



Off and Running!

Last week, all eyes were on the 14 candidates who filed for the special election for the unexpired term of former Governor (now U.S. Senator) Joe Manchin, and their first full week of campaigning. If the first week is any indicator, it will be an eventful spring leading up to the May 14 primary. Though public attacks have not yet commenced, there has been no shortage of rumblings under the dome, not only amongst candidates, but in regard to other constitutional offices' handling of the election. From the Supreme Court decision leading to the special election, the Attorney General's opinion on campaign funds, to what the Secretary of State's office did or did not know prior to the passage of the special election legislation in regard to utilization of said funds, there's no shortage of political hands in the cookie jar.

However, the music has started and those that will be circling the one final chair now know the rules of the game. The candidates who have filed with the Secretary of State for the special primary election are (in no particular order other than party grouping):

Earl Ray Tomblin (D)
Richard Thompson (D)
Arne Moltis (D)
Natalie Tennant (D)
John Perdue (D)
Jeffrey Kessler (D)
Clark Barnes (R)
Betty Ireland (R)
Mark Sorsaia (R)
Larry Faircloth (R)
Cliff Ellis (R)
Mitch Carmichael (R)
Ralph William Clark (R)
Bill Maloney (R)

The primary winner from each party will face off in the special general election set for October 4. Jesse Johnson, a Mountain Party candidate who is expected to be nominated for their ballot spot, will likely also be on the general ballot.

NASW Bills of Interest:

Monday, February 21 marks the final day a bill can be introduced in the House of Delegates and State Senate. With the session approaching the "House of Origin" deadline on March 2, bills that are still in their first reference, minor committee will need to be reported out early this week in order to make a major committee agenda in time for passage by the deadline. Thus, this week will see a flurry of activity that will continue to the session finish line of March 12.

(Click the bill number below for the latest version of the complete text. The text MAY not include amendments made in committee.)

[HB 2525](#) - Social Work Licensure Bill. The bill is before the Senate Health and Human Resources Committee and is expected to be on the agenda for consideration on Tuesday, February 22, 2011. The DHHR, the Board of Social Work Examiners, and NASW, continue to work together on successful passage of this important legislation.

[HB 2729](#) & [SB 362](#) - Cigarette Tax. A public hearing was held last week regarding a proposed increase in the tax on cigarettes and smokeless tobacco. Funds generated from the increased tax would be used for smoking cessation programs and drug and alcohol treatment programs. Sam Hickman spoke on the behalf of the NASW-WV in support of the tax increase. The Senate version of the bill is pending before the Committee on Finance.

[SB 278](#) & [HB 2864](#) - "Celina's Law" creating the misdemeanor offense of "unlawful restraint" to deprive a person of their liberty using threats or duress. The House version of the bill has passed the House of Delegates, and on February 9, 2011 was sent to the Senate Committee of the Judiciary for consideration.

[SB 218](#) & [HB 2693](#) - Requiring insurance coverage for autism spectrum disorders. The House version has passed the House of Delegates and was sent to the Senate on Feb. 11, 2011 for consideration by the Senate Committee on Finance. The House bill creates a cap on coverage at \$30,000.00 for the first 3 years and then \$2,000 per month until the child attains the age of 18 years. The Senate version of the bill has no cap in coverage.

[HB 2161](#) & [SB 17](#) - Creating the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs within the Governor's Office. NASW-WV strongly supports this bill. The House version of the bill has passed the House of Delegates and is currently in the Senate Committee on Government Organization.

[HB 2558](#) - Establishing the powers and duties of the Office of Child Advocacy including the ability to investigate and monitor the Division of Child Protective Services and Division of Juvenile Services. Passed House Judiciary on January 26 and was sent to Finance. No further action since then.

[SB 226](#) & [HB 2045](#) - Prohibiting discrimination in employment and housing based upon sexual orientation. The same bill that has successfully passed the Senate two years in a row only to have it die in the House. No action on the bill has occurred in either the House or Senate since filed. A press conference sponsored by Fairness West Virginia highlighting the bills will be held at the entrance to the Senate in the Capitol at 9:00 AM on Monday, February 21. Sam Hall, a gay coal miner who is a plaintiff in the landmark harassment suit against Massey Energy and Acting Senate President Jeff Kessler will make remarks.

[HB 2439](#) & [SB 509](#) - Requiring insurance coverage of spouses and dependents for pregnancy and contraceptive services. No action on House version since introduction on January 13. Senate version was placed in a subcommittee by the Senate Banking and Insurance Committee.

[SB 338](#) & [HB 2081](#) - A bill to restore food stamp and cash assistance to former drug felons who, as a lone category, were banned for life in the 1996 federal welfare reform legislation. Senate version has passed that body and is now before the House committee on the Judiciary.

[HB 3020](#) & [SB 443](#) - Bill that prohibits all health insurance plans (public or private) offered through a state exchange from providing coverage of abortion care – even in the case of rape or incest. House version passed the Banking and Insurance committee with Del. Mahan and Del. Morgan as the only votes in opposition to the bill. The bill is now before the House Finance committee. No action on the Senate version.

[HB 3178](#) - Funding for substance abuse services through increased taxes on beer, wine and liquor. Introduced on February 17 and referred to House Health and Human Resources Committee.

[HB 3067](#) - Enhancing funding for civil legal services for the poor. Passed House Judiciary on February 16 and sent to committee on Finance.