



*West Virginia School Service Personnel Association*



## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE #3

March 12, 2008  
FINAL

### **“A pretty good session, but our work is not completed”**

As the 2008 legislative session wound to a close, your WVSSPA lobbyists concluded that it was a pretty good session for school service personnel. While we didn't get everything we wanted, we will see improvements to our salary and working conditions, and we are still working on the pension merger. The following is a list of bills of interest.

**Salary Bill (SB 573):** When the session started, the Governor proposed a 3% pay raise for service personnel. By the time the session closed, your WVSSPA lobbyists had been able to increase the pay raise to \$70 per month or 3.5%. When this bill left the House of Delegates on the last day of the session, it included a provision to increase “Cafeteria Managers” from pay grade “D” to “E”, created a “Bus Operator II” whereby bus operators with twenty years of service would have moved from pay grade “D” to “E”, and created a “Technology System Specialist” position at pay grade “F.” Unfortunately, the Senate would not accept these provisions in the House version of the bill. Even though we are disappointed with the Senate action to eliminate our amendments, the final pay raise was more than the Governor proposed. This is the second year in a row where we have been able to increase the initial salary proposal by the Governor. The \$70 per month increase added to your \$32 per month experience increment means you will see a salary increase of \$1,020 next year.

**Pension Merger:** As with most legislative sessions, we never get all that we expect or certainly deserve. However, going into the session, one of our top priorities was to convince legislators to allow those in the new retirement plan (TDC) the option to transfer to the old plan (TRS). Unfortunately, this very important issue remains unresolved. The House of Delegates advanced a bill that we liked much better than the Senate bill. At one point on Saturday, we thought the two sides had agreed on a plan that we could live with, but suddenly, the Governor got involved and the Senate backed away and no agreement was reached. However, the legislature will spend this week meeting and, if an agreement can be reached, then a special session will be held early next week to take up this important matter.

**Local Share Monies:** Last year, the legislature passed SB 541 which generated an increase of approximately \$16 million in local share money for county boards to spend at their discretion. We have been able to negotiate county level salary increases and benefit enhancements in many counties from this money. As you recall, the Governor introduced legislation this session to mandate that this local share money be used only for classroom teacher salaries. With the cooperation of AFT-WV, we were able to defeat this bill.

**School Aid Formula Bill (HB 4588):** Over a five year period, this bill provides approximately \$64 million in additional funding to most counties. The bill provides funding for 80 additional service personnel positions. The bill also updates the definition of net enrollment.

**Bus Operators with Diabetes (HB 4059):** This bill relates to protecting the rights of bus operators who treat diabetes by allowing them to receive a waiver to drive while taking insulin.

**WVSSPA's Safe School bill (HB 4368):** The purpose of the bill is to reduce acts of student violence and disruptive behavior through the implementation of a Bill of Rights and school discipline committees. In addition, the bill requires more involvement and input by service personnel in oversight of discipline policies and requires a series of county-wide meetings to be held in addition to increased penalties for chronically disruptive students.

**Bus Operator Certification (HB 4554):** This bill provides that bus operators take the written component of their annual recertification every other year instead of every year.

**Grievance Bill (SB 780):** This bill provides clean-up to last year's grievance reform legislation including clarifying the definition of harassment and favoritism.

**Special Education Aides (HB 4478):** This bill provides that aides and paraprofessionals may only transfer once per year if they are assigned to a student who's IEP requires a “one-on-one services.” These individuals may bid for and receive any open position, but may not assume said position until five days prior to the next instructional term.

**Automatic Chains on School Buses (HB 4407):** This bill requires that all new school buses purchased after July 1, 2008 be equipped with automatic tire chains.



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