



WVSSPA Responds to the WV State of the State Address

The 800 lb. elephant in the room is [PEIA](#). One of the biggest issues we face is drastic, draconian cuts to PEIA. This includes increased premiums, using family income to calculate premiums, as well as fewer income tiers that cause lower income employees to pay higher premiums while they cut premiums for employees with huge salaries. This elephant was not addressed. We must fix and fund [PEIA](#). WVSSPA has a plan; we have drafted legislation to completely fund [PEIA](#) with no cost to West Virginians—a 2.5% increase in the Natural Gas severance tax.

We agree with Governor Justice that “education should be the centerpiece and we do need to pay our teachers more.” **What about Service Personnel?** With an average service personnel salary at \$26,600, a 1% increase would give you just \$266 a year and remember [PEIA](#) premiums increased .5%. Many of our service personnel qualify for federal assistance according the SNAP gross salary guideline of \$20,712 salary for a family of four. Could service personnel benefit from the “1+1+1 equals a 5% pay increase” like others? We work hard and deserve the same, all state workers should receive the same increase.

We do agree with the flexibility of the arts included in school board policy 2510; the arts is a great outlet for many of our youth. To allow high school students to earn an associate degree while in school is a great idea. Having a pool of qualified employees would be a great resource for the trades.

Our position on elimination of the inventory tax will come later. We want to be sure the cut in tax **will not** be placed on schools and counties, or the costs passed onto working West Virginians with an increase in property tax. If and when the \$83 billion from the China deal becomes a reality, then we can make a statement concerning that. Our hope is that any additional funds West Virginia receives will positively impact our service personnel.

While WVSSPA wants to lift up all working class West Virginians our focus is and always will be school service personnel. We are the true voice of West Virginia school service personnel.