



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. Early in the week 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 this week included math/science achievement, death penalty costs, high school athletic standards, repeal of the Death with Dignity Act and beverage bottle 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.

Financial empowerment for high school students is the goal for new legislation



Olympia – Senate Bill 5505 was introduced yesterday by Senators Sophia DeBusschere and Sabrina deBont. “This bill addresses the

issue of personal financial education and will empower our students to handle their money well after they leave high school and enter the world of work,” said Sen. DeBusschere. Lack of information about money matters is a problem among high-school age youth; only seven percent of students were able to pass a test of basic financial knowledge, according to a study by the Jump\$tart Coalition for Personal Financial Literacy. College students are feeling the effect of this ignorance, with the average student drowning in thousands of dollars of credit card debt. “Currently, instruction is up to parents, but many parents don’t have the knowledge themselves and cannot impart pecuniary wisdom to their children,” said Sen. deBont. Bill 5505 mandates that all Washington’s high school students complete an online personal finance course before they graduate. The curriculum will include information on buying a car, purchasing a home, saving for retirement, and navigating the stock market, among other topics. “In this economy, our young people need all the help they can get in managing their fiscal life,” said Sen. deBont.

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.

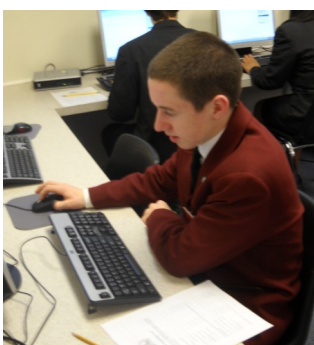
Health care for underprivileged kids



Olympia – House Bill 3693 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Savanna Scott, Eva Fellows, and Daniel Slagle. “This bill addresses the issue of uninsured

children and will grant health care for children until the age of 18,” said Rep. Slagle. Currently the state’s insurance program for underprivileged children, Apple Health for Kids, provides free to low cost health care to its patients. However, there are still many children who aren’t getting the medical attention they need. In 2008, nearly 73,000 children in Washington State had no health insurance. “This is a matter of providing insurance for a child with asthma so he can go to a doctor for treatment that will cost the insurance company \$163, or not providing insurance and having that child visit the ER for \$382. Guess who pays for that ER visit? Those of us who are insured,” said Rep. Fellows. This bill will support the continuation of the Apple health care program with the addition of raised eligibility standards and lower premium costs. “No family would pay more than \$60/month in premiums,” said Rep. Scott.

Bill puts restrictions on seniors

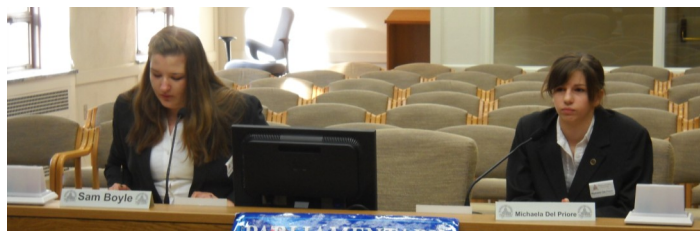


Olympia – Senate Bill 7268 was introduced yesterday by Senator Aidan O’Neill. “This bill addresses the issue of elderly drivers and will reduce the accident and fatality rates for our senior citizens,” said Sen. O’Neill. In 2005 it was reported that drivers aged 75 and older had a 37 percent higher crash rate than younger drivers.

This bill will require all drivers 65 years and older to take a physical driving test again. “It will be just like they were getting their license at age 16,” said Sen. O’Neill. At age 70, drivers will need to take medical tests for diseases and/or conditions that may obstruct their driving ability before a license will be renewed.

Teachers make the difference

Olympia – House Bill 2222 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Sam Boyle and Michaela Del Priore. “This bill addresses the issue of low student test scores in math and science



and will make sure that high school teachers hold an endorsement for any subject they teach,” said Rep. Boyle. Math and science test scores for the United States are much lower than scores of other countries. Currently the U.S. ranks 31st worldwide in math and 23rd in science. This may be due to the lack of highly qualified teachers in these subjects. Nationally, among high school teachers of biology and life science, almost one third of them don’t have even a minor in biology. This bill will require teachers to obtain an endorsement in all the subjects they teach. Those who currently have assignments for which they have no endorsement will be provided an accelerated endorsement program at a discounted tuition price. “Teachers who know the material they teach can teach it better to their students,” said Rep. Del Priore. “This bill ensures a high quality education for students who need to equip themselves for the competitive international job market of the future,” she said.

Make it or break it

Olympia – House Bill 2595 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Matt Althoff and Mistya Beyer. “This bill addresses the issue of high school sport eligibility and will raise grade standards for athletes without jeopardizing sports programs,” said Rep. Beyer. Currently all high schools do not have the same standards for teams, creating a situation where some talented players get to participate and other have to sit out because of low grades. The WIAA sets a minimum standard for participation, but school district may set higher ones. “Having low standards is sending the message that sports are more important than education,” said Rep. Althoff. “Having students eligible to play sports in high school and not prepared for life doesn’t make sense. It’s a disservice to students. Even the NCAA believes that sports should take a backseat to education,” he said. This bill will require all high schools to set a 2.0 GPA for all athletes. Students below this GPA will be benched and given three weeks to improve their grades with the help of tutoring. If improvements aren’t made, the student is benched for the season.



Bottle bill moves to Washington



Olympia – Senate Bill 7999 was introduced yesterday by Senators Rory McDonald and Emma Hollar. “This bill addresses the issue of plastic bottle pollution and will provide a place for citizens to recycle their used cans and bottles,” said Sen. McDonald. When bottles are recycled into the designated station, there

will be a refund for each can or bottle depending on size. Bottles make up 40 to 60 percent of all litter and, with this new law, legislators are hoping citizens will be motivated to recycle rather than throwing them away. “The fine for littering will also go up, which will help with the cost of this new recycling system,” said Sen. Hollar. This program was patterned after Oregon’s law which has been in use since 1971. “This will save oil and the recycled bottles will be turned into new products,” said Sen. Hollar.

Reps sack plastic bags

Olympia—House Bill 1111 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Michelle Magbag, Quinlan Hughes, and Lauren Hackett. “This bill addresses the issue of plastic bag pollution and will result in reducing trash that piles up because of over-consumption of the bags,” said Rep. Magbag. A recent study shows that an estimated 100 billion plastic bags are thrown out each year and only 5.2 percent of those are recovered for recycling. The bags also use up precious non-renewable resources, harm marine life, and can create dangerous toxins when burned in landfills. “In landfills, plastic bags take 450 years to decompose, compared to paper bags which take a mere week,” said Rep. Hughes. The bill requires all retail stores to impose a 5-cent fee on all plastic bags. “Optional paper, compostable plastic, or reusable machine washable bags will be provided at little or no additional cost to the consumer, however,” said Rep. Hackett. “We know this will reduce the consumption of plastic bags help us make the shift to the more eco-friendly ones,” she said.



High school athletes need to get smarter to play school sports

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Cameron Siler and Luke Davidson introduced Senate Bill 6789, which addresses the issue of high school athletic eligibility. “The bill is a good one because it helps create a level playing field for high school teams,” said Sen. Davidson. This



bill will replace the current Washington Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) minimum standards for sports teams in the state. “Currently, any school district can set higher standards than the WIAA, and many do. This means that some talented athletes get to play and some have to sit on the bench because of low grades,” said Sen. Siler. With the new law, athletes at all public and private high schools will have to maintain at least a 2.5 GPA and be passing all their classes to play. Districts will not be able to raise the state standard. “We believe that if students have higher standards to meet they will rise to the occasion and be more successful at life,” said Sen. Siler.

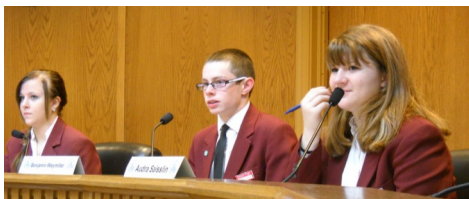
Washington food product companies must comply with new labeling law



Olympia – Senate Bill 5203 was introduced yesterday by Senators Julia Nark and Danielle Powell. “This bill addresses the issue of harmful food additives in state products and will help Washington

citizens become more educated about what they are putting in their bodies,” said Sen. Powell. Many common food additives are damaging to one’s health. Ninety percent of a family’s food budget is spent on processed foods, the majority of which are filled with additives and stripped of nutrients, such as soluble fiber, antioxidants, and “good” fats, which are designed by nature to protect the heart. According to studies, chemical additives contribute to health problems, such as cancer, diabetes, birth defects, and many other diseases. This bill requires all food products processed in Washington State to clearly identify additives and any other unnatural ingredients in a bold font on the package nutritional label. “While we can’t ban the products entirely, we hope when consumers learn more about what is in the food they eat, they will eliminate the bad foods on their own,” said Sen. Nark.

Death with Dignity Law simplified



Olympia — Yesterday, Senators Kelly Tackett, Benjamin Weymiller, and Audra Saisslin introduced Senate

Bill 5384, which addresses the issue of the assisted suicide law that was enacted in 2007. “The bill is a good one because it allows patients with less than six months to live the ability to take their own lives in a more timely and humane manner,” said Sen. Tackett. The senators are looking to reduce the amount of time it takes for a patient to request a doctor’s help in ending his or her life. Currently, it can take over a month between when the patient first verbally asks for the lethal drugs and when he receives it. “This means in the amount of time he spends waiting, he continues to suffer, medical bills are growing, and the will to live is shrinking,” said Sen. Saisslin. This bill simplifies the paperwork needed to access the life-ending option and makes it mandatory for all doctors to fill prescription requests within one week of the patient’s verbal request.

Senators ease restrictions on medical marijuana



Olympia – Senate Bill 5420 was introduced yesterday by Senators Simon Giloi and Shane Florance. “This bill addresses the issue of medical marijuana and will help end problems concerning arrest protection and obtaining prescription for patients,” said Rep. Giloi.

The bill will authorize the licensing of medical cannabis dispensaries to act as pharmacies, allowing patients with prescriptions to get medical marijuana. Patients will have arrest protection for as long as their prescriptions are valid, if they do not exceed the amount of allowed marijuana. The medical marijuana law has been in force for more than a decade, but patients must either grow the product for their own use or find one other person who will grow it for them. “Many patients can’t do either, and dispensaries have cropped up to help them. Owners and police officers don’t have the same interpretation of the law, though, so some cities are closing down what they consider to be illegal businesses,” said Sen. Florance. This bill will allow those businesses to continue operating.

Reps help sleep deprived teens improve academics with later school start times

Olympia – House Bill 2323 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Georgette Lugalía, Kathryn Merrill, and Lacey Thompson.



“This bill addresses the issue of sleep deprived teens and will improve academic success for high school students,” said Rep. Merrill. Statistics show that 85 percent of teens get less than the required 8.5 to 9 hours of sleep a night to perform well at school. By requiring districts to begin the high school day no earlier than 8:30 a.m., lawmakers will give teens the extra sleep they need. More rest will mean better attendance rates and better grades. After the Minneapolis Public School District changed the starting times of seven high schools from 7:15 a.m. to 8:40 a.m., there were improvements in attendance and performance rates, an increase in daytime alertness, and a decrease in student-reported depression.

Death penalty is cost-prohibitive, say legislators

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Joshua Bates and MaKaylah Kelly introduced House Bill 2363, which addresses the issue of death penalty costs. “The bill is a good one because it will eventually save money and help the state get out of debt,” said Rep. Kelly. This bill will eliminate the death penalty. Death penalty cases cost nearly \$500,000 more than a murder trial where the person will get life in prison, and since inmates on death row are required to be in special facilities, it costs an enormous amount of money for security and other accommodations, according to the lawmakers. The average cost per year for an inmate on death row is about \$90,000 and the average cost per year for a regular inmate is \$35,000. Currently Washington state has seven inmates on death row. “One inmate



has been there for 20 years; that’s \$1.8 million we’ve spent just on him,” said Rep. Bates. “This could save us a lot of money,” he said.

Guest speakers visit Page School

Lt. Governor Brad Owen, Rep. Sam Hunt (D-22nd), and Peter Rex, Olympia School District Communications and Community Relations Officer, 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.



Page program over 100 years old

The Legislative page program has been in existence since 1891. 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. Initially, only males were allowed into the program. The first female pages began serving in 1937.



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 celebrated her birthday this week with us. 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.



Pages compete for *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.

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.

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