



The Weekly Page

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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.

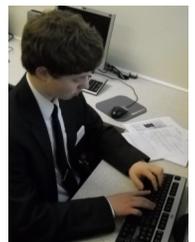
Pages write bills, hold mock hearings

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 commit-

tee hearing on Thursday. Some topics for policy bills included plastic bag pollution, math and science achievements of American high school students, use of personal electronics when crossing streets, and health care for uninsured children. 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.

From streets to a job

Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Brian Carter introduced House Bill 1337, which addresses the issue of homelessness. “The bill is a good one because it will put those who are living on the streets into an environment that will help them find a home and job. This solution is self-sustaining and will have long term positive affects for our communities,” said Rep. Carter. In 2008 there were 24,000 homeless people on average on any given day in Washington State. Over 87,000 faced homelessness during the year. “Re-entering the workforce is hard to do from a tent, and this bill will establish centers where a bed, education, and medical help will be provided for the homeless until they get back on their feet. Once they are working, a portion of their income will be withheld to repay the expenses from the state help,” he said. According to the bill, initial help for building the centers will come from community service projects and volunteers, as well as a temporary .5 percent increase in property taxes.



University science and math programs for teachers upgraded



Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Alexis Gjurasic introduced House Bill 2954, which addresses the lack of quality math and science teachers in the public schools. “The bill is a good one because it will enable more college students in education to sharpen their teaching skills,”

said Rep. Gjurasic. Many math and science graduates are lured to private industry by high salaries and don’t think about going into education. Those that do are often experts in the field of science and math but are lacking in their teaching skills. This bill provides potential teachers with information about new advances in technology and teaching methods. “With high school students nearing the time when science and math test results will determine whether a student graduates or not, it is very important to attract more good teachers to the classroom,” said Rep. Gjurasic.

Sleepy students get a special day

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Mason Bernard, Matthew Brost, and Micah Allred introduced Senate Bill 5555, which addresses the issue of teenage sleep deprivation and its effect on students. “The bill is a good one because it will educate students about getting enough sleep,” said Sen. Bernard. Research shows that students who don’t get enough sleep are more likely to experience depression, poor grades and absenteeism. “Our solution is to create a Teen Student Sleep Day which will be celebrated and recognized by all Washington State public schools. On this day, teachers and school administrators will teach and engage students in dialog about their lack of sleep and the effects it can produce,” said Sen. Brost.



Cheerleading bill ensures safer stunts

Olympia – Senate Bill 5015 was introduced yesterday by Senators Bethany Boyd and Marlo Boyd. “This bill addresses the health issues involved in cheerleading and will prevent injuries and even death due to dangerous stunts,” said Sen. Bethany Boyd. Cheerleading injuries increased from 4,954 in 1980 to nearly 27,000 in 2007. The sport is second only to football in its fatality and injury rates, according to the senators’ research. The bill requires all coaches to be certified who allow flying and advanced tumbling stunts in their team routines. “Stunts must also be done on spring floors or four inch mats, which are proven to prevent injuries by 90 percent,” said Sen. Marlo Boyd.

Hunters and hikers need to be separated

Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Zach Brotherson introduced House Bill 3924, which addresses the issue of hiker safety.

“The bill is a good one because it will save lives during hunting seasons,”

said Rep. Brotherson. In 2008 a 14-year-old hunter shot and killed 54-year-old Pamela Aimli who was hiking in a shared wilderness area. That same year an elk hunter accidentally shot a man in an overlapping recreational area. This bill will require that hunting and hiking areas are separated and that hikers close to hunting areas wear fluorescent orange clothing that covers at least 400 square inches. It will also reinstate the age of 14 for solo hunting. Hunters under the age of 14 must be accompanied by an adult hunter, 18 years or older, who has at least two years of experience. “We don’t want any more hikers mistaken for wildlife and injured or killed,” said Rep. Brotherson.



Paper or plastic?



Olympia – House Bill 3999 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Sarah Marble and Madeleine Hanshew. “This bill addresses the

issue of plastic bag pollution and will ban the bags throughout the state,” said Rep. Hanshew. More than 100 billion plastic bags are thrown out each year. Those that break down in the marine environment are often ingested by marine mammals, while those in landfills will take a thousand years to decompose. This law will prohibit grocery stores from providing checkout bags unless they are made of recyclable paper, compostable plastic, or reusable textile materials. Also, stores that provide these outlawed bags will suffer a large fine. “Several cities like Edmonds have already banned disposable plastic bags in retail stores with much success,” said Rep. Marble. “We should follow this example throughout the state.”

Senators provide for future global jobs



Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Elizabeth Gallagher and Theresa Gallagher introduced Senate Bill 5000, which addresses the issue of low math and science achievement in public school students.

“The bill is a good one because it will enable American students to compete in the future for global jobs ,” said Sen. Elizabeth Gallagher. American school children rank lower than other nations’ students in math, science, and reading because of fewer hours and days in school and poor quality teachers, according to the senators. This bill will authorize the Legislature to add 24 extra days to the school year and reward quality teachers with extra pay. “Arne Duncan, the Secretary of Education, says we will lose a generation of kids if we don’t act quickly to solve this problem,” said Sen. Theresa Gallagher. “American students are at a competitive disadvantage, and where longer days, longer weeks, and longer years are the norm, it makes a huge difference.”

Rep. Crittenden sets minimum age for juvenile offenders to be tried as adults

Olympia – House Bill 3998 was introduced yesterday by Representative Aunquisha Crittenden. “This bill addresses the issue of juveniles charged as adults and will help young offenders who commit crimes have a fair chance to rehabilitate themselves,” said Rep. Crittenden. Washington is one of 23 states that have no minimum age for trying juveniles as adults. About 25,000 children a year have their case sent to adult court. “Horrible things happen to young people who are sent to adult prisons for their crimes,” said Rep. Crittenden. If this bill becomes law, the Legislature will set the minimum age at 17 for being tried as an adult. If the young person is convicted of a crime, they will go to a juvenile facility not an adult prison.



Bill aims at a healthy future for kids

Olympia – Senate Bill 5127 was introduced yesterday by Senator Brianna Fields. “This bill addresses the issue of uninsured children and will require all children to have



some healthcare,” said Sen. Fields. Every 41 seconds a child is born without health care. This bill will require employers to provide family coverage for all their workers. If this is impossible, the government will step in and care for these children. Taxes on imported fruits and vegetables will provide the money for the state assistance.

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.

AND

Watch our mock committee hearings live at:

<http://twv.org>

Death Row costs too high

Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Robert Maiava introduced House Bill 1666, which addresses the issue of death penalty expenses. “The bill is a good one because it will reduce the cost of keeping someone on death row,” said Rep. Maiava. Washington state currently has seven inmates on death row. One person has been there for 20 years. This one person has cost the state more than \$1.5 million. Rep. Maiava’s bill limits the number of years an inmate can be on death row. This bill would allow convicts five years to appeal their sentences. If the appeals failed, he would be executed. “There is no sense in supporting a first degree murderer for an unlimited amount of time. This will save the state a lot of money in the long run,” he said.

New start times to benefit students



Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Andrew Field introduced Senate Bill 5001, which addresses the issue of teenage sleep deprivation. “The bill is a good one because it will help students be more focused and attentive in class,” said Sen. Field. Over time, sleep deprivation leads to serious consequences for academic achievement, social behavior, and the health and safety to our nation’s youth. Adolescents need at least nine hours of sleep, and with biologically determined sleep patterns, that is often hard to get. This bill will require public high schools to start no earlier than 8:30 AM, which will give students more time to sleep and help them to better succeed.

Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Alex Gibson introduced Senate Bill 5456, which addresses the issue of American students ranking lower in math, science and reading compared to students in other nations. “The bill is a good one because it will enable our future workers to be more educated and more competitive in the global market,” said Sen. Gibson. The bill will require all students to stay in school for one month longer. “It should be worth it since only about one-third of 13-14 year olds in the United States are at grade level in reading. The statistics for math and science are even worse. We can no longer afford an academic calendar designed when America was a nation of farmers who needed their children at home plowing at the end of each day,” he said.

Longer school year; it’s worth it

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Rep. Raftis hopes to decrease auto accidents caused by elderly

Olympia – House Bill 1434 was introduced yesterday by Representative Kaylene Raftis. “This bill addresses the issue of elderly drivers and will make our highways safer,” said Rep. Raftis. This bill will require elderly drivers, age 65 and over, to take a driving test every two years. Drivers 85 and over must take the test every year. Statistics show that drivers 75 and older have a 37 percent higher crash rate than younger drivers. “This bill will reduce the amount of accidents caused by our senior citizens who are becoming affected by physical limitations and medications, which can delay reaction times,” said Rep. Raftis.



Vaccine exemptions removed

Olympia – House Bill 3079 was introduced yesterday by Representative Karen McDonough. “This bill addresses the issue of childhood vaccinations and will protect the community from dangerous outbreaks of disease,” said Rep. McDonough. Only 69 percent of Washington children get the required vaccinations, which is 8 percent below the national average. This bill removes the current exceptions from the law on religious and philosophical grounds and requires all school age children to be vaccinated before they attend public school. The exemption for medical conditions would still remain.

Stop texting; start paying attention

Olympia – Senate Bill 5200 was introduced yesterday by Senator Spencer Kombol. “This bill addresses the issue of pedestrian safety and will reduce injuries and deaths caused when people crossing busy streets are distracted by their personal electronic devices,” said Sen. Kombol. Nationally, 12 percent of traffic fatalities are pedestrian-involved. This bill bans the use of iPods, cell phones and other electronic devices while crossing the street. Violators caught texting or using electronics will be fined \$100. “So, next time you are walking across the street, pay attention!” said Sen. Kombol.



Uninsured children get a second chance

Olympia – Senate Bill 5258 was introduced yesterday by Senators Victoria Vongkhamchanh, Gaby Torres, and Marisa Konen. “This bill addresses the issue of uninsured children and will result in all children under the age of 18 being fully covered by medical insurance,” said Sen. Vongkhamchanh. Nationally there are 8.7 million children under the age of 18 who are without health care. “So this means that one in every 10 children can’t go to the doctor if they are sick or need a medical procedure,” said Sen. Torres. This bill will raise the sales tax from 9.5 percent to 10 percent for the next two years in order to fund basic health insurance for lower income children. “We are talking about spending another 1/2 cent for every dollar when we buy items. This will save children’s lives,” said Sen. Konen.



Guest speakers visit Page School

Becca Kenna-Schenk, policy analyst and communications specialist for the Senate Democratic caucus; Supreme Court Justice Mary Fairhurst; and Scott Freeman, Director of Information Technology for local station TVW, joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. Each spoke about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information in regard to the legislative and judicial processes. Pages were able to interact with the guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speakers’ questions.



Competitive edge results in *Jeopardy* win

On Friday pages tested their knowledge of the Legislative process in a spirited game of *Jeopardy*. Winning teams were awarded certificates and brightly colored stickers that they wore proudly for the rest of the day.

No more innocents killed!

Olympia – House Bill 2327 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Josh Woodson, Chase Wood, and Jona Spiller. “This bill addresses the issue of wrongful death sentences and will prevent the amount of innocent people being executed,” said Rep. Wood. In the past 22 years there have been 265 post-conviction exonerations due to DNA testing. “This means 265 innocent people could have been put to death,” said Rep. Spiller. This bill requires DNA testing for all death penalty cases and gives \$50,000 per year to any person confined on death row erroneously.



Senator says we must save the planet

Olympia – Senate Bill 7999 was introduced yesterday by Senator Paul Montemayor. “This bill addresses the issue of plastic bags pollution and will help the environment,” said Sen. Montemayor. Plastic bags are helping destroy the earth, according to the senator. “Animals in the ocean are mistaking the bags for food and dying from eating them. Also, it takes valuable petroleum resources to make the bags. Did you know that it takes one thousand years for these bags in our landfills to decompose?” If this bill becomes law, a 20 cent tax will be placed on each plastic bag that is used at retail stores. “In Ireland, a 20 cent tax was put on plastic bags and 90 percent of people stopped using them, so this idea could work,” he said. Retailers who do not collect the tax will be fined \$500.

Green energy promoted

Olympia – Senate Bill 6666 was introduced yesterday by Senator Tyrell Lund. “This bill addresses the issue of energy production and will promote the use of wind energy,” said Sen. Lund. “Many alternative green energy sources are available for us to use instead of coal. Coal is very dirty.” A recent study reported that when coal is burned, it releases impurities such as sulfur, nitrogen, and fly ash into the air. These can pollute the air or contribute to conditions that lead to acid rain, precipitation that damages forests, rivers and lakes. In order to promote more healthy environments, the Legislature will motivate more landowners to allow wind turbines to be built on their land by giving them tax exemptions and by waiving building permits. “Jobs will be created to build and maintain the wind turbines, so it’s a ‘win-win’ situation,” he said.



Teachers passionate about civic education

The Washington State Legislature’s 2011 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 five 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.

Page program over 100 years old

The Legislative page program has been in existence since 1891. This photo is of pages who served in past years. The first female page served in 1937. In the past, pages were required to do ironing and cleaning for members. Page duties today are much more professional.



Autographs & Emails

