



The Weekly Page

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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. 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 harmful food additives, the Head Start education budget, employment for newly released felons, and teen sleep deprivation. 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” recom-

mendation 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.

Senators hold student athletes to higher standard

Olympia – Today, Senators Tristan Cook and Landon Baldwin introduced Senate Bill 7415, which addresses the issue of sports eligibility in public high schools.

“The bill is a good one because it will be more fair to all athletes and focus more on academic success,” said Sen. Cook. Although the Washington Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) sets a minimum standard for participating in team sports, many schools require a higher GPA. Currently, those schools that follow the WIAA rules, allow athletes to pass all but one class. “This could mean they have 5 Ds and one F and are still able to play with the team,” said Sen. Baldwin. “At schools with higher GPA requirement, that student wouldn’t be able to play. This is unfair,” he said. This bill mandates a 2.0 grade average for all students who participate on high school athletic teams. “Students don’t realize that athletics can only take them so far and that the purpose of school is for kids to learn, not to play sports,” said Sen. Cook.



Lawmakers want food label changes



Olympia – House Bill 1234 was introduced today by Representatives Tyler Durant and Joshua Limes. “This bill addresses the issue of common harmful food additives and will help consumers make better

choices about the foods they buy,” said Rep. Durant. There are over 14,000 man-made food additives in food today, according to the legislators. The big four ingredients in processed foods that are harmful are trans-fats, refined grains, salt and high-fructose corn syrup. Recent scientific studies have revealed that trans-fats, one of the additives in foods, may have directly been responsible for as many as 100,000 premature heart related deaths last year. This bill will require Washington State producers of food containing the big four harmful food additives to list them in a BOLD font on the package label. In addition, manufacturers who add unhealthy amounts of these four ingredients will be taxed 8 percent. “This will motivate them to cut down on the amount they add to products, thus reducing the amount of heart related deaths, and other medical problems that the additives may cause,” said Rep. Limes.

A healthy body means a healthy brain

Olympia – Today, Senators Claire Bacon, Johanna Harris, and Amber Crabb introduced Senate Bill 6789, which addresses the issue of childhood obesity in Washington state. “The bill is a good one because it will improve the health of our future citizens,” said Sen. Harris. Current research shows that in the past 30 years, childhood obesity has tripled, from 5 percent to 17 percent. Obesity results in many health concerns later in life.

Children born in 2000 have a one in three chance of developing type 2 diabetes in their lifetime. This bill will require all public schools to have at least one hour a day of physical education or sports classes. In addition, the bill provides for increased availability to nutrition classes for parents, smaller portions for school lunches,

healthier snacks and lunches at school, and restricted advertising of unhealthy foods on TV



networks aimed at children. “a healthy body has a healthy brain. If you work your body hard, your brain can work hard, too,” said Sen. Bacon.

Legislation puts limits on EBT cards

Olympia – House Bill 2326 was introduced today by Representatives David Haley and Daniel Buchignani.

“This bill addresses the issue of EBT fraud and will limit which ATM cash machines can be accessed by welfare recipients,” said



Rep. Haley. While it is illegal to gamble with welfare money, a recent investigation showed that 20,465 separate withdrawals of welfare cash were made at Washington casinos in one year. Drug detectives also say that the cards are used as currency on the streets and are handed over to dealers in exchange for drugs. “After the deal, the user visits a DSHS office to get a replacement card, claiming they lost the original,” said Rep. Buchignani. This bill will prohibit the placement of EBT accepting ATMs in casinos, bingo halls, and card rooms. In addition, it will limit the number of replacement cards to three per year. When the third replacement is requested, a \$50 fine will be assessed and no more cards will be replaced that year.

Microchips in pets to cut down on euthanization by shelters

Olympia – Senate Bill 6505 was introduced today by Senators Serena Hunt, Briana Nasman, and Matthew Larson. “This bill addresses the issue of abandoned pets and will reduce the number of euthanized animals in shelters,” said Sen. Hunt. It is estimated that 5 to 7 million companion animals will enter animal shelters nationwide every year, and 60 percent of cats and 70 percent of dogs are euthanized there. Less than 2 percent of cats and only 15-20 percent of dogs are returned to their owners, according to the senators. This bill requires all pet owners to have microchips implanted in their animals. “If they get picked up by the shelter, they will not have to keep the animal or put it down,” said Sen. Nasman.



Senators make A's out of Zzz's

Olympia – Today, a group of bills were introduced in the Senate’s Early Learning and K-12 Education committee concerning sleep deprivation in teens and early start times of public middle and high schools.



SB 7000, introduced by Senators Douglas Bishop and Melissa La Haye; SB 6663, sponsored by Senators Lindsay Clerf and Anastasia Baum; and SB 5438, introduced by Senators Amy Pratt and Manya Segireddy all focused on the health and academic problems that arise when teenagers don’t get the required 8 1/2 to 9 1/2 hours of sleep experts say they need to



function well at school. It is reported that 85 percent of teens get less than 8.5 hours of sleep per night. “Sleep deprivation impairs the ability to pay attention, creativity,

communication, problem solving, decision making, mood and motivation,” said Sen. Pratt. Reports also reveal that, of the 100,000 motor vehicle crashes caused by fatigued drivers, over half of them are high schoolers. Research in the 1990s found that teenagers’ sleep patterns are biologically determined, causing them to stay up late and sleep in later. “Their bodies don’t let them go to sleep until about 11 or 12 at night. This means that they need to sleep longer in the morning to get the required 9 hours of sleep,” said Sen. Bishop. While each bill suggests a slightly different start time for public middle schools and/or high schools—8:30 or 8:45 a.m.—the sponsors all agree that getting an extra hour of sleep each morning will result in increased learning and a better chance for success in the future. “When the Minneapolis School District changed start times from 7:15 to 8:40 a.m., the end results were improved attendance and enrollment

rates, increased daytime alertness, and decreased depression and teen suicide rates,” said Sen. Clerf. “If it can work there, it can work here.”



Beverage bottle bill helps Washington go green

Olympia – Today, Representatives Holly Brown and Wyatt Griner introduced House Bill 1220, which addresses the growing



problem of beverage bottles in state landfills. “The bill is a good one because it will reduce the increasing volume of waste going into landfills in our state,” said Rep. Brown. In the United States 120,548 bottles are dumped in landfills every minute, adding up to 63.4 billion a year. Beverage bottles compose 40-60 percent of all litter. These bottles take an average of 300-500 years to decompose. “As these landfills grow, recycling becomes more and more important. We need to figure out how to motivate more people to conserve,” said Rep. Griner. The proposal would mandate a 10 cent deposit on each beverage bottle sold. When bottles are returned to the retailer or recycling center, the dime would be refunded. “Various states that have adopted this policy have seen recycling rates jump, reaching as high as 80 percent,” said Rep. Brown.

Lawmakers fear death penalty could execute the innocent



Olympia – Senate Bill 7443 was introduced today by Senators Gage Stromberg and Wells Stromberg. “This bill addresses the issue of the death penalty and will prohibit innocent people from being executed,”

said Sen. Wells Stromberg. In the state of Illinois, 13 death row inmates were released after discovering through DNA tests that they were innocent. Currently Washington State has seven convicted death penalty felons. “Because the average exoneration rate is one in seven, it is possible that we now have an innocent man on death row in our state,” said Sen. Gage Stromberg. If this bill becomes law, the death penalty will be replaced with life in prison without parole (LWOP). “This solution could potentially save innocent lives and will save money for the state. There are no downsides to this bill,” said Sen. Wells Stromberg.

Graduation coaches help reduce dropout rates



Olympia – Today, Representatives Claire Conley and Renée Roach introduced House Bill 2012, which addresses

the issue of high school dropouts. “The bill is a good one because it will encourage more students to graduate from high school,” said Rep. Conley. Research shows that educators can predict with 66 percent accuracy which students in elementary school will go on to drop out of high school. Out of Washington’s 290 high schools, about 22 would be considered “dropout factories,” having no more than 60 percent of its students who start as freshmen make it to their senior year. This bill proposes to require all high schools with graduation rates lower than 60 percent to have “graduation coaches.” These would be educators who would nag, guide, coax, and cheer their students toward earning enough credits to get to the finish line, according to the lawmakers. “Graduation coaches will visit the middle and elementary schools once every month to motivate kids to do their best. In high school, kids will be assigned a coach to work with them more personally,” said Rep. Roach. Costs to implement the program will come from a one-cent increase in sales tax.

State senators propose abolishing the death penalty

Olympia – Today, the Senate Judiciary committee heard bills from two groups of sponsors on the issue of death penalty costs. SB 7993, introduced by Senators Ina LaGrandeur, Blake



Langeslay, and Laurel Messenger; and SB 7773, introduced by Senators Aamina Mohamed, Victoria Morales, and Ashley Pratt, both recommended discontinuing capital punishment in favor of life in prison without parole (LWOP). “The bills are both good ones because they help save millions of dollars that the state is spending on continuing court cases and personal attention to the few inmates on death row,” said Sen. LaGrandeur. A trial in which capital punishment is pursued costs at a

minimum \$754,000 more than a normal murder trial, according to the Washington State Bar Association. Additional costs of the death penalty include extra security and several appeals for each inmate on death row. Currently, Washington has seven inmates sentenced to death; one has been on Death Row for 21 years. In addition, in a recent poll police officers ranked the death penalty last when asked what was most important in reducing violent crime. In New Jersey after abolishing the death penalty, the state actually saw a drop in murder rates. “The money we are spending on these criminals could be put to far better use,” said Sen. Langeslay.



Abortions too easy in Washington



Olympia – Today, Representatives Wyatt Dunlap and Josh Curry introduced House Bill 2835, which addresses the issue of abortions. “The bill is a good one because it will protect innocent human life by making it harder to get the procedure,”

said Rep. Curry. In 2009 there were a total of 23,738 abortions recorded in Washington. Of those, 1,096 abortions were for out-of-state residents. “Why do women from other states come here?” said Rep. Dunlap. “It’s because we have no restrictions of any kind on the mother...it’s easy to get the procedure done here.” In other states, several restrictions are in place to make it harder for a woman to get an abortion. This bill proposes to require counseling for any woman seeking an abortion. A parent’s signature must be provided at least one week prior to an abortion for a young woman under the age of 18. In addition, only a licensed physician can perform an abortion and all state funding for the procedure will be eliminated. “From the moment of conception, the human is alive. Therefore, it is our responsibility to protect this precious life,” said Rep. Dunlap.

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.

Finding jobs for newly released felons could get easier



Olympia – Today, Representatives Romie Pugh and Ali Tesch introduced House Bill 2217, which addresses the difficulty felons have in finding employment after being released from prison. “The bill is a good one because

it will require inmates to take educational courses and participate in job-training programs while in prison so they will have job skills when they reenter their communities,” said Rep. Tesch. Research shows that once ex-convicts return to the community, 48 percent wanted but were unable to participate in programs to improve their work skills due to the fact that they were unaware of available programs or they could not afford the training offered. Current unemployment rates are about 8.3 percent. “Due to the current unemployment rates, it’s even more challenging for felons to find a job. We feel it is more beneficial to prepare the person to reenter society early than to wait until later when he is back home and has a lot of other hurdles to get over,” said Rep. Pugh. The bill calls for encouraging new or experienced teachers to volunteer to teach prison classes in exchange for excusing part or all of their student loans based on the time they give to the program.

How low can you go?

Olympia – House Bill 2500 was introduced today by Representatives Morgan Chaffee and Amara Gordon.

“This bill addresses the issue of academic success in public schools and will reduce class size in the early grades,” said Rep. Chaffee. Washington’s class sizes are among the largest in the nation. In the early grades the national average is 20 students to the state’s 23 student-teacher ratio; however, by high school the numbers jump to 31 students in state classes compared with the national average of 19 students per teacher. “In our 3rd grade classes, where numbers tend to be smaller, yearly test scores are higher than in 4th and 5th grades, where class sizes are higher,” said Rep. Gordon. This bill will



increase the sales tax by 1/4 cent, which would bring in enough money to buy approximately 5,000 elementary teachers. “When the budget was reduced in 2010, the enhancement money for smaller classes in grades K-4 was eliminated. This bill would return revenues to the enhancement program and give our youngest students the successful start they need to do well in school later,” said Rep. Chaffee.

Legislators alarmed over teen sleep deprivation

Olympia – House Bill 2929 was introduced today by Representatives Keaton Dahlinger and Liam Paige. “This bill addresses the issue of teen sleep deprivation and will promote healthy living and academic success for teens,” said Rep. Dahlinger

Eighty-five percent of teens get less than the recommended 8.5 hours of sleep per night, according to the lawmakers. More than half of children under the age of 18 complain of being tired during the day, and 15 percent said they fell asleep at school during the year. “Since teens’ bodies biologically determine their sleep and wake patterns, it is difficult for them to go to sleep before 11 or 12 p.m. This fact is in stark contrast to the early school bells that ring at 7 a.m. in many parts of our state,” said Rep. Paige. The legislators are proposing that all public high schools start no earlier than 9 a.m. in order to accommodate the need for teens to get more sleep. “This change can only result in better grades and attendance and less depression and inattention,” said Rep. Dahlinger.



Page program over 120 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 and include delivering campus correspondence, helping with mailings in legislative offices, and handing out documents on the floor of the Senate and House.

Watch us live at TVW.org

Committee proposed to study science/math skill inadequacies



Olympia – Senate Bill 5000 was introduced today by Senators Matthew Warren and Jack Kaltreider. “This bill addresses the poor skills exhibited by students in the areas of math and science when compared to our international peers,” said Sen.

Warren. In a recent study of international schools, the United States ranked near the middle or close to last on math and science tests for students in grades 4, 8, and 12, and was last in advanced science skills. “These shortfalls can be attributed to both a lack of qualified teachers in these areas as well as curriculum that doesn’t properly prepare our students for the global workplace,” said Sen. Kaltreider. Among high school physical science teachers, 55 percent do not have a minor in any of the physical sciences. Because most math and science teachers are new to the profession, they are making less money than the more experienced teachers, so they tend to quit after 4-5 years to take higher paying jobs in private companies. “Our public schools can’t compete with the private corporate salaries,” said Sen. Warren. This bill establishes a committee to study and offer suggestions to revamp the curriculum, as well as to propose ideas to encourage college students to become teachers. They will report to the legislature at a future date with recommendations.

Lawmakers make a plea to avoid Head Start cuts

Olympia – Today, Representatives Lillian Kelly, Felicia McKenzie, and Randi Omat introduced House Bill 2221, which addresses the issue of budget cuts

to the Head Start Early Learning program. “The bill is a good one because it preserves the social and academic program for preschoolers,” said Rep. Kelly. Head Start is an education program for low income families that helps prepare preschoolers for kindergarten. Currently, 16,500 youngsters attend this program. “Without this program the kids would not be ready to



learn. We know that Head Start children have a lower dropout rate than those who do not attend,” said Rep. Omat. The bill was initiated out of fear that current plans for the supplemental budget include cutting the highly regarded program. It mandates that current funding remain intact and that program participants—low income families—pay \$5 to register their child in the program. “Essentially, we are saying ‘hands-off’ this program when cuts have to be made,” said Rep. McKenzie.

Representatives propose eliminating the death penalty

Olympia – House Bill 1798 was introduced today by Representatives Tyler Weyer and Shanna Hauser. “This bill addresses the cost of keeping the death penalty and will ban the sentencing option in the future,” said



Rep. Weyer. “This bill will easily save the taxpayers \$10 million that the state could spend on teachers and police officers,” said Rep. Hauser. At the trial level, death penalty cases are estimated to generate roughly \$470,000 more in costs compared to the cost of trying the same case as an aggravated murder without the death penalty. The death penalty is not a deterrent for criminals, either, according to the legislators. In New Jersey murder rates decreased after they eliminated the use of the death penalty. “The death penalty was ranked last when police chiefs were asked to name one area as ‘most important for reducing violent crime’ with only one percent listing it as the best way to reduce violence,” said Rep. Weyer. “There are many great and helpful things we could spend our money on, and the death penalty shouldn’t be one of them,” said Rep. Hauser.

Sine Die and goodbye!

At the rear of both chambers of the legislative building are massive double doors. When opened wide, the presiding officers on the respective rostrums can see one another across the rotunda. It is a long-standing tradition that the final act of the legislative session occurs when the two officers simultaneously bang their gavels and announce they are now adjourned *sine die*.

Today, after 60 days of public hearings in committees, compromises between political parties and controversial topics debated, the final regular session of the 62nd Legislative biennium ended. Over 3,000 bills were introduced in the two chambers, but only about 15-20 percent will actually become laws. The last bills to be passed will be sent to the Governor for her signature after the session’s midnight deadline tonight.