



The Weekly Page

VOLUME 7 ISSUE 12

APRIL 1, 2011

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 puts the brakes on air pollution



Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Will Badart introduced Senate Bill 5029, which addresses the issue of automobile pollution. “The bill is a good one because it will slow down global warming and ensure environmental sustainability,” said Sen. Badart. The bill mandates that all automobiles in Washington undergo yearly emissions testing. Currently, these tests are required in only five counties. “If your vehicle fails, or if your car goes more than 400 days without being tested, you can’t get your license tabs renewed,” he said. The average car produces about 17,000 pounds of airborne pollutants each year, and more than 40 percent of air pollution in Washington comes from cars, according to the senator.

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 inexperienced hunters, plastic bag pollution, drunk drivers, and low academic performance of public school students. 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.

Test to cut down on hunting accidents

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Talbot Bluechel and Phil Gathany introduced House Bill 2691, which addresses the



issue of hunting accidents. “The bill is a good one because it will keep the general public, specifically hikers, protected from inexperienced hunters,” said Rep. Bluechel. In 2008, a 14-year-old hunter, who was unsupervised, shot and killed a hiker, mistaking her for a bear. A few months later, another citizen was shot by an inexperienced hunter. The proposed bill would require that all minors be supervised while hunting. New hunters will be required to hunt with an experienced hunter for two years. The experienced hunter will be required to have six consecutive years of experience. In addition, all hunters will be required to take a target identification test as part of their testing battery. The test will include cutouts shaped like humans and adults. “If they fail to hit 75 percent of the animal shapes or if they hit even one human shape, they will fail the test,” said Rep. Gathany.

Rep shuts down "dropout factories"



Olympia – House Bill 3201 was introduced in the Education Committee yesterday by Representative Kelsey Shibley. “This bill addresses the issue of high school dropout rates and will increase graduation rates,” said Rep. Shibley. In 2007, 22 of Washington's 290 high schools were considered dropout factories. Current research shows that educators can predict with 66 percent accuracy that a student in elementary school will go on to drop out from high school. This bill will

establish early warning systems in elementary school that signal at-risk students. The legislation calls for schools to monitor attendance and reading and writing ability, and track parent conferences. “As students are identified, they will be referred to the school’s academic learning team that would create a plan to help the student succeed,” said Rep. Shibley. This bill will not cost the taxpayers any money, as transportation can be provided by the PTSA members and tutoring could be provided by high school students who need community service hours, according to Rep. Shibley.

More quality teachers needed



Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Ryan Clarke introduced Senate Bill 5227, which addresses the issue of quality math and science teachers in public schools. “The bill is a good one because it will help Washington students gain higher test scores in those areas,” said Sen. Clarke. The bill will

require public school principals to evaluate all of their teachers every two years to determine if the teacher is teaching up to the state standards. Then, if the teacher is not teaching up to Washington state standards they are required to take a 60-day training class on how to be a better teacher. "I am confident that the legislature will pass this bill because it will help everyone—teachers, students, and the community as a whole," he said.

Health bill tries to stop parent smoking

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Marcos Campos and Nathan Campos introduced Senate Bill 7777, which addresses the issue of second-hand smoking in multi-unit housing complexes and

outdoor parks and beaches. “The bill is a good one because it will improve the health of children and adults alike,” said Sen. Nathan Campos. Every year 500 children younger the age of 5 are diagnosed with asthma from breathing second-hand smoke. This bill will ban smoking at state parks and beaches. In addition, it bans parents and legal guardians of children under the age of 10 from smoking within 20 feet from the child or when within a confined space where there is no adequate air flow. The funds for enforcing the new law will come from an increased tax on cigarettes by \$2.



Lawmakers take baby steps to outlaw smoking in cars with children present

Olympia – House Bill 3333 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Triston Foster and Chelsie Sunde.

“This bill addresses the issue of second-hand smoke, and will keep children who are passengers in cars from breathing in cigarette smoke,” said Rep. Sunde. Toxins from cigarettes smoked in the front seat and which flow to the backseat are 30 times higher than the level at which an unhealthy air alert is triggered. Second-hand smoke is associated with lung disease, heart disease, and SIDs in babies. “This bill will make smoking in cars with passengers under 18 a secondary traffic offense for the first eight months, and then will change to a primary offense with a fine of \$250 dollars,” said Rep. Foster. The point of this bill is to keep children safe and keep them away from dangers of second-hand smoke in cars, which is more toxic than smoke in open areas, according to the lawmakers.



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.

Sen. Snodgrass tries to find help for uninsured kids

Olympia – Senate Bill 6111 was introduced yesterday by Senator Sarah Snodgrass. “This bill addresses the issue of uninsured children and will help resolve the costs and medical attention children need but don't get,” said Sen. Snodgrass. According to a recent study, a baby is born without health coverage every 41 seconds.



Children without health insurance usually go to the emergency room where they have to be cared for even if the family can't pay. That can cost \$382 for a common asthma attack, and if an uninsured child waits until the situation is very bad, hospitalization for the attack can cost over \$6,000. “If they had insurance, they could just go to a doctor and pay half the cost of an ER visit,” said Sen. Snodgrass. This bill requires all private health insurance companies to offer financial aid to families who can't afford premium payments. These payments will be similar to the Apple for Kids Health Care program that the state currently offers, according to the senator.

Goal of legislature is healthier youth



Olympia – Senate Bill 5836 was introduced yesterday by Senator Jeanette Byrnes. “This bill addresses the issue of childhood obesity and will reduce the negative health affects associated with poor food choices,” said Sen.

Byrnes. Childhood obesity is becoming increasingly more common, and many children and teens are developing obesity-related health conditions such as type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure. If left unchecked, these health issues could shorten the life expectancy of humans over the next few decades. If this bill becomes law, all public schools will include a unit on nutritious eating choices in their health classes and increase PE times.

Fiscal committee cut-off week brings bill process closer to an end

This week bills were voted out of fiscal committees as they continued through the lawmaking process. Transportation, Ways and Means, Capital Budget and several Appropriations and Oversight committees met for the last time to de-

cide what funding would look like for many state programs and new legislation. Hundreds of bills have been introduced in the two chambers this session, but only about 15-20 percent will actually become laws. Pages were busy on the floors of both the House and the Senate, delivering documents, listening to their legislators express their views and watching the voting process. House and Senate members have only a few more weeks to amend and pass legislation. Bills which are passed in their final form will be sent to the Governor for her signature by the session's end on April 24.

Senator cracks down on DUI repeat offenders

Olympia – Senate Bill 5678 was introduced in the Transportation Committee yesterday by Senator Joanna Cobb. “This bill addresses the issue of drunk driving and will reduce repeat offenses,” said Sen. Cobb. The bill will require use of ignition interlock devices (IID) on cars of all repeat offenders for three years. IIDs require a driver to blow into the device before their car will start. “It has been shown that 82 percent of offenders themselves believe interlocks were very effective in preventing them from drinking and driving, so this should work to make our roads safer,” said Sen. Cobb.



State sets minimum hunting age

Olympia – House Bill 1111 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Brittany Hinds, Katherine McKay, and Vivian Guzman. “This bill addresses the issue of young hunters and will ensure the safety of hikers and other citizens who participate in outdoor activities,” said Rep. Hinds. Recently, a 14-year-old boy shot and killed a hiker, mistaking her for a bear. Currently, Washington state has no minimum age for obtaining a hunting license. This bill requires a young person to be 16 years or older in order to get a license to hunt.



Plastic sack bill is in the bag



Olympia – Senate Bill 6274 was introduced yesterday by Senators Jess Sargent, Sean Wilkinson, and Clayton Avery.

“This bill addresses the issue of plastic bag pollution and will help solve the issue of global pollution while decreasing the marine life death toll,” said Sen. Avery. About 100,000 whales, seals, turtles and other marine animals are killed by eating plastic bags each year. Valuable oil is used up in manufacturing the bags, and Americans consume between 30 and 100 billion of the bags each year. This bill will prohibit the use of plastic grocery and retail bags by 2012. “Stores can replace them with eco-friendly canvas bags or easily decomposable paper bags,” said Sen. Sargent. “By doing this, we feel that we are taking a step toward a cleaner planet and a better future.”

College loans forgiven if math/science grads go into teaching



Olympia – House Bill 1589 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Ashleigh Mullis-Fritz, Eleanor Bushnell, and Myranda Paquette. “This bill addresses the issue of poor science

and math test scores and will encourage college graduates in those fields to enter the teaching profession,” said Rep. Bushnell. The average passing rate in science on the WASL over the last 10 years was 36.4 percent. In addition, the math score average was 46.4 percent. “If we were requiring these tests for graduation, it would mean that less than half of the students would not be eligible to graduate. This is devastating and unacceptable,” said Rep. Paquette. If this bill becomes a law, the state will encourage students graduating from college in math and science to become teachers for at least 5 years by forgiving part of their student loans for each year they teach. The state will fund these loan portions. “The paramount duty of the state is to educate our children, so spending a little more money on this important task is very important,” said Rep. Fritz. Currently there is a shortage of qualified math and science teachers.

No more sandwiches or other freebies allowed

Olympia – Senate Bill 5959 was introduced yesterday by Senators Kasi Swidecki and Hayley Tillet. “This bill addresses the issue of aggressive credit



card marketing on college campuses and will help students manage their debt better,” said Sen. Swidecki. At age 18, 56 percent of undergraduates get their first credit card, and 91 percent have a card by their final year. The average outstanding balance on undergraduates' credit cards was \$2,169 in 2005. “There have been some instances where students have committed suicide to escape credit card debt,” said Sen. Tillet. This bill will forbid “give aways” as enticements to students to sign up for cards on campuses. In addition, cards will have limited debt levels of no more than 20 percent of a student’s income or \$1,500 if their parents co-sign. “Cards are often offered to students through enticements for free t-shirts, gift cards, and sandwiches. This is an offer many starving students can’t resist,” said Sen. Swidecki.

Senators say abortion limits needed

Olympia – Senate Bill 7519 was introduced yesterday by Senators Cassandra Offerrall and Gabrielle Schmidt. “This bill addresses the issue of abortion and will allow parents to be more aware and involved in their daughter's pregnancy, along with saving thousands of lives,” said Sen. Schmidt. Currently, the state does not require under-aged girls to consult their parents regarding the surgical procedure, nor does it require the abortion to be performed by a licensed medical doctor. In 2002, nationally 86,000 women younger than 18 had abortions. “Our bill requires the procedure to be performed by a licensed physician and also requires parental consent. Abortions need to be taken more seriously and not done so frivolously,” said Sen. Offerrall.



Watch us live at TVW.org

Natural light could improve test scores



Olympia—Yesterday, Senator Kaylene Stocking introduced Senate Bill 6577, which addresses the issue of public school energy consumption. “The bill is a good one because it will save taxpayers over \$500 million while improving student performance,” said Sen. Stocking. If the bill

passes, it will set aside funds for public schools to install larger windows and skylights to allow classrooms to be lit by natural daylight. “While this might seem costly, it can reduce energy costs by as much as 30 percent, and studies have shown that students perform better under natural light,” she said. Such a solution in a state known for its overcast skies might seem ironic, but if it does all it claims, Washington might look a little brighter, literally, according to the senator.

House bill adds up to better job prospects for students

Olympia – House Bill 1234 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Aaron Wiesenfeld and Trevor Shibley.

“This bill addresses the issue of mathematics education and will raise the scores of Washington State students through a rigorous curriculum-based test,” said Rep. Wiesenfeld. The United States ranks 31st worldwide on standard international math assessments. “These results are unacceptable and must be addressed,” said Rep. Shibley. The bill will require passing the math test in order to receive a high school diploma. It will also ensure that schools hire and retain their best teachers and that students take a challenging curriculum in math. “Overall, this should result in students becoming more prepared for the future global job market,” said Rep. Shibley.



Bag bill hopes to clean up environment

Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Cecelia Schilling introduced Senate Bill 6543, which addresses the issue of plastic bag pol-

lution. “The bill is a good one because it will reduce waste in landfills,” said Sen. Schilling. Plastic bags used in grocery and retail stores are rarely recycled and 100 billion of them are thrown away each year, according to the senator. “There are enough plastic bags used every year to encircle the Earth at least 31 times,” she said. It also takes hundreds of years for the plastic to break down, and often they make their way into the waterways and ocean and end up killing hundreds of sea animals who mistake them for food. This bill will ban all plastic bags used in grocery and retail stores over the next two years. “After the first year, there will be a 10 cent charge on consumers for every bag they need to use at the store. We need to start getting shoppers to bring reusable bags with them when they shop. It will probably take the two years to get into this new habit,” she said.



It’s “lights out” for smokers who drive with kids in the car

Olympia – Senate Bill 7000 was introduced yesterday by Senators Atikah Samal and Virginia Pohl. “This bill addresses the issue of second-hand smoke and will help our young citizens live more successful and healthy lives,” said Sen. Samal. Second-hand smoke is associated with many ailments, such as lung disease, asthma, ear infections and SIDS in babies. “When drivers smoke in cars with their children in the backseat, the second-hand smoke is toxic and the little ones can’t really escape it,” said Sen. Pohl. This bill will forbid smoking by adults in vehicles where minors are passengers. In the first six months, police officers will only be able to issue a warning to those who violate this law, so they can get used to it. September 25, 2011, will be the date for full enforcement of the law. Violators at that time will be fined \$210. “This gives everyone plenty of time to change their habits and help our children stay healthy,” said Sen. Samal.



Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/PageSchool>

Tired students = poor academics



Olympia – Senate Bill 6373 was introduced yesterday by Senator Matthew Straume. “This bill addresses the issue of teenage sleep deprivation and will improve attention spans and grades of our students,” said Sen. Straume. Statistics show that teens need between 8 1/2 and 9 1/4 hours of sleep each night to do their best in school. More than 15 percent of students say they fall asleep at school. “This is because of the early start times,” said Sen. Straume. This bill requires all public schools to move

their start times 30-45 minutes later in the morning. In districts where the start times were moved to 8:30 a.m. there were noticeable improvements in attendance, grades, and students reported less depression, according to the senator.

Guest speakers visit Page School

Rep. Ross Hunter (D-48); Becca Kenna-Schenk, Senate Democratic Policy Analyst and Communications Specialist; and Adam Cooper, Legislative Assistant for Sen. Jeanne Kohl-Welles, joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. They spoke about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information about the legislative branch of government. Pages were able to interact with the guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speakers’ comments.



Interlock devices go into cars after all DUI convictions

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Josiah Cramer and Joshua Cramer introduced House Bill 2222, which addresses the issue of drunk driving. “The bill is a good one because it

will keep our streets and highways safer and will stop repeat DUI offenders from violating the law,” said Rep. Josiah Cramer. In 2008, 582 people died in car accidents, and of those crashes 182 were drunk driving-related. “That amounts to 35 percent of all car fatalities,” said Rep. Joshua Cramer. Approximately one-third of people arrested for drunk driving are repeat offenders. This bill will require anyone arrested and convicted of drunk driving to install an ignition interlock device in all cars driven by the person. The violator must use the device for six months and pay the cost of installation and the monthly lease payment himself. “If the person can’t get in the car and drive drunk after a first conviction, it means we won’t have these repeat offenders on our streets, and maybe they will get into a new habit of staying sober when they drive,” said Rep. Josiah Cramer.



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.



Thanks for a great week!