



# The Weekly Page

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 4

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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.

### Bill will keep hunters, hikers safe

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Jennilee Brown and Matisen Anders introduced House Bill 1042, which addresses the issue of hunting accidents. “The bill is a good one because it will prevent further negligence of parents and reduce the amount of deaths caused by unaccompanied young hunters,” said Rep. Brown. On August 2, 2008, a 14-year-old hunter accidentally shot and killed a hiker, mistaking her for a bear. “He was hunting with his 16-year-old brother and had no adult supervision,” said Rep. Anders. If this bill becomes law, all adolescents under the age of 18 seeking a hunting license must be accompanied by a licensed guide. In addition, hikers will be required to wear orange clothing covering at least 400 square inches above the waist during open hunting season.

### Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at:  
<http://www.leg.wa.gov/PageSchool>

### Lawmaker puts limits on EBT card use

Olympia – House Bill 2053 was introduced yesterday by Representative Clayton Easley. “This bill addresses the issue of public benefits fraud and will prohibit use of EBT cards at gambling venues,” said Rep. Easley. Current studies show that Washingtonians with EBT cards have made more than 20,000 transactions at casinos, amounting to over \$2 million. “In 2010, 13,000 Washingtonians on welfare withdrew cash from a casino,” he said. This bill will prevent electronic benefit transfer cards (EBTs) from being used in automated teller machines at casinos in the state. Those who are found in violation will have their EBT cards revoked. “This law will save the state money,” said Rep. Easley.

### Government to sell medical marijuana



Olympia – Senate Bill 1609 was introduced yesterday by Senator Francois Ballou. “This bill addresses the issue of medical marijuana and will make it easier for patients to get the prescriptions they need,” said Sen. Ballou. Under current law, medical marijuana is legal in the state for people with terminal or debilitating medical diseases. “Unfortunately, some of the dispensaries where people who can’t grow the drug themselves or who have no one to provide it for them are being shut down,” said Sen. Ballou. This measure would allow the government to sell the product in a safe way.

## Wanna plastic bag? It'll cost ya!



Olympia – House Bill 3508 was introduced yesterday by Representative Geoff Brelsford. “This bill addresses the issue of pollution and will reduce the use of non-recyclable plastic bags,” said Rep. Brelsford. Grocery and retail stores that hand out plastic bags will have to pay a two cent tax per bag, if this bill becomes law. “In our state 270,000 tons of plastic bags and wrappings are thrown away each year. The petroleum based bags eventually break down into tiny particles that contaminate our soil and waterway,” said Rep. Brelsford. When the particles enter the food chain, animals accidentally ingest them and die. “Not only are we hurting life, but we are littering our roads and parks, and something must be done,” he said.

## 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. Students discussed criteria for making a legislative solution work before selecting 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 which were televised by TVW. Some topics for policy bills included minimum hunting age, teenage drug use, minors prosecuted as adults, and plastic bag pollution. 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.



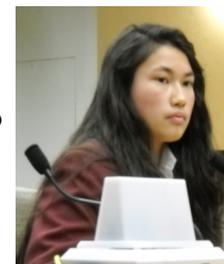
## Guest speakers visit Page School

Sen. Craig Pridemore (D-Vancouver) and Mike Bay, Vice-president in charge of programming for local station TVW, joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. Both spoke about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information in regard to the legislative process. TVW provides “gavel to gavel” coverage for each session, as well as

producing a variety of educational programs for the viewing public. Pages were able to interact with the guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speakers’ questions.

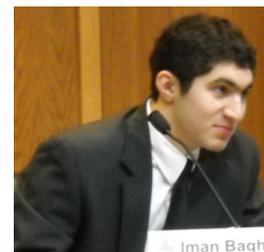
## Senator attempts to stop outrageous lawsuits

Olympia – Senate Bill 5200 was introduced yesterday by Senator Paige Toop. “This bill addresses the issue of abusive lawsuits and will help close the budget gap in our state,” said Sen. Toop. Until Thursday, Washington state was wide open to lawsuits with huge payouts. In one recent case, the driver of a speeding Corvette lost control, crashed and seriously injured the passenger. The driver's negligence was to blame, but questions about the freeway's design exposed the state to paying potentially all the damages. A settlement of \$4.4 million was considered the least expensive outcome. Payouts have grown outrageously from \$241,000 to \$10 million over the last 50 years, according to the senator. In order to solve this problem, the bill will cap lawsuits in Washington state at \$250,000. “If this bill becomes law, we will join many other states in the U.S. who have caps on lawsuits, and we will save millions,” she said.



## High school dropout solution proposed

Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Iman Baghai introduced House Bill 1076, which addresses the issue of high dropout rates in public high schools. “The bill is a good one because it encourages students to stay in school,” said Rep. Baghai. Washington's current graduation hovers at approximately 73.5 percent. About 7.5 percent of state high schools would be labeled as “dropout factories,” according to a recent news article. “Dropout factories are schools with 40 percent or more of their students quitting school,” said Rep. Baghai. This bill will provide priority state funding for failing schools and will encourage highly effective teachers to transfer to these schools to help raise standards by paying them extra. Teachers with low ratings will be dismissed. Funding for the proposed legislation will come from taxes on cigarettes, candy and soda. “Every student deserves a full chance in life, and this is only possible through an excellent education; it is our duty to make sure everyone has this opportunity,” said Rep. Baghai.



## Minors hunting is a major problem

Olympia – Senate Bill 6932 was introduced yesterday by Senators Austin Stonnell, Jacob Yee, and Connor Stake-



lin. “This bill addresses the issue of young and inexperienced hunters and will save hundreds of potential lives, as well as ensure our trails remain safe for public use,” said Sen. Stake- lin. There are over 500 trails in Washington State that are used by citizens for recreational hiking. “Unfortunately, some boundaries of hunting areas and public trails overlap, and this can have tragic consequences,” said Sen. Yee. In 2008, 54-year-old Pamela Aimli was hiking in the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest when she was shot to death by a 14-year-old boy who thought she was a bear. In just 10 years, there have been 56 fatal and 351 non-fatal hunting accidents. “To prevent these sad outcomes, this bill will require all hunters to be at least 16 years of age in order to hunt without an adult. Also a more strict proficiency test will be required before hunters receive their permits. “This bill will separate the experienced from the inexperienced hunters and hopefully reduce the number of accidents in Washington,” said Sen. Stonnell. The new permit will cost \$20 to cover testing fees.

## Juveniles should not be sentenced to adult prison



Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Anna Simonelli and Jessica Corder introduced Senate Bill 7998, which addresses the issue of minors being sentenced to adult prisons. “The bill is a good one because it will keep our youthful offenders from

being harmed by violent adult criminals,” said Sen. Simonelli. Currently the state has no minimum age for charging a young person as an adult. “This bill will protect the minors as well as the public,” said Sen. Corder. “If juveniles are sent to adult prison, they are prone to more criminal acts. Youth in adult prisons are nearly 21 times as likely to report being assaulted or injured there.” Youngsters 10-13 often do not have the mental capacity to help in their own defense, according to studies. This bill will prohibit minors under the age of 16 from being charged in adult court. Those under the age of 16 who commit a major felony will serve time in a juvenile jail until they turn 18, as which time they will be sent to adult prison to finish their sentence.

## Drug dogs sniff out trouble

Olympia – Senate Bill 7007 was introduced yesterday by Senators Nicole Hobbs and Zach Robischon.

“This bill addresses the issue of drug use among teenagers and will reduce drug abuse in our public schools,” said Sen. Robischon. Drug use in 2003 was reported at 30.3 percent for all 8th graders and as high as 52.8 percent for seniors, according to Sen. Hobbs. “I imagine they are even higher today,” said Sen. Robischon. In order to stop the growing rates, the bill will make random, bi-monthly locker and bag checks by drug-detecting dogs a requirement. “Our goal is to reduce the number of teenagers bringing drugs to school and stop drug abuse from spreading,” said Sen. Hobbs. “Eventually, school productivity will increase and the number of teens on drugs will be reduced.”



## Lawmakers put a stop to concussions

Olympia – House Bill 1234 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Michael Talen and Corbett Cruver. “This bill addresses the issue of sports concussions and will keep our athletes safe and healthy,” said Rep. Cruver. Concussions are a very serious issue and can be life



threatening. A Texas high school player died after taking a helmet-to-helmet hit and another player is now paralyzed after going back into a game too soon with a concussion. If the bill becomes a law, all public school coaches will be required to have certified training in recognizing concussions in their players, medical clearances by doctors must be given before anyone sustaining a concussion is let back into a game, and three concussions in one season will make a player ineligible for the remainder of the season. “This important law will help keep these serious injuries from having tragic consequences,” said Rep. Talen.





### DNA hope for innocents on death row



Olympia – House Bill 1352 was introduced yesterday by Representative Sehar Bokhari. “This bill addresses the issue of the death penalty and will reduce the number of innocent people being executed,” said Rep. Bokhari. In the United States there have been 265 post-conviction DNA exonerations. Seventeen of those found innocent served

time on death row. Currently Washington State has seven criminals on death row. One has been there for 20 years, before the technology for DNA testing became more accurate. This bill would require that a second DNA test be administered before execution to verify the results of the first test. “This would make sure that we have the right person for the crime,” said Rep. Bokhari.

### No kids allowed in prison



Olympia—Representative Alex Burrington introduced House Bill 1220 yesterday in the Judiciary committee. This bill would prevent all prosecution of minors under the age of 18 in adult courts. Currently, Washington has no minimum age for charging youth as adults. According to the legislator,

studies show that children 13 and under function like mentally disabled adults and can not help with their own defense. Additionally, youth who commit serious crimes and are sent to adult courts reoffend at twice the rate of those sent to juvenile court. Violent acts are committed in far greater number on youthful offenders in prisons, than on older criminals. “It’s also going to be cost effective to send our youthful offenders to juvenile halls. Prisons are much more expensive,” said Rep. Burrington.

### Bill improves children’s health

Olympia – House Bill 3996 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Sam Scott and Aaron McCullough. “This bill addresses the issue of adults smoking in cars with minor passengers and will improve the health of children in our state,” said Rep. McCullough. Secondhand smoke is toxic and is associated

with lung disease, heart disease, asthma, and ear infections and can lead to an increased risk of sudden instant death syndrome. “Inhaling the small particles in smoke can also adversely affect the development of children's lungs, and there is nothing the children can do to protect themselves,” said Rep. Scott. Children under the age of 16 who are passengers in cars will not have to endure second-hand smoke if this bill passes. Violators who do smoke in cars with children present will be fined \$100. This law will begin as a secondary statute for two years and then will become a primary law.



### Schools need to ‘go green’



Olympia—Yesterday, House Bill 3336 was introduced by Representative Taryn Alexander. “This bill is a good one because it will save energy in our public schools and save the state and school districts money,” said Rep. Alexander. American schools spend more than \$7.5 billion annually on energy—more than they spend on textbooks and computers combined, according to the legislator. “Lighting represents about 26 percent of electricity consumption in a typical school. Together, heating and cooling represents well over half of the energy used by schools,” she said. This bill will require all public schools to replace computers and copiers with Energy Star-qualified products, which use 10-50 percent less energy than conventional models. “We can use the money we save to hire more math and science teachers for the classrooms and to help us solve our other environmental problems.”

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