



# The Weekly Page

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 6

FEBRUARY 18, 2011

## Pages Learn About Legislature



### 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 dangerous dog attacks, juveniles charged as adults in court, the death penalty, and sleep deprived teens. 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.

### Roberts and Snyder propose all-year school



Olympia – House Bill 1001 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Eric Roberts and Caitlyn Snyder. "This bill addresses the issue of student achievement and will increase student learning in science, math and reading," said Rep.

Roberts. This bill will establish year-round public schools with 4-week breaks every three months. "This wouldn't increase the cost, because teachers are working the same number of days per year, but during different months than they work now," said

Rep. Snyder. The current school schedule is based on an old theory that most people are farmers who need their kids to help with harvesting, according to the legislators. "That just isn't the situation anymore. The long summer break gives too much time to forget what was learned during the school year. This new plan will be much more effective," said Rep. Roberts. Compared to other countries, U.S. schools ranked 8th overall and had fewer school days than any of the other top countries.

### Treatment of juvenile offenders on trial



Olympia – Senate Bill 5151 was introduced yesterday by Senators Caleb Brasher and Doug Doenges. "This bill addresses the issue of juvenile crime and will protect young offenders and help rehabilitate them," said Sen. Brasher. Minors who are sent to adult prisons are 7.7 times more likely to commit suicide than their peers in a juvenile facility and are 50 percent more likely to be attacked with a weapon. Youth transferred to adult courts are more likely to reoffend than those sent to the juvenile justice system for the same crime and similar prior records, according to several studies. This bill prevents anyone under the age of 18 from being tried as an adult. "This is not an acceptable way to treat children. They need help learning to be better citizens, not help learning to be better criminals," said Sen. Doenges.

### Page School on the web

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

## Lawmakers lower drinking age

Olympia – House Bill 3210 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Kathleen Yi and Annalies Schuster. “This bill addresses the issue of adolescent alcohol abuse,” said Rep. Yi. Three million teens in the U.S. are problem drinkers, and nearly 60 percent of high school dropouts who drink began before the age of 16. “A major factor in teen drinking is that it is forbidden. If we take the temptation away, it won’t be such a big deal,” said Rep. Schuster. This bill lowers the drinking age to 18.



## Ready! Set! Sleep!

Olympia – Senate Bill 6298 was introduced yesterday by Senator Kyra Bruce. “This bill addresses the issue of teen sleep deprivation and will improve the health and academic achievement of our high school students,” said Sen. Bruce. Scientists have proven that teens require 8.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep each night, but 85 percent receive less than that. Lack of sleep impairs the ability to pay attention in class, think abstractly and make decisions. This bill will move all public high school start times to no earlier than 8 a.m. in order to accommodate the natural biological clocks of adolescents. “In districts where this has been tried, attendance improves along with grades and the overall general mood of students,” she said.



## Cruel or unusual?

Olympia – Senate Bill 5115 was introduced yesterday by Senators A.J. Davis and Braydon Anderson. “This bill addresses the issue of prison costs and will lower yearly expenditures,” said Sen. Davis. Inmates on death row or those who have been given life without parole cost too much money because of their appeals, according to the senators. This bill will only allow a person sentenced to death to have up to four appeals in seven years. After that, the person will be put to death. “We currently have a person who has been on death row for 20 years. That is just too costly and unnecessary,” said Sen. Anderson.



## Bill takes a bite out of dog attacks

Olympia – House Bill 1515 was introduced yesterday by Representative Jay Douthit. “This bill addresses the issue of dangerous dog attacks and will protect our communities,” said Rep. Douthit. The number of fatal dog attacks in the US has been going up; there were 33 deaths in 2007. If this bill becomes a law, all owners of pit bulls, rottweilers, and presa canaries must enroll in an obedience class and must carry extra home insurance in case their dog bites someone. “These dangerous breeds are responsible for 74 percent of attacks and they need training. This is the responsibility of their owners,” said Rep. Douthit.



## Hours for new drivers changed

Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Edward Kim introduced Senate Bill 6428, which addresses the issue of teenage drivers. “The bill is a good one because it will make our streets and highways safer and reduce the number of teenage death from car crashes,” said Sen. Kim. Current research reports in Washington state, two thirds of all teenage deaths are from car crashes. Additionally, the risk for car crashes in 16-19 year olds in Washington state is higher than any other age group because of their lack of experience. Almost half of teen motor vehicle deaths, and some of the most devastating teen car crashes, occurred between 9 p.m. and 5 a.m. This bill will ban teenage drivers, under 18 years of age, from driving alone between 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. for first 6 months after they get their licenses. However, they are permitted to drive between those hours if accompanied by parents, guardians, or licensed drivers who are at least 25 years old, or if there are academic events, sports activities, or emergency situations. Currently the hours are 1 a.m. to 5 a.m.



## 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.

Watch us live at [TVW.org](http://TVW.org)

## Paper instead of plastic



Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Evan Kenney introduced Senate Bill 6789, which addresses the issue of plastic bag pollution. “The bill is a good one because it will stop people from dumping plastic bags into areas landfills or waterways,” said Sen. Kenney. These bags take a long time to de-

compose, and when they enter the oceans and lakes, marine animals mistake them for food. Particles from the decomposing bags kill sea turtles and other marine animals. The Sierra Club estimates that almost 100 billion plastic bags are thrown away each year; only 5.2 percent are recovered for recycling. This bill will require grocery stores and other retail stores use only checkout bags made of recyclable paper, compostable plastic, reusable machine-washable textile materials, reusable plastic that is at least 2.25 mils thick and can be for multiple reuse or make plastic bags that are bio-degradable within 90 days.

## Apartment residents won’t suffer from secondhand smoke anymore



Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Alex Davis introduced House Bill 3941, which addresses the issue of secondhand smoking risks. “The bill is a good one because it will save millions of dollars on fires caused by smokers and will help keep children health,” said Rep. Davis. Smokers are the leading cause of apartment fires and many non-

smokers who live in apartments are bothered by the secondhand smoke of their neighbors. This bill will require landlords to enforce “no smoking” rules in rented housing units. They must also create designated smoking areas in safe locations for renters. “This should drastically reduce the amount of disease and risks involved with secondhand smoke,” said Rep. Davis.

## Shorter summers make smarter students

Olympia – House Bill 2011 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Benjamin Lam, Tali Haller and Joy Duval-Igarta. “This bill addresses the issue of student achievement and will enable American students to compete more successfully for global jobs in the future,” said Rep. Lam. American students are falling behind in math, science and reading. Currently the U.S. is ranked 8th in the world in these subjects. This bill proposes that public middle and high school add 15 extra days to

the school year. “By encouraging Science and Tech businesses in our state with tax credit if they contribute to a special education fund for these days, we will cover the added costs. In the long run, with the help of the additional classroom time, our American students will start pulling ahead in the academic race,” said Rep. Haller.



## Legislature punches the snooze button for students

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Cameron Curtis and Zach Barker introduced House Bill 1234, which addresses the issue of teen sleep deprivation. “The bill is a good one because it will improve academics among high school students,” said Rep. Curtis. Due to public high schools’ early start times, teens are performing worse in school, suffering from mood swings, and are more dangerous behind the wheel. Studies show that 85 percent are not getting the 8.5 or 9 hours of sleep each night that they require. “Sleep deprivation impairs the ability to pay attention, communicate, think abstractly and make good decisions,” said Rep. Barker. The lawmakers propose a mandatory start time of no earlier than 9 a.m. for all public high schools.



## Senator chooses life



Olympia – Senate Bill 5432 was introduced yesterday by Senator Emily Grubbs. “This bill addresses the issue of abortion and will lower the number of procedures in Washington state,” said Sen. Grubbs. This bill will require doctors to get parental consent for any minor who requests an abortion and will make all women wait two weeks after requesting the surgery. During that time they must get counseling about this and other options. Abortions will no longer get any state funding, but counseling programs for the women may receive state funds. “It’s just too easy to get an abortion in our state,” she said. There were 22,642 abortions in 2009 in Washington. “That is 16.6 out of every 1,000 teens—way too many!”

## Guest speakers visit Page School



Troopers Tina Wallman and Dena Hazuka, assigned to the Washington State Patrol Cadet Testing Unit; Justice Debra Stephens of the Washington Supreme Court; and Sen. Mike Carrell (D-28th) joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. They spoke about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information about the branches of government with which they are associated. Pages were able to interact with the guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speakers' comments.

## Food additive regulations proposed



Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Sarah King introduced Senate Bill 5155, which addresses the issue of harmful food additives. “The bill is a good one because it regulates the unhealthy elements in our food by first reducing and then completely eliminating them,” said Sen. King. The bill will require the state

to research the effects of trans fats, refined grains, salt and high-fructose corn syrup added to products and compare them to other healthier alternatives. It will also require package warning labels to be posted on products so consumers can see what they are putting into their bodies. Additionally, the Washington State Department of Health will also gradually set lower and lower levels of additives allowed in food until finally the healthier alternatives will replace them. “Over 90 percent of the typical American food budget is spent on processed food which contains little nutritional value,” said Sen. King. “The long-range benefits of this bill should lead to decreases in heart problems and diabetes.”

## Smoking ban to include apartment complexes and parks

Olympia – House Bill 2727 was introduced yesterday by Representative Ben Lewis. “This bill addresses the issue of second-hand smoking and will ban the practice in apartment complexes and public parks,” said Rep. Lewis. People exposed to smoking

in multi-unit housing complexes and outdoor parks and beaches have increased chances of developing diseases such as lung cancer and asthma. Smokers are also the leading cause of apartment fires, according to the lawmaker. “This bill will make environments for people living in apartments and enjoying outside recreation much safer,” said Rep. Lewis.

## State begins teaching the teachers

Olympia – Senate Bill 5678 was introduced yesterday by Senator Richard Postera.

“This bill addresses the issue of student dropouts and will increase teacher quality,” said Sen. Postera. It requires that all teachers observe highly qualified teachers for five hours and then do a practice teaching session while being observed before being hired. All teachers will be required to complete observations every five years, as well. “No one likes to be in class and not understand his or her teacher, so this should definitely improve the graduation rates,” explained Sen. Postera, “I’m excited to see how the education of our children will change after this bill becomes law.”



## 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.

## Dangerous drivers stopped in their tracks

Olympia – Yesterday, Representative Amelia M. Thompson introduced Senate Bill 7898, which addresses the issue of dangerous drivers. “The bill is a good one because it will increase safety on our highways,” said Rep. Thompson. The proposed law will require all drivers to take a physical driving test once every 15 years, specifically every third time they renew their license—at age 16, 31, 46, 60, 75 and 90.

“This will decrease the number of unsafe drivers and not single out any one group as poor drivers,” she said. This will be paid for by increasing the cost of all license renewals by \$2. “With the extra funds, the DMV will be able to hire more workers to administer the driving test, which will include a vision and knowledge portion along with the actual test behind the wheel.”



### Death penalty mended, not ended



Olympia – Senate Bill 5674 was introduced yesterday by Senators Nicci Francis, Maleah James, and Tess

Fox. “This bill addresses the issue of the death penalty and will decrease the number of innocent people being executed,” said Sen. James. “For every seven executions since 1976, one other prisoner on death row has been found innocent in the United States. This is where our problem starts,” Said Sen. Fox. People all over the United States are being wrongfully convicted of crimes, put on death row, and then found innocent. One man spent 18 years, 12 of them on death row, for the murder of an entire family before he was finally found innocent. There have been 265 post-conviction DNA exoneration in the U.S. This law will require all death penalty sentences to be verified with conclusive DNA proof before execution.

### No more cyber bullies!!

Olympia – Senate Bill 7998 was introduced yesterday by Senator Izel Thomson. “This bill addresses the issue of cyber bullying and will make the use of the internet safer,” said Sen. Thomson. The bill will increase the punishment for those accused of cyber-bullying to a fine of \$150, and establish secure monitoring of all social networking websites by watchdog citizen groups. “This is a neat and futuristic way of keeping people of all ages safe to use the computer once more,” said Sen. Thomson.



### Unemployment money being abused



Olympia – Senate Bill 5216 was introduced yesterday by Senator Jillian Langer. “This bill addresses the issue of unemployment abuse and will prevent the misuse of state money,” said Sen. Langer. Statistics from the Employment Security Department found that 3,033 people who were not looking for jobs received \$3.3 million in unemployment compensation.

In addition, a recent King 5 News report found nearly \$2 million in welfare cash being withdrawn from ATMs in casinos all over Washington in one year. “This is our

tax money and this should not continue,” said Sen. Langer. She proposes that unemployment checks stop after one year, which will encourage people to actually look for real jobs and save money for emergencies after the unemployment runs out. “Unemployment should not be the person’s job!” she said.

### Stricter rules imposed on bars and clubs



Olympia – Senate Bill 7377 was introduced yesterday by Senator Maureen McMillin. “This bill addresses the issue of drunk driving and will reduce the number of deaths due to irresponsible behavior,” said Sen. McMillin. In 2008, 35 percent of all automobile related deaths involved alcohol. Studies show that night time drivers are four times more likely to be involved in alcohol related fatalities. This bill will affect all bars, clubs, or other venues which serve alcohol. It will require them to collect the keys of its patrons, and the patrons must perform a successful blood alcohol concentration (BAC) test to retrieve their keys upon departure. The cost for the BAC devices will be paid by the bar owners, who can increase drink prices to help pay for the equipment. “Perhaps this will encourage more people to become designated drivers,” said Sen. McMillin.

### Page program over 100 years old

The Legislative page program has been in existence since 1891. 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 and include delivering campus correspondence, helping with mailings in legislative offices, and handing out documents on the floor of the Senate and House.



## 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 enjoy 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.

## Autographs & Emails

