



Off and Running...

The first full week of the 80th West Virginia Legislature is complete and issues of gubernatorial succession, the respective roles of Acting Governor and Acting President of the Senate, as well as fundamental separation of powers issues consumed much of the time and energy of the Legislature in these early days.

On January 18, 2011, the West Virginia Supreme Court of appeals issued an [Order and Opinion](#) directing the Acting Governor to issue a proclamation that a gubernatorial election must occur within one year of the November 15, 2010 date on which he took office. The opinion further requires an election be conducted by a convention unless the Legislature acts to create an alternative method. To that effect, on January 21, 2011, Acting Governor Earl Ray Tomblin proclaimed a general election will occur on October 4, 2011. It is expected the Acting Governor will introduce legislation with election details including filing deadlines and other necessary deadlines including a primary election for June 20, 2011. The House of Delegates is also expected to have an election bill forthcoming.

NASW Legislation...

The NASW-WV legislative team is currently monitoring approximately 175 bills that affect various social work practice issues, on behalf of its members. Bills of particular interest to NASW-WV include: *(Please note that our listing of bills does not indicate support or opposition unless specifically noted.)*

HB 2525 - An update of the social work licensure structure to comply with modern practices. The bill was introduced on Monday with a double reference; first, to the House Government Organization Committee and, then, to the House Judiciary Committee. Thursday, the bill was reported out of the Government Organization Committee with a recommendation that it "do pass." There has been discussion of dispensing with the second reference to Judiciary and, instead, reporting the bill directly to the House floor. If HB 2525 is passed by the House, it will then be sent to the Senate and referred to the relevant committees. This is the most significant piece of legislation for NASW-WV this session and is the product

of a multi-year effort led by Sam Hickman, the Board of Social Work Examiners, the Department of Health and Human Resources, and the House Government Organization Committee.

SB 202 - Creating a Governor's Commission to develop a pilot program to help at-risk youth in West Virginia.

SB 218 - Requiring insurance coverage for autism spectrum disorders.

HB 2052 - Creating a loan forgiveness program for social workers and other professions.

HB 2161 - Creating the Herbert Henderson Office of Minority Affairs within the Governor's Office. On Monday the bill was approved by the House Government Organization Committee with recommendation that it "do pass." The bill is now on its way to House Finance committee. NASW-WV strongly supports this bill.

HB 2381 - Prohibiting the establishment of methadone treatment programs and clinics, except those operated by comprehensive community mental health centers.

HB 2408 - Relating to treatment for drug and alcohol addiction, and providing a procedure for extended involuntary treatment programs, including setting forth certain rights of persons subject to involuntary treatment, and limiting persons who may petition for involuntary commitment.

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.

HB 2729 - Raising the excise tax on cigarettes by \$1.25 per pack.

HB 2714 – Creating the West Virginia Addictions Treatment and Recovery Fund by dedicating five cents per ounce of the uniform price of alcoholic liquors sold in this state to the fund.

The Legislature on the Web...

The West Virginia Legislature has an excellent, and extremely user-friendly [website](#). You can monitor floor sessions and key committee meetings, track legislation, search by topic of the legislation, date of activity, bill number, or legislator who introduced the bill. Additionally, you can easily access information about legislators including district, contact information, committee assignments and photographs. It is an excellent tool and an invaluable resource for every lobbyist and constituent alike.