



The Weekly Page

VOLUME 8 ISSUE 7

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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..

Lawmakers take the sting out of high school concussions

Olympia – Senate Bill 6000 was introduced yesterday by Senators Riley Martin and Kyle Beaton. “This bill addresses the issue of high school head injuries and will protect our athletes from dangers on the sports field,” said Sen. Beaton. Concussions will sideline at least 67,000 of the 1.2 million high school football players this fall, many of whom will suffer from symptoms such as extended memory loss, depression, and brain dysfunction. If this bill becomes a law, all public high schools will be required to provide ath-



letes with protective helmets that have been designed with innovative air-cushioned shock absorbers such as Xenith's X1 helmet to prevent these dangerous head injuries. “The number of concussions has doubled in the last 10 years, and it is time to put a stop to this very damaging situation,” said Sen. Martin.

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 sleep deprived teens, drunk drivers, high school sports injuries, and childhood obesity. 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.

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.

Students sleep in, get better grades



Olympia – House Bill 1234 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Tiffany Carlile, Sadie Allard, and Charolette Seto. “This bill

addresses the issue of sleep deprived teens and will improve the health and learning ability for our young people,” said Rep. Allard. Many teenagers are sleep deprived which can cause health problems and interfere with learning. Experts recommend that teens get 8.5-9.5 hours of sleep each night, but 85 percent of teens get less than that. “Students who don’t get enough sleep are more likely to feel depressed, be tardy or absent, and fall asleep during class which can interfere with their grades,” said Rep. Carlile. This legislation will require all public high schools to start no earlier than 8 a.m. “Mercer Island School district moved their start time from 7:30 to 8:45 a.m. and they have some of the highest test scores in the state,” said Rep. Seto.

Homeless youth get help to graduate

Olympia – Senate Bill 7777 was introduced yesterday by Senators Bryce Barton and Ryan Ludeman. “This bill addresses the issue of homeless youth and will provide a better future for those on the streets,” said Sen. Barton.



Over 24,000 children are homeless in Washington state. Washington is 25th in the nation in child homelessness. Over 4,000 of them are in high school. “The average high school dropout makes about \$12,000 a year, whereas a high school graduate makes about \$20,000. We need to help everyone graduate so they will be successful workers who can provide for themselves and their families in the future,” said Sen. Ludeman. This bill will establish special classes for homeless youth in schools. These classes will create an environment for students to study, do homework, and get a healthy snack.

Reps make cheerleading a safer sport

Olympia – House Bill 1430 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Claire Kristiansen and Veronica Leonardi. “This bill addresses the dangers of cheerleading and will require new regulations, certified coaches, and more rigorous enforcement of rules,” said Rep. Kristiansen. Currently in the state cheer coaches are not required to undergo standardized training. “With higher stunts at a younger age, the sport has gone from a sideline distraction to an extreme sport,” said Rep. Leonardi. In the last 25 years, cheerleading has accounted for more than half of the 112 catastrophic injuries to female high school and college athletes, including three deaths. This bill requires all high school cheer coaches to be certified, proper equipment such as mats, and back spotting for stunts. “With the proper training in a cheer squad, injuries will be greatly reduced and it will be safer for everyone in the sport,” said Rep. Kristiansen.



More temporary shelters the answer to increased homelessness, say legislators

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Connor Wate and Ricci Valice introduced Senate Bill 6211, which addresses the issue of homeless citizens. “The bill is a good one because it provide more temporary shelters for people who have recently lost their jobs and/or cannot afford a permanent home just yet,” said Sen. Wate. Forty-four percent of the nation’s homeless population is unsheltered. Being exposed to extreme weather can lead to death for some homeless citizens; 700 unsheltered homeless people die of hypothermia annually. In Washington State alone, there are 24,000 homeless children. This bill proposes to increase the number of temporary shelters by encouraging construction workers to provide materials and labor in exchange for a tax break in their businesses. “The housing sites will be positioned in each county according to the homeless population,” said Sen. Valice.



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Sweet dreams to grumpy teens



Olympia – House Bill 2493 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Gage Keesee, David Bowker and Billy Allocca. “This bill addresses the issue of teen sleep deprivation and will require later school start times, resulting

in better health and grades,” said Rep. Allocca. A recent poll found that 60 percent of children under the age of 18 complain of being tired during the day, and 15 percent said they fell asleep at school. “Sleep deprivation impairs the ability to pay attention, creativity, communication, problem solving, mood and motivation,” said Rep. Bowker. The representatives’ solution is to move the start times to no earlier than 8:45 a.m. for all public high schools. “Washington needs this bill. I know my son does,” said Rep. Keesee. Mercer Island School District is on the forefront of this venture, and they received the highest scores in the state after changing the start times from 7:30 to 8:45 a.m. “The natural tendency for teens is to sleep late and wake up later in the morning. This goes against most current public school start times. It’s not them being lazy, it’s their boy’s natural alarm clock,” said Rep. Allocca.

Driver’s Ed classes to address proper use of cell phones

Olympia – Senate Bill 7969 was introduced yesterday by Senators Joseph Rossi and Dario Haynes. “This bill addresses the ineffectiveness of the current cell phone law and will lower the accident rate in Washington State,” said Sen. Rossi. Cell phone conversations account for 21 percent of all car crashes in the U.S. Studies show that cell phone conversations are more dangerous than talking to a passenger inside the vehicle, because the passenger is aware of the driving situation and can actually help the driver in tough situations, unlike someone on the other end of a cell phone. There have been numerous accounts of teenage drivers involved in car crashes because of the cell phone distractions. “Heather Lerch is one of those people,” said Sen. Haynes. “She was talking on her cell phone while



in February two years ago, when her car swerved into a Tumwater ditch and she died on impact.” If this bill becomes law, all driver’s training courses must teach the proper and improper uses of cell phones.

Lawmakers want to shame drunk drivers with colored license plates

Olympia – Senate Bill 7998 was introduced yesterday by Senators Amanda Richter and Rebekah Richter. “This bill addresses the issue of drunk driving and will get these irresponsible motorists off the road,” said Sen. Amanda Richter. In the United States there were 11,773 drunk driving deaths in 2008, 32 percent of all car accidents. If this bill becomes a law, after their second offense, drunk drivers will be required to get a special license plate with red letters and numbers. If they stay clean for six months, they get their old license plate back, according to the senators. “But if they have another DUI, their red plates will change to yellow plates for a longer period of time,” said the Senator.



An end to obesity at no extra cost

Olympia – House Bill 3936 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Lauren Thomas and Rachel Miller. “This bill addresses the issue of childhood obesity and will lead to fewer future state-wide expenses in health care,” said Rep. Thomas. In 2004 an estimated 17 percent of children and adolescents ages 2-19 were overweight. “This figure has more than tripled since 1980,” said Rep. Miller. This bill proposes to implement a mandatory nutrition course in public schools that educates students about the recommended food groups and the consequences of good and bad eating habits. “We also want to encourage local food growers to offer part of their crops to schools so fresh foods are an option,” said Rep. Thomas. By teaching school children the importance of nutrition, and by using only local produce in public schools, children will learn at a young age the importance of healthy food choices, according to the lawmakers.



Reps take a creative crack at ending concussions



Olympia – House Bill 2222 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Jack Knox, Luke Palmer, and Austin DeBolt.

“This bill addresses the issue of high school sports-related concussions and will reduce future head trauma,” said Rep. DeBolt. “This bill will change the game and how it is played; if an athlete gets a concussion, he’s done until he’s cleared by a neurologist,” said Rep. Knox. Over half a million children ages 8-19 when to emergency rooms with concussions from 2001-2005, and nearly half of those injuries were sports-related.

“Concussions can permanently end the sports careers of high school athletes and even end their lives. This is a serious matter,” said Rep. Palmer. If this bill becomes law, all student athletes who sustain a concussion in a sport will be required to be cleared by a neurologist before they continue playing. While it might seem like an expensive solution, especially for students who might not have health insurance, according to the lawmakers, safety is a greater concern than the risk of continuing to play.

Senators put restrictions on abortion

Olympia – Senate Bill 7095 was introduced yesterday by Senators Megan Dowlen, Emma Agte, and Jonathan Thomas. “This bill addresses the issue of abortion and will give pregnant women more time to think about their choice,” said Sen. Agte. In 2009 the total pregnancies among Washington State women, age 15-17, was 24 out of 1,000. Of those 24, 10 ended in abortion. “One unsaved baby is too many,” said Sen. Dowlen. Currently there is only one restriction on abortion in the state—

viability. This bill proposes to require all women considering an abortion to take one free counseling session on the mental health risks of the procedure by a doctor. After counseling, the woman must wait 24 hours before proceeding.



Sleep is the best medicine

Olympia – House Bill 2435 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Rachel Fenske and Emmie Johnson. “This bill addresses the issue of sleep deprived teens and will improve the health and academic



success of our teens,” said Rep. Johnson. A recent poll conducted by the National Sleep Foundation found that 60 percent of children under the age of 18 complained of being tired during the day, and 15 percent said they fell asleep at school during the year. “As we all know, high schoolers have a lot on their plate with work from six different classes causing them to stay up late and not get the required amount of sleep,” said Rep. Fenske. Experts recommend that teenagers get 8.6-9.5 hours of sleep. But 85 percent of teenagers get less than that each night. Sleep and learning are intimately related. Sleep deprivation impairs the ability to pay attention, creativity, communication, abstract thinking, problem solving, innovation, decision making, mood and motivation. “We, just as seven high schools did in the Minneapolis Public School District, can improve student success rates in students everyday by simply starting school an hour later and that’s what our bill will require,” said Rep. Johnson. The bill mandates all public high schools to start no later than 8:30 a.m.

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.



Dropout rates addressed in legislature

Olympia – Senate Bill 5521 was introduced yesterday by Senators Ryan Rouse and Dylan Tom. “This bill addresses the issue of high dropout rates in public high schools and will provide incentives to students to continue their education,” said Sen. Tom. Twenty-two of Washington’s 290 high schools are considered “dropout factories,” where less than 60 percent of the students who enter the school in their freshman year graduate four years later. “There is an estimated \$320 billion in productivity, wage, and tax losses throughout the U.S. due to the failure of some students to graduate,” said Sen. Rouse. It is estimated that the high school dropout averages \$12,478 per year in wages compared to a high school graduate who makes \$20,889, according to the 2000 census. This bill targets students who are doing poorly academically, creates an atmosphere in schools which promote success by paying those a minimum wage who do well, establishes a procedure for school districts to provide lotteries to raise revenue, and involves parents more actively in their student’s school lives.



Lawmakers eliminate red light traffic cameras



Olympia – Senate Bill 7999 was introduced yesterday by Senators Margaret Litzow, Max Makin, and Sam Makin..

“This bill addresses the issue of red light traffic cameras and will make our streets and intersections safer,” said Sen. Litzow. A recent study released by the Texas Transportation Institute found that when red light traffic cameras were installed in communities, there was a 15 percent increase in rear-end collisions. “Drivers slam on their brakes at yellow lights rather than driving on through because they are afraid of getting a ticket,” said Sen. Max Makin. The lawmakers contend that this practice is

also ineffective because the tickets issues for this offense don’t go on a person’s record, so there is almost no consequence for running a red light. It is estimated that over 200,000 red-light-running accidents occur at signalized intersections in the U.S. each year. This bill will eliminate red light traffic cameras in communities and mandate increased yellow light intervals. “This will give drivers extra time to make their decision about going through the signal,” said Sen. Sam Makin.

Teens hit the snooze button

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Sean Hendrickson and Huatsern Yeager introduced Senate Bill 5061, which addresses the issue of teen sleep deprivation. “The bill is a good one



because it will promote the health and education of our high school students,” said Sen. Hendrickson. Experts say a teenager needs from 8 1/2 to 9 1/2 hours of sleep per night. Over 85 percent don’t get this and are tired at school every day; many actually fall asleep in class, according to the lawmakers. “Over time, sleep deprivation leads to serious consequences for academic achievements, social behavior, and the health and safety of our nation’s youth,” said Sen. Yeager. If this bill becomes law, middle and high schools will be required to start no earlier than 8 a.m. “A study by the University of Minnesota showed that after seven high schools changed their start times from 7:15 to 8:40, students showed increased. If it worked there, it can work in Washington State,” said Sen. Hendrickson.



Parent consent now required for minors to get abortions

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Anna Palmer and Philip Trubee introduced House Bill 3298, which addresses the

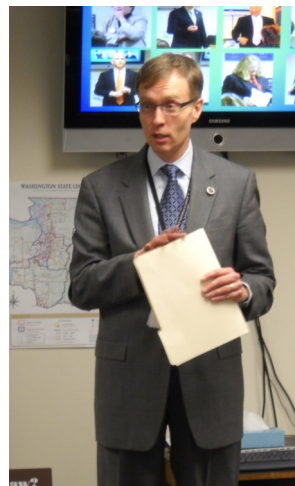


current abortion law in the state. “The bill is a good one because it will save more unborn children,” said Rep. Palmer. In 2009, the number of abortions in the state totaled 22,672. This bill will require minors to have parental consent for an abortion and will mandate ultrasounds for all pregnant women. “While all women must get the ultrasound, a woman may choose not to view it, so we aren’t taking freedom of choice away from anyone,” said Rep. Palmer. The bill also encourages more educational opportunities for women considering an abortion to actually understand what the procedure involves.

Paper or Plastic?

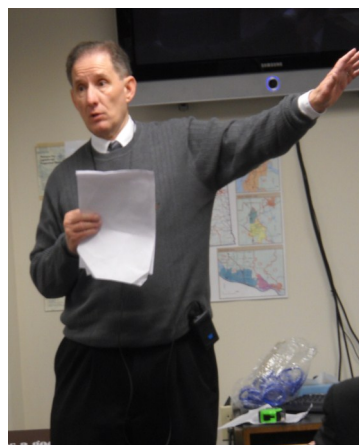


Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Christine Munson, Erikka Olson, and Lydia Mull introduced Senate Bill 6913, which addresses the issue of plastic bag pollution. “The bill is a good one because it substitutes plastic bags with an eco-friendly alternative, leading to cleaner, healthier, and happier communities,” said Sen. Olson. Each year Americans consume between 30 and 100 billion plastic bags—enough to encircle the planet at least 31 times. Over 100,000 marine animals are killed each year due to eating the plastic bags that have made their way into the ocean. Finally, cities spend millions of dollars cleaning plastic bags off their streets. This bill will require stores to phase out plastic bags completely at their checkout locations by 2014. During the 2-year grace period, the Legislature will impose a 10-cent tax on customers who choose to use plastic bags for their shopping. “The temporary tax will be invested in cleaning up pollution in local communities,” said Sen. Mull.



Guest speakers visit Page School

Peter Goldmark, Commissioner of Public Lands; Mike Bay, Vice-president of Programming at TVW; Rob McKenna, Attorney General; and Tom Allman, Voter Accessibility Coordinator for the Secretary of State’s office joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. Each spoke about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information in regard to their contribution to state government. Pages were able to interact with the guests, asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speakers’ questions.



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.

New scratch lottery game will benefit future college students



Olympia – House Bill 1270 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Adam Carter and Daniel Dzilenski. “This bill addresses the issue of high tuition costs and will allow more students to get an education at our colleges and universities,” said Rep. Dzilenski.

Since 2007, Washington State University's tuition has risen 57 percent, while the University of Washington's tuition has increased a whopping 66 percent, according to the legislators. “By 2018, 67 percent of all jobs in the state will require a post-secondary degree, but if the cost of getting into college is too high, we won't have enough people to get those jobs,” said Rep. Carter. If this bill becomes law, the state will introduce a scratch lottery ticket game for each of the six state colleges. Sales from half the tickets will go directly into scholarship endowments to help more lower and middle income students. The remaining revenue will be used by the lottery commission to pay prizes. “The school that is represented on the ticket will receive the scholarship money,” said Rep. Dzilenski. “Pride for a particular school will translate into money for future graduates.”

Teachers passionate about civic education

The Washington State Legislature's 2012 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 six 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 enjoyed 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 alongside experts is just fascinating to me,” said Judi.



Measures taken to improve student math and science skills

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Lauren Barthenheier and Aran Kirschenmann introduced House Bill 1111, which addresses low math and science skills.



“The bill is a good one because it will raise the achievement of our students in these critical fields, so that they will be better prepared to enter the competitive global workforce,” said Rep. Kirschenmann. As of 2010, less than half of Washington students are meeting state math standards, and American students are failing to rank internationally in both math and science. This bill will make several changes in public schools. First, math and science teachers will be paid 8 percent more than their counterparts in other subject areas. “We need to attract those people into teaching who would otherwise find higher paying jobs in the technical fields,” said Rep. Barthenheier. The middle school curriculum will be more focused on higher level math and science courses, such as chemistry and geometry. In addition, the number of school days in the year will increase to 210. “If students are in school more, they won't forget all they learned over a long vacation,” said Rep. Kirschenmann. All of these changes will serve to improve math and science skills and position students for future success, according to the legislators.

