



The Weekly Page

VOLUME 8 ISSUE 2

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Pages Learn About Legislature

Pages write bills, but snow prevents 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 mock committee hearings on Thursday.

Unfortunately, Mother Nature had other plans when a snow and ice storm dumped over 10 inches of snow on Olympia and curtailed plans to present bills. Although everyone was ready to present bills by Friday, the ice storm wrecked havoc with area trees and electrical grids, and the capitol campus lost power by late morning, sending everyone home early.

The articles that follow represent the bills that would have been presented and include a wide variety of social topics—from medical marijuana and childhood obesity to abortion and capital punishment. The good news is that no bills died in committee this week!

Cell phone fines to double

Olympia – House Bill 1001 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Dallas Duplessis and Regina Ballew. “This bill addresses the issue of the currently ineffective cell phone law and will raise the fines for illegal use while driving to \$300,” said Rep. Ballew. Since 23 percent of crashes involve cell phones, the lawmakers are committed to making Washington a safer state. “Those worried about the higher fee will just have to obey the law,” said Rep. Duplessis. A portion of the higher fee will be used for public service campaigns to dissuade the use of cell phones while driving. According to the House members, there are still too many people breaking this primary law.



Reps intent on saving unborn children

Olympia – House Bill 1234 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Hailey Johnston and David Johnston. “This bill addresses the issue of abortion and will help save many unborn children,” said Rep. Hailey Johnston. In



2009, there were 23,783 abortions in the state. Of these, 1,096 were out-of-state residents who came to obtain the procedure by Washington clinics and doctors. It's very likely they came from other states that are much harder to obtain an abortion, according to the lawmakers. This bill will require that pregnant women have an ultrasound in order to see and hear the fetal heartbeat before obtaining an abortion. Twenty-four states require counseling and a waiting period before an abortion can be performed. Washington will also require a waiting period of 24 hours.

Medical marijuana available soon

Olympia – House Bill 3333 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Chance Watts and Jeffery Petschl. “This bill addresses the availability of prescription marijuana and will simplify the process,” said Rep. Watts. Currently Washington State law limits the supplier of medicinal cannabis to one patient only. This bill will eliminate that restriction, making the recently vetoed dispensaries now legal in cities with over 30,000 people. “This will definitely make the product more accessible for patients,” said Rep. Petschl.



Senators want to abolish death penalty



Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Kyle Samson and Dylan Scanes introduced Senate Bill 7088, which addresses the issue of the death penalty. “The bill is a good one because it will prevent the execution of innocent people,” said Sen. Samson. Since

1976, an average of one in seven inmates sentenced to death has been exonerated in the U.S. Currently, Washington State has seven people on death row. “Theoretically, one of those people could be innocent,” said Sen. Scanes. Sixteen states have already substituted the death penalty with a sentence of life without parole. “Washington State needs to join these more humane states,” said Sen. Samson. Should this bill become law, Washington will become the 17th state to repeal the death penalty.

Heartbeat bill proposed to curb abortions

Olympia – Yesterday House Bill 3287, which addresses the issue of abortion restrictions in Washington State, was introduced by Representatives Kaiya Weston, Hannah Ozasa, and Kellie Foth. “Our bill will require mothers to listen to a fetal heartbeat during an ultrasound test before making a final abortion decision,” said Rep. Weston. A 2009 state study shows that 16 percent of all pregnancies end in abortion. Currently, the state has one of the most liberal laws in the nation. “When other states have adopted the heartbeat requirement, mothers are made more aware that there is a real person inside them, and it is much harder for them to choose the abortion option,” said Rep. Ozasa. Abortion rates go down. “We just want pregnant women to think deeply about their decision before choosing to end a life,” said Rep. Foth.



Inexperienced hunters need supervision

Olympia – Senate Bill 6782 was introduced yesterday by Senators Kaitlyn Backer, Jordan Moore, and Noel Petersohn. “This bill addresses the issue of hunting accidents and will provide an age requirement for young hunters,” said Sen. Petersohn. In

August 2008, a 14-year-old hunter shot and killed a hiker on a marked trail in Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Park, thinking she was a bear. He was accompanied by his 16-year-old cousin. “This was a tragedy and could have been prevented,” said Sen. Backer. Currently, the state does not have any age requirement for hunters. It only requires passing a gun safety course to get a hunting license. This bill will require any hunter under the age of 14 to be accompanied by an experienced hunter. Also a \$500 fine would be issued to anyone caught breaking this law.



Senators hope to improve grad rate

Olympia – Senate Bill 5796 was introduced yesterday by Senators Nicole Godbout and Amanda Allison. “This bill addresses the issue of teen dropouts and will increase the number of students graduating from our public high schools,” said Sen. Godbout. The overall dropout rate is 26.5 percent of all students. Experts believe that that these rates will only increase, due to larger class sizes, drug and alcohol abuse, and the requirement to pass standardized tests, according to the senators. “All of us suffer when our high schools fail,” said Sen. Allison. Dropouts cost the U.S. \$320 billion in lost wages, taxes, and productivity. Educators at Tahoma High School believe they may have a solution to their dropout problem. “Project Pass” matches up one teacher with 300 students in order to help motivate them to go to the class they are struggling with and get help. Not a single student in the school program is failing. Some schools have special coaches to support students and guide them to success. “Every student in America should graduate ready for college, a career, and life. Every child, no exceptions,” said Sen. Allison. This bill provides special coaches for all public high schools.



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Core-flex established for struggling students

Olympia – Yesterday House Bill 1111 was introduced by Representatives Payton Rothlin, Alexanna Bachmann, and Christian Forde. “This bill addresses the issue of dropout rates in our public high schools and will help students stay in school,” said Rep. Rothlin. In 2009, 26.5 percent of state seniors did not graduate, according to the lawmakers. Programs in other states working to curb dropout rates have shown success with graduation coaches. This bill establishes 30-minute meetings per day with “at-risk” students to meet with their graduation coaches to get the extra help they need to pass tough classes. “We call the program Core-flex, and teachers will be assigned to students to help them pass their classes and assist them with homework when they need it,” said Rep. Forde. “In Atlanta, from 2006-2009, the graduation rate went from 35.4 percent to 77.4 percent of seniors graduating with a program like this,” said Rep. Bachmann.

Death penalty ineffective in reducing violent crime



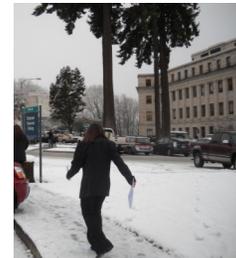
Olympia – Senate Bill 5757 was introduced yesterday by Senators Stephen Kvamme and Fainan Lakha. “This bill addresses the issue of capital punishment and will abolish the death penalty in the state,” said Sen. Lakha. Research finds death penalty to be wasteful and ineffective in reducing crime. A recent national poll

of police chiefs ranked the death penalty as the least efficient use of taxpayers' money. Currently, Washington State has seven death row inmates, one who has been locked up for over 21 years. “We’ve spent millions of dollars on housing and providing legal services for those convicts’ appeals over the years,” said Sen. Kvamme. Sixteen other states have abolished this practice and violent crime has not increased in those places, according to the senators.

Tax deductions approved for pet owners

Olympia – Representative Josh Lusink introduced House Bill 1853 yesterday in the Local Government committee. “This bill addresses the issue of abandoned animals and will reduce the number of animals left in shelters to be euthanized,” said Rep. Lusink. Approximately 5-7 million companion animals are abandoned every year, and 3-4 million are euthanized, many

completely healthy. Many animals are abandoned because of an inability on the part of owners to pay for the cost of the animal. This bill would introduce a tax deduction of \$100 per pet for pet owners in the hopes of encouraging people to keep or adopt pets, clearing up shelters and lowering the euthanasia rate.



Sleep deprived teens need later school start times

Olympia – House Bill 2222 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Max Iniguez and Jack Johnson. “This bill addresses the effect of sleep deprivation on teen academic success and will reduce dropout rates and raise standardized test scores



among high school students,” said Rep. Iniguez. Lack of sleep can interfere with learning. Many studies have shown that when student classes begin too early in the morning, there is an increase in tardiness and poor grades, and a reduction in motivation. “Many

high school students fall asleep in their morning classes every day,” said Rep. Johnson. When high schools push their start times to 8 a.m. or later, improvements occur in every area. This bill will require all public high schools to begin no earlier than 8:30 a.m.

Medical marijuana patients claim drugs too hard to get

Olympia – Senate Bill 5073 was introduced yesterday by Senators Ana Campos and Malik Knight. “This bill addresses the issue of medical marijuana and will make the prescriptions easier to fill,” said Sen. Campos. Medicinal cannabis is simply too difficult to obtain for those eligible patients who have chronic pain or who are terminally ill, according to the lawmakers.

“Washington's strict requirements for patients to grow their own or have someone grow it for them makes it impossible for dispensaries to fill prescriptions for them,” said Sen. Knight. This will allow dispensaries to act like pharmacies and provide legal marijuana for anyone with an order from a doctor.



Childhood obesity results in later adult health problems



Olympia – Yesterday, Senators McKenna Neal and Carly Carlson introduced Senate Bill 5213, which addresses the issue of childhood obesity. “The bill is a

good one because it will help our children remain healthy into adulthood,” said Sen. Neal. Obesity has become a big problem and costs the state healthcare system \$1.5 billion a year. Being overweight in childhood can result in many severe medical conditions later in life, like heart disease and type II diabetes; and these diseases are showing up in younger and younger individuals in more recent years. Vending machines containing junk food and unhealthy school cafeteria choices are partly to blame, according to Sen. Carlson. “Our bill will force public schools to replace chips and soda with healthy choices like yogurt, milk, juice, water, granola bars and many other healthy foods and drinks,” said Sen. Neal.

Senators say underage women should have parent consent for abortions

Olympia – Senate Bill 5678 was introduced yesterday by Senators Blade Gundermann and Erin



Wallman. “This bill addresses the issue of minors receiving abortions too easily in our state and will require parental consent for the procedure,” said Sen. Gundermann. Nationwide, in 2002 approximately 86,000 women younger than 18 had abortions. Only about half of pregnant teens involve their parents in their decision to end a pregnancy. “In states that require parental consent, hundreds of thousands of babies are alive now because their mothers changed their minds, and we believe a conversation with a parent had a great influence on that decision,” said Sen. Wallman. The bill will require women under the age of 18 to obtain the permission of at least one parent to get an abortion.

Sleep deprived teens suffer in school

Olympia – Yesterday, Senate Bill 6412 was introduced by Senator Madilyn Bariekman in the Early Learning & K-12 Education committee. “This bill addresses the issue of sleep deprived teens and will provide a later start time for public high schools so students are more alert in classes,” said Sen. Bariekman. Experts agree that teens need at least 8-9 hours of sleep per night. Nearly 85 percent get less than 8.5 hours each night. If they don’t get enough rest, they have more problems with depression, inappropriate social behavior, poor grades, and dangerous driving habits. This bill will require all public high schools to start no earlier than 8:30 a.m.



Juveniles should not be tried as adults

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Catherine Mead-Smith and Sarah Mead-Smith introduced Senate Bill 7023, which addresses the issue of juveniles charged as adults in criminal cases. “The bill is a good one because it would create a safer environment for society and focus on rehabilitation rather than punishment for young offenders,” said Sen. Catherine Mead-Smith. Currently in Washington State juveniles are only charged as an adult in very serious cases. When this happens and they are sent to adult prisons, juveniles are 34 percent more likely to commit violent crimes once released than those kept in juvenile facilities. “This is because they are subjected to beatings and more serious bodily harm from the adults in those institutions, and come out more hardened criminals. In juvenile detention centers, they get the help they need to become more productive citizens,” said Sen. Sarah Mead-Smith. This bill requires anyone under 18 to be charged as a juvenile, no matter what the crime. “Everyone will benefit from this because it will change young offenders into law-abiding citizens and reduce the crime rate in our state,” said Sen. Mead-Smith.



Football helmet law KO's concussions



Olympia – Senate Bill 7230 was introduced yesterday by Senators Josh Pfenniger and Ryan Rouse. “This bill addresses the issue of head injuries sustained by high school football players and will provide a safer playing environment,” said Sen. Pfenniger. In

2002 Will Benson collapsed during a football game. He died from an acute subdural hematoma that doctors said was caused by a helmet-to-helmet blow that had occurred two weeks earlier. Many helmets currently in use don’t absorb shock like newer, safer ones, according to the senators. “Coaches who have purchased the X1 helmets have seen far fewer concussions,” said Sen. Rouse. This bill requires all public high schools to provide the helmets for their players. The added cost of the more effective, and more expensive, helmets will be raised by increases in gate costs at football games.

Cell phone fine needs increase



Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Zach Vaughn and Maria Kogan introduced Senate Bill 7692, which addresses the ineffective current cell phone law. “The bill is a

good one because it will reduce distractions and create safer roads and highways,” said Sen. Vaughn. Research shows that using a mobile device is comparable to being intoxicated while driving. “Drivers’ minds are somewhere other than on the road when they are talking or texting on a cell phone,” said Sen. Kogan. “We think raising the fine from \$124 to \$200 will make those who continue to use their hand-held phones think twice. It will be much more costly if they are caught,” said Sen. Vaughn. Hands-free cells will continue to be legal, if this bill becomes law.

Gay marriage gives equality

Olympia – House Bill 3261 was introduced yesterday by Representative Joseph Landoni. “This bill addresses the issue of same-sex marriage and will give all citizens equal rights,” said Rep. Landoni. “Many critics say this will undermine the institution of marriage, but with the national divorce averaging nearly 50 percent and domestic partnership dissolution rates in our state at a mere 2.5 percent, I just don’t see this argument,”

said Rep. Landoni. Religious groups also oppose the bill, but the lawmaker argues that marriage is a legal matter and should have no religious impact. Churches would not be required to marry same-sex couples. “When this state recognizes domestic partnerships as marriages, it will give equal visitation and tax return rights in all 50 states,” said Rep. Landoni.

Teachers passionate about civic education

The Washington State Legislature’s 2012 Page School employs certificated civics teachers Judi Orr and Leo O’Leary. Judi is a retired social studies and English teacher who taught for over 35 years in the Clover Park School District, and Leo has been teaching and coaching in and around Olympia for the past six years. “I really like the fact that I can help kids make their dreams come true through both education and athletics,” he said as he introduced himself on Monday. Both teachers enjoyed meeting so many students from all parts of Washington and teaching them more about how state government functions. “I’d be a committee ‘junkie’ if I wasn’t teaching each day. Watching citizens testify about various issues alongside experts in the field is just fascinating to me,” said Judi.

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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.