



The Weekly Page

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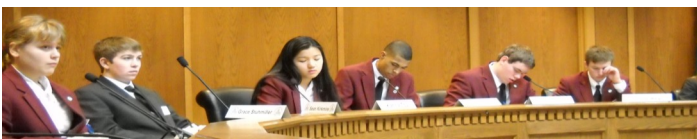
JANUARY 14, 2011

Pages Learn About Legislature



Big ideas in government

Throughout the week pages grappled with understanding the three “big ideas” for a representative government: governing is a complex process, successful democracies rely on responsible citizens, and government affects our life every day. As they participated in daily discussions, listened to guest speakers, and proposed bills in mock committee hearings, their understanding around the concepts deepened. On Friday, they wrote about one of the big ideas to demonstrate the depth of their new knowledge.



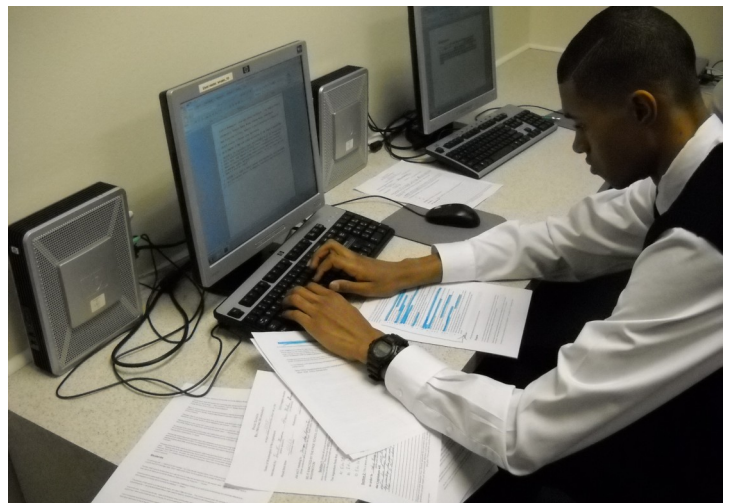
Legalization of marijuana advocated

Olympia—The issue of medical marijuana was considered in committee hearings yesterday when Representatives Bailey Albright, Deno Borghi, and Keegan Jordan introduced House Bill 1111. “We want to make it easier for folks with medical marijuana prescriptions to get what they need at local dispensaries by pushing this bill through the session so our Governor can sign it into law,” said Rep. Borghi. Currently the law prohibits more than one person from supplying the drug to a patient, so technically a dispensary that provides the drug to many people is not allowed. This law would make dispensaries legal for people to get their medical marijuana.

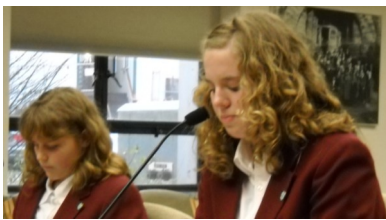


Pages write bills, hold mock hearings

Pages worked individually or in small groups to write bills designed to address issues which were relevant to them and the state. Criteria for making a legislative solution work was discussed before students selected issues to research and develop. Then they used bill templates on class computers to formulate official-looking documents in preparation for a mock committee hearing on Thursday. Some topics for policy bills included medical marijuana, plastic bag pollution, sleep deprivation in high school students, and dangerous animal attacks. Pages read their bills and “committee members,” governed by the rules of parliamentary procedure, debated the pros and cons of the proposals. A “DO PASS” or “DO NOT PASS” recommendation was then voted upon, allowing a bill to continue on in the legislative process. As in the real political system, some bills died in committee.



High school students' greatest nightmare may be solved



Olympia – Senate Bill 5592 was introduced yesterday by Senators Taylor Vetter and Grace Stuhlmiller. “This bill addresses the issue of improving the academic success of high school students, and will

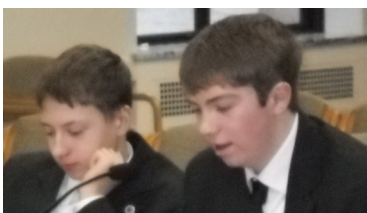
require all public high schools to begin school no earlier than 8:30 a.m., allowing students more time to get the sleep they desperately need,” said Sen. Stuhlmiller. Studies show that chemicals in high school students’ brains cause them to stay up later and sleep in longer. Experts say that teenagers need 8 1/2 to 9 1/2 hours of sleep every night, however, less than 85% of teens actually get that much. “Students that do not get enough sleep are more grumpy, groggy, and generally not able to pay attention, meaning they get lower grades,” said Sen. Vetter. “People may react badly to this idea, but schools that have already made this change reported success,” said Sen. Stuhlmiller.

Bears be warned...we see you!

Olympia—The issue of wild bears appearing in communities was considered in committee hearings yesterday when Representatives Winter Kartak and Sakina Khan introduced House Bill 3333. “We want to reduce the amount of bear attacks and sightings in Washington State by pushing this bill through the session so our Governor can sign it into law,” said Rep. Khan. The bill calls for sighted bears to be relocated to unpopulated habitats. “Bears are a danger to citizens but they still have the right to live in their natural habitat,” Rep. Kartak.



Elderly drivers need some restrictions



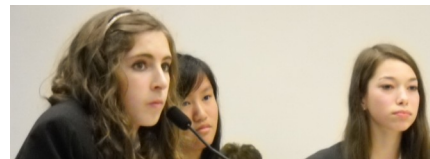
Olympia—The issue of elderly drivers was considered in committee hearings yesterday when Representatives Sean Kirkmire, Olivia Juel, and David Drinkard introduced Bill 3777. “We want to make the roads safer for all of our

citizens by pushing this bill through the session so our Governor can sign it into law,” said Rep. Kirkmire. “Slow driving and delayed reactions by our seniors, which cause auto accidents and even death, are regular issues that all drivers have to deal

with on our roads and highways. So, we are proposing that drivers over 70 years of age be given an annual driving test to check their physical and mental abilities,” said Rep. Drinkard. “This bill is fair because we are not taking their freedom away, we are just simply checking to see if they are fit to be driving,” Said Rep. Juel.

Drivers' Ed scholarships suggested

Olympia – House Bill 3999 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Erin Kitchens, Madelyn Weber, and Justine Connelly. “This bill addresses the cost issue of Drivers' Education classes and will increase the accessibility to those who would otherwise be unable to pay the high registration fees,” said Rep. Kitchens. Drivers' Education is required to obtain a driver’s license, but government funding ended nine years ago. Private companies have taken over and currently charge from \$250 to \$825 for a class. Seattle Public Schools now only graduates 1,500 from the Drivers' Education Program, while the school district used to graduate more than double that amount. If this bill becomes law, the Legislature will require public schools to provide scholarships for students who cannot afford the classes. It will also gather money for scholarships from private companies.



Legislation to improve student attendance, academics

Olympia – Senate Bill 5555 was introduced yesterday by Senators Hunter Mixon, Shaun Meehan, and Donovan Wargo. “This bill addresses the issue of sleep deprivation in high school teens, which causes poor academic performance. In addition, it will lighten the homework load given to kids,” said Sen. Meehan. According to the senators, students are staying up way too late doing homework and the next morning they are so tired that they fall asleep in their early morning classes. “We intend to push the official starting times of all public schools to later in the morning to allow better preparation for school,” said Sen. Mixon.



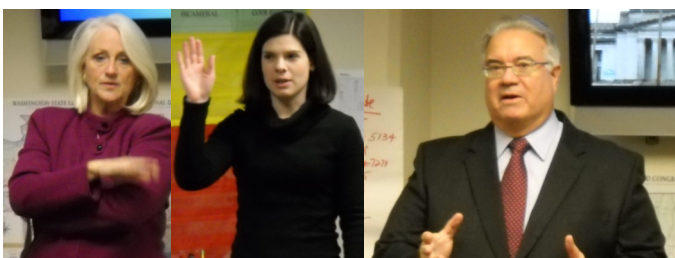
Plastic bag bill to help environment



Olympia – Senate Bill 6893 was introduced yesterday by Senator Karina Toy. “This bill addresses the issue of plastic bag pollution. It will require that all stores that utilize plastic bags give costumers a discount for reusing them, make recycling for the bags available, and sell reusable bags,” said Sen. Toy. It takes an estimated 1,000 years for plastic bags to break down in a landfill, where they end up after being used for only 10 minutes. Recent reports say they also are responsible for killing approximately 100,000 marine wildlife each year. “In addition, the manufacturing of plastic bags uses precious natural resources, over 12 million barrels of valuable oil,” said Sen. Toy. If this bill becomes law, an additional one percent in tax will be added to the already 10 percent sales tax to all plastic bags that are bought by retail stores, further encouraging stores and citizens to discontinue using them. In addition, stores will be required to provide a small discount to shoppers who use their own bags. “It’s a win for the environment and the shopper,” she said.

Guest speakers visit Page School

State Auditor Brian Sonntag, Senator Randi Becker (R-2), and Lindsay Pryor, Voter Education & Outreach Coordinator for the Secretary of State’s office joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. Each spoke about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information in regards to the legislative process. Pages were able to interact with these guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speaker’s questions.



Additives to be listed bigger, bolder

Olympia – Senate Bill 7575 was introduced yesterday by Senator Daniel Hug. “This bill addresses the issue of corn sugar in our food products, and will require manufacturers to provide that ingredient in bold type and one font size larger than is currently used,” said Sen. Hug. The bill focuses on the harmful nature of excess sweeteners and educates the public about the consequences of eating processed foods. “Maybe if it is easier to read this toxic ingredient, people will be less likely to those products,” said Sen. Hug.



Taking the bite out of dangerous dogs

Olympia – House Bill 2008 was introduced yesterday by Representative Jessica Alloway. “This bill addresses the issue of dangerous dog attacks and will require a dog training class when purchasing or registering an animal,” said Rep. Alloway. “With the steady increase in dog attacks and continued dog fighting, I felt that I needed to make a change. Hopefully this is a giant step towards a safer place for humans and dogs,” said said.



Senator introduces school vouchers

Olympia – Senate Bill 5115 was introduced yesterday by Senator Samantha Hanchett. “This bill addresses the issue of failing students in our public schools. My bill allows school vouchers and will let the parents choose a private school for their child if they feel there is a need for a better education than the public school is providing,” said Sen. Hanchett. The senator also pointed out that the state will be saving money, as well. “Without a voucher, the state is spending approximately \$10,000 for each public school student. With the voucher program, the state would be giving \$7,000 to the student’s parents to make the choice of either a public or private school education. The school voucher program will help the state get out of debt faster, saving millions of dollars a year,” she said.

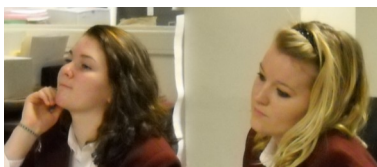
Plan to save water proposed

Olympia – Senate Bill 7329 was introduced yesterday by Senator Anya Boettcher. “This bill addresses the issue of wasting water and will save the state’s precious drinking water,” said Sen. Boettcher. If this bill becomes law, the Legislature will establish a program to educate the citizens about saving water. The Department of Natural Resources will make public service ads on TV explaining how to save water in bathrooms, laundry rooms, and kitchens as well as outside in gardens. “It will help the environment a lot,” said Sen. Boettcher.



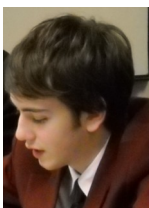
Senators tackle sleep deprivation in teens

Olympia—The issue of teenage sleep deprivation was considered in committee hearings yesterday when Senators Stephanie Cleaves and Gretchen Eberl introduced Senate Bill 5678. “We want to improve the overall attendance, daytime alertness and student-reported depression by pushing this bill through the session so our Governor can sign it into law,” said Sen. Eberl. According to recent reports many of today’s teenagers are sleep deprived, which can cause health problems and interfere with learning. By approving this bill, the Legislature will force public schools throughout Washington, grades K-12, to begin no earlier than 8 a.m. “The later start time will give students more hope for success in their learning and wellbeing,” said Sen. Eberl.



Marijuana debate resumes

Olympia - Yesterday, Senator Nick Vargish introduced Senate Bill 5339, which addresses the issue of marijuana legislation. “The bill is a good one because it will decriminalize marijuana by lowering the infraction from a criminal misdemeanor to a civil infraction,” said Senator Vargish. This means that small time marijuana offenders will no longer have to appear before a judge, face jail time or get saddled with a criminal record. Currently, nearly \$16 million is spent on processing court cases and housing and feeding low-risk drug offenders in our state prisons, according to the senator. “Another benefit of passing this bill allows our police to focus on more severe crimes, thereby making the streets safer for all citizens,” he said.



Senators propose requiring DNA samples upon arrest



Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Kendal Seeman, Clarisa Watkins and Lydia Moynihan introduced Senate Bill 5432, which addresses

the issue of DNA samples taken at the point of arrest. “The bill is a good one because it will provide police and the legal system with the evidence they need to prove a person guilty or innocent,” said Sen. Seeman. The bill will require a DNA sample from anyone at the time they are arrested. This test will be

kept in a database similar to the current fingerprint database. Some felt that the testing would be an invasion of privacy, but the senators believe the increased safety to society and the more accurate results far outweigh those costs.

Failing athletes no longer eligible

Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Megan Lucero introduced House Bill 2035, which addresses the issue of high school sports eligibility. “The bill is really good because it forces the student-athlete to focus on what comes first, being a student in good academic standing,” said Rep. Lucero. It also will discourage athletes from moving from to a school with lower academic standards, thereby causing an unfair competitive advantage. If this bill becomes law, it will require all public school districts in the state to add a “no pass, no play” policy to their eligibility rules. Failing grades in a class will prevent a student from playing on that season’s sports team.

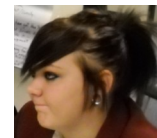


Rep advocates for gays to say “I DO”

Olympia – Yesterday Representative Mack Sack introduced House Bill 3030, which addresses the issue of equal marriage rights for all citizens. “The bill is a good one because it allows all people the same rights and benefits to marriage regardless of their lifestyle choice,” said Rep. Sack. Some of the benefits include the ability to file joint tax returns, share an insurance plan, and visit their loved one in a hospital.

Legalization of dispensaries called for

Olympia – Yesterday Senator Rianna Dorr introduced Senate Bill 5134, which addresses the issue of medical marijuana dispensaries. “This bill is great because it really helps the patients who are having a hard time getting their prescriptions filled,” said Sen. Dorr. Under the current law, gaining access to medical marijuana is challenging, if not impossible for some patients. The bill requires the state department of health to license and regulate dispensaries so they can distribute medication to patients.



Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/PageSchool>

This newsletter has been posted there.