. Their attempts to amend were consistently defeated on a 18-16 vote. At press time, discussion and attempts at amending the bill were ongoing.
- We expect the bill to pass the Senate but anticipate the pace of its advancement to slow dramatically in the House. We are optimistic the House of Delegates will fully vet the bill and utilize the committee process to address concerns in the bill.

Next Steps for Education Employees

- County presidents of AFT-WV, WVSSPA and WVEA have received ballots and instructions. They will disseminate to worksite reps to conduct the vote at each worksite.
- To increase accuracy and avoid intimidation, the voting should be done using a secret ballot method. Check employees off when they receive a ballot and also when they return a ballot.
- Building voting can be done during a meeting or by talking to each individual and handing them a ballot. **This should not be done during the instructional day.**
- Votes will be collected and the local president will report the county totals on Saturday, February 9 at the joint local presidents meeting.
- The vote will authorize the state leadership of the AFT-WV, WVSSPA and WVEA to call a statewide work action should circumstances surrounding the Omnibus Education Bill merit such a work stoppage and to determine the appropriate time for that action to take place.

Meanwhile....

These are strategic activities that our locals and members must continue. Community support and systems to support our children in the event of a work stoppage must be in place. Please facilitate these in your locals:

- Call your elected officials and demand a meeting with all education employees in their district.
- Request County BOE & County Commissions to pass resolutions to support education employees
- Reach out to parents, religious leaders, food banks/pantries, and possible child care providers to build a community support system similar to last year.
- Please look to our sites for information (website, action network emails, social media sites, text alerts, emails from leaders, etc.) Please take advantage of all communication tools available to allow AFT-WV to rapidly disseminate information or instructions as needed.

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power!***

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legislative session!**

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