



FINAL March 14, 2011

# WVSSPA

## Legislative Update

### **Session ends with a "pretty good" pay raise**

The 2011 Legislature ended their session at midnight last Saturday by passing a pay raise bill for all public employees. As you recall, Governor Tomblin proposed a one-time bonus for school service personnel in his State of the State message. Through a lot of hard work, your WVSSPA lobbyists were able to turn the one-time bonus into a permanent pay raise by the end of the session. Additionally, we were able to secure \$5.8 million for the budget to address "salary equity" for service personnel.

The service personnel pay raise contained in HB 2879 is as follows: All service personnel will receive a salary increase of at least \$50 per month, up to 2% of salary with the increase not to exceed \$120 per month. Additionally, WVSSPA was able to get funding for the "salary equity" provision inserted into the pay bill. This will mean an additional salary increase of \$37 per month for nearly every service personnel next year. All of this will be added to your annual experience increment of \$32 per month.

As an example, if you currently make \$25,000 per year in state base pay, you can expect a \$50 per month base increase, \$37 per month equity increase, and a \$32 per month experience increment increase. This would amount to an \$1190 pay raise for a ten month employee, a \$1428 pay raise for a 240 day employee, and a \$1547 increase for 261 day employee.

Using the same example, a service personnel currently making \$35,000 annually would see a pay raise of \$1390 as a ten month employee, \$1668 if you are a 240 day employee and \$1807 if you are 261 day employee.

While we would like to have gotten more, we think this is a pretty good package given the state of the economy. Many thanks to the thousands of you who called and sent emails to legislators asking them to "treat service personnel fairly in the pay bill." Your lobbying effort paid off!

The pay raise bill is now on Governor Tomblin's desk and we expect him to sign it into law.

### **Other Service Personnel Bills Fail to Pass Legislature**

WVSSPA worked diligently during the legislative session on several other major bills that failed to pass. Most notable were the "Career Ladder for Cooks" bill and the "Service Personnel Reclassification Bill." While we are disappointed that these bills died, it is not uncommon for new ideas to take two or more years to pass the legislature.

### **OPEB Liability Still a Monster**

Your WVSSPA lobbyists worked with legislators until the last hour of the session trying to find a solution for the projected \$8 billion unfunded liability associated with providing PEIA coverage for retirees. We were actually able to get a good OPEB bill through the House, but the Senate refused to accept the House version. At press time, it appeared that there was a good chance that Governor Tomblin might call a special legislative session to deal with this issue. Our primary position is that any solution to this issue should not come as a result of a reduction of employee benefits or an increase in PEIA premiums.

### **One-Time Bonus for Retirees Passes**

The legislature passed HB 3145 which gives a one-time bonus of \$1200 to retirees who draw less than \$600 per month from their TRS retirement. This bill awaits the Governor's signature to become law.

### **Definition of Bullying Clarified**

The definition of "bullying" was expanded and clarified in HB 3225 which passed during the session. In addition to physically harassing or bullying another student, this bill prohibits bullying through electronic media such as texting or on the internet. It also extends the prohibition of bullying to school buses and at school bus stops. This bill awaits the Governor's signature to become law.

**This update brought to you by the WV School Service Personnel Association - the organization that fights for your rights!**