Top Stories

SB 1, "Last-Dollar-In" for Community and Technical Education is unanimously approved by Senate

West Virginia Chamber President Steve Roberts addresses the media following the West Virginia Senate's unanimous approval of SB 1 - Photo from Charleston Gazette-Mail
On Wednesday, the West Virginia Senate unanimously approved SB 1, which provides "last-dollar-in" tuition for those seeking community or technical college education in West Virginia.

According to the bill, those applying would first have to apply for all scholarships and grants available, but the state of West Virginia would cover the remaining costs.

Senate President Mitch Carmichael (R-Jackson), the lead sponsor of the bill, applauded the entire Senate and the bi-partisan support SB 1 received when he said, "This is an investment in the people of West Virginia, and I am so proud of the Senate."

Importantlty, during remarks on the floor, Senator Robert Plymale (D-Wayne) urged co-operation and co-ordination among community colleges, higher education, K-12 education and Workforce West Virginia.

Following the bill's passage, West Virginia Chamber President Steve Roberts said, "This will help make a significant improvement in West Virginia's labor force participation rate by making community and technical education attainable for so many of our fellow West Virginians."
Senate President Mitch Carmichael is joined by a bi-partisan group of senators and SB 1 supporters after Wednesday's floor session

To Read the MetroNews Story on SB 1...
Only 4 Days Away!

The West Virginia Chamber of Commerce 2019 Legislative Welcome Reception is just four days away! The reception will be held from 4:30pm - 6:00pm on Tuesday, January 29 at the West Virginia Culture Center, and space is quickly filling up!

Last year's event attracted a crowd of nearly 600, so you don't want to miss out! This is the place to be this coming Tuesday!

The West Virginia Chamber Legislative Reception is the premier event that brings together college and university presidents, state agency leaders, business leaders, local chambers of commerce and members and leadership of the West Virginia Legislature. Register now and network with key policymakers to discuss the issues most important to you.

For sponsorship opportunities, please contact Amanda Pasdon at apasdon@wvchamber.com or by calling (304) 989-0664.

Register for the Legislative Reception
Big education bill steps into W.Va. Senate

**WV MetroNews** - One big education bill hit the West Virginia Senate, eliciting excitement and wariness. The "omnibus education bill" has been discussed almost as a mythical creature in Capitol hallways ever since the regular legislative session began. "This is a really big bill," said Senate Education Chairwoman Patricia Rucker, whose committee got a first glimpse of the 139-page bill Thursday afternoon. "We just wanted to present an overview." [Continue...]

A fire chief in West Virginia helped change her city's approach to the opioid epidemic. Now overdoses in her county are down 40%

![Huntington, WV Fire Chief Jan Rader - Dimitrios Kambouris/Getty Images](image-url)
Insider - Addiction to opioids has caused a surge in fatal drug overdoses all across the country. But in West Virginia, the epidemic has proven particularly deadly. The state had the highest rate of drug overdose deaths in the US in 2014, 2015, and 2016, according to data published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In one West Virginia city, however, a woman named Jan Rader has been fighting against that trend. Continue...

West Virginia News

House committee begins work on business inventory tax proposal

WV News - The House Finance Committee took the first step Wednesday morning to eliminate the state's tax on business inventory, equipment and machinery. The tax is written into the state's Constitution. As a first step to eliminating it, committee members approved a joint resolution that proposes taking the tax out of the Constitution and putting it under the purview of lawmakers. The proposal, House Joint Resolution 17, would allow state voters to decide in the 2020 general election if they want to amend the state Constitution. Continue...

Major investment in tourism advertising will pay dividends, senators advised

Charleston Gazette-Mail - In his first time returning to the Senate as West Virginia Commerce secretary, former state senator Ed Gaunch told the Senate Finance Committee on Monday that Gov. Jim Justice wants to make a major investment in the state Tourism Division in the 2019-20 budget. Justice is proposing increasing Tourism funding by $14 million, Gaunch said. Justice also proposed a $14 million increase for Tourism last year, but the Legislature zeroed it out of the final 2018-19 budget, instead providing the Tourism Division with a $2.5 million supplemental appropriation. Continue...

Unity the theme at annual MLK Jr. Day celebration and bell-ringing

WV MetroNews - Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Unity has never meant uniformity." The unity of dozens embracing their differences was shown at the 2019 Commemoration and Celebration of Dr. King by the Martin Luther King Jr. State Holiday Commission on Monday. The annual celebration, which took place at Asbury United
Methodist Church in Charleston and later at the State Capitol, made unity as their theme this year during the Martin Luther King Jr. Day event.  Continue...

DHHR secretary tells lawmakers time to 'pivot' opioid treatment

WV MetroNews - West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Secretary Bill Crouch told lawmakers Wednesday it's time for the state to pivot to a new direction for treatment of drug addicts caught up in the state's opioid crisis. West Virginia has the highest per capita death rates in the country from drug overdoses and it is estimated more than 150,000 West Virginians are substance abusers.  Continue...

After a day of debate, W.Va. foster care bill keeps moving in House

WV MetroNews - After a passionate public hearing and then another two hours of committee debate, a bill that would revamp West Virginia's foster care system cleared yet another hurdle. The foster care bill was passed out of the House Health and Human Resources Committee, one of three committees assigned to consider it. It next moves to the House Judiciary Committee. Delegates continued to ask questions about an aspect of the bill that would give managed care organization oversight of foster children's healthcare.  Continue...

Lottery director: State revenues from sports betting still hard to pin down

Charleston Gazette-Mail - State Lottery Director John Myers told senators Tuesday that the Lottery still does not have financial data from the recent launch of sports betting in the state to give a more accurate update on the state's share of revenue, beyond estimates of between $2 million and $5 million a year. While all five state casinos opened on-site sportsbooks between August and December, only two - Mardi Gras and Wheeling Island - have sports wagering apps up and running to date, he said.  Continue...

Banking group buys Town Center Mall for $35 million
**WV MetroNews** - The Town Center Mall was sold Thursday during a public auction for $35 million. The winning bid, according to Charleston Mayor Amy Goodwin, came from U.S. Bank Association, the group that has held the loan note on the facility. The former mall owners defaulted on a $93 million loan in late 2017 and the banking group filed a lawsuit to put the mall into receivership. Kanawha County Circuit Judge Joanna Tabit signed off on an agreement last January appointing CBRE Group to handle the day-to-day operations of the mall while it remained in receivership.  

**Editorials / Op-Eds**

**Editorial: Education establishment's letter counterproductive**

*Daily Mail WV*

The reason West Virginia's education rankings remain low in so many measures became clear once again this week, when the education establishment dropped off a letter to every lawmaker in the West Virginia Legislature. The letter said - not literally, but in effect - "Just give us more money for teacher pay raises and dump millions more dollars into our health insurance program, but don't ask us to make any changes that might actually improve educational outcomes because we are comfortable with our staid, outdated, non-responsive, bureaucratic, top-down public education system."
David Brooks: How We Destroy Lives Today

New York Times

Within living memory, political polarization had at least something to do with issues, but in the age of social media it’s almost entirely about social type. It’s about finding and spreading the viral soap operas that are supposed to reveal the dark hearts of those who are in the opposite social type from your own. It’s about finding images that confirm your negative stereotypes about people you don’t know. It’s about reducing a complex human life into one viral moment and then banishing him to oblivion.  Continue...

Upcoming West Virginia Chamber Events

West Virginia Chamber 2019 Legislative Reception

January 29, 2019

Register Now!

West Virginia Chamber 2019 Legislative Briefing Breakfasts

February 5, 12 & 19, 2019

Register Now!