Top Stories

House votes to kill comprehensive education reform bill

Teachers union leaders celebrate the House's procedural vote to kill comprehensive education reform - Photo by Brad McElhinny / WV MetroNews

**WV MetroNews** - The House of Delegates approved a motion that postponed an omnibus education bill indefinitely, essentially killing the bill.

The motion to table the bill passed 53 to 45 with two absences. That elicited an eruption of cheers from teachers who gathered outside the House of Delegates.

Senate President Mitch Carmichael, a main advocate for the big education bill, expressed disappointment but said he would continue to fight for educational policy changes.
"Unfortunately today the champions of the status quo won," said Carmichael, R-Jackson. "But that will not stop progress. They're on the wrong side of history."

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**WV House Education Committee votes to expand 'last dollar in' tuition bill**

*Charleston Gazette-Mail* - The West Virginia House Education Committee voted Thursday to expand the free public community college tuition bill to also reduce the cost of the first two years at four-year colleges - both public and not-for-profit schools. The 13-10 vote, which defied party lines, came despite some Republicans' arguments against increasing the legislation's cost. Some argued that would imperil its chances later on in the legislative process.  

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**Editorial: Teachers Strike to Kill Student Choice**

*The Wall Street Journal*
Readers who still think teachers are striking over money should look at what just happened in West Virginia. A year after the state's 20,000 teachers struck to get a 5% pay raise and no reductions in rich benefits, they walked off the job Tuesday to kill an education reform bill that would have increased school choice and accountability.

The West Virginia Education Association gave the walkout order to defeat legislation that would have allowed all of seven charter schools in the state over the next three-and-a-half years. The bill would also have created educational savings accounts for private or online schools and removed seniority as the only criterion for teacher layoffs. Competition and judging teachers by student performance are mortal threats to the union K-12 monopoly.

Sorry to say, Republican Gov. Jim Justice surrendered so fast that West Virginians should start calling him the former Governor. On Tuesday he promised to veto the reform if it passed, and legislators in the state House of Delegates shelved the bill indefinitely. The de facto Governor now is teachers union chief Dale Lee. The losers are the state's children, who score below the national average in test results.

Unions will keep striking to roll back reform and charter schools until politicians and citizens find the courage to stand up to them. Continue...
Campus conceal carry bill goes to the House floor

**WV MetroNews** - College leaders across the state don’t like the idea of carrying concealed guns on campus in West Virginia, but the bill is now headed to the House of Delegates floor. The House Finance Committee passed the bill Thursday evening after discussing its estimated $11 million financial impact to colleges. The measure is backed by the National Rifle Association. [Continue...]

Strike in West Virginia Demonstrates How Teachers Unions Oppose School Choice, As Well As Tax Relief

**Forbes** - Thousands of parents across West Virginia need to figure out what to do with their kids today while they go to work. That's because West Virginia teachers union members are on strike today, the second time they've gone on strike in the past 13 months. American Federation for Teachers union head Randi Weingarten has descended upon the state to join in today's protest, where union bosses aren't calling for more pay, which they received last year. No; this time Weingarten and West Virginia teachers union members are protesting Senate Bill 451, legislation that would expand school choice in West Virginia by permitting charter schools and create an Education Savings Account (ESA) program for special needs children. [Continue...]

West Virginia News

House committee passes bill to make major changes to school calendar

**WV MetroNews** - Calling it the "landmark" legislation of this legislative session, members of the House of Delegates Education Committee passed a bill Thursday morning making major changes to the public school calendar when it comes to when students start and end school. The committee amended the bill to reduce the number of instructional days from 180 to 170. Del. Sean Hornbuckle, D-Cabell, who offered the amendment, said he met with a group of teachers and school administrators to arrive at the 170 number. [Continue...]
Justice appoints Dodrill insurance commissioner

**Charleston Gazette-Mail** - Gov. Jim Justice has appointed James A. Dodrill as state insurance commissioner effective March 4, Justice announced in a news release Monday afternoon. Dodrill replaces Allen McVey, who was appointed earlier this year as secretary of the Department of Administration. Dodrill, of Hurricane, earned his bachelor of arts in political science from Marshall University and graduated from the West Virginia University College of law.  

Pay raise bill up for passage in the House; Blair says money could be used on roads

**WV MetroNews** - Members of the House of Delegates are poised to approve the "clean" pay raise bill during Friday's floor session. The measure moved through second reading with no problem during Thursday. HB 2730 would raise teachers' salaries by five percent with increases included for school service personnel (approximately $1,100) and state police. The raises for other state workers are included in the governor's budget bill.  

Senate passes intermediate courts bill

**Charleston Gazette-Mail** - By a single-vote margin earlier this week, the West Virginia Senate passed a bill establishing an intermediate court of appeals between the circuit court and state Supreme Court levels. Many Senate Republicans say the courts would free up the Supreme Court to establish a broader spread of jurisprudence; many Democrats say the court is an unnecessary layer of government that will delay cases, favoring insurance companies and civil defendants. West Virginia is one of nine states without an intermediate appellate court.  

Loughry signs deal with state to be disbarred, will never seek public office again
**West Virginia Record** - Former state Supreme Court Justice Allen Loughry has agreed to disbarment and to never seek public office in West Virginia again. Loughry appeared Feb. 20 before the state Judicial Hearing Board. As part of an agreement signed Jan. 31 by Loughry, the state Judicial Disciplinary Counsel recommended censure, a $3,000 fine and payment of $5,871.12 for the cost of the proceedings against Loughry.  

**W.Va. House may pursue work requirements for Medicaid**

**WV MetroNews** - West Virginia's Legislature is considering joining a handful of states that have work requirements for people on Medicaid. The House Finance Committee took up the issue Wednesday afternoon as a bill originating from the committee, meaning that few observers were up to speed on the ins and outs prior to its introduction. The Legislature has already passed the deadline for individual members to introduce bills, and the end of this week marks a deadline for bills to get out of committee. The Finance Committee voted 14-9 to send the work requirement bill to the full House for consideration.

**Debate over Rockwool plant comes to Huntington**

**The Herald-Dispatch** - Huntington business leaders on Thursday heard from Rockwool, a new West Virginia company that plans construction of a manufacturing facility in the Eastern Panhandle but is facing opposition from environmental groups and others that believe it will cause heavy pollution in the state. The Denmark-based company makes stone wool insulation and other building materials, and plans to hire more than 150 people, bringing millions of dollars in economic activity to the state.

**Attorney files FOIA request seeking info about Putnam schools staying open during strike**

**West Virginia Record** - A former attorney for the state Supreme Court has filed a Freedom of Information Act request regarding the decision by Putnam County's school superintendent to be the lone system in the state to keep doors open during the recent two-day teacher strike. Jennifer Singletary hand-delivered her FOIA request Feb. 21 to Superintendent John
Editorials / Op-Eds

Editorial: Notice what's missing in better education debate?

Daily Mail WV

A certain statewide elected official has been missing from the discussion of education reform in West Virginia these last several weeks. More importantly, this statewide elected official has been missing in the more important long-term push for education reform that is so needed in the state where spending per pupil ranks high while public school educational outcomes (and teacher pay) rank low. After making big spending promises to teachers last October to fund another round of 5 percent pay raises and inject an extra $150 million to shore up PEIA, Gov. Jim Justice promptly left the field of engagement and created a void of leadership. And when an assigned leader fails to lead, someone else steps up. Credit goes to Senate President Mitch Carmichael, R-Jackson, and Senate Education Chairwoman Patricia Rucker, R-Jefferson, for having the foresight, the courage and the great ideas to get the much-needed education reform discussion going in West Virginia.

Editorial: Union on strike call: 'We are left no other choice'

Daily Mail WV

How ironic that in announcing the illegal strike of public school teachers and education service workers Monday evening in front of the Senate chambers at the State Capitol, union chief Fred Albert stated: "We are left with no choice." Thank you, Mr. President of the West Virginia branch of the American Federation of Teachers, for stating succinctly and strongly how most parents of school-age kids in West Virginia feel. They don't have a choice of where they send their kids to school. But actually, the union chiefs did have choices. They could have worked the bill in the Legislature like representatives of other organizations do. They could have pointed out the positive and negatives as they saw them, and they at least could have waited till the Senate voted before calling a strike. But the truth is, the union chiefs and others in the education establishment don't have good reasons to oppose portions of the bill.
they say are "bad." Those bad portions - education savings accounts and charter schools - often work really well in many other states.  

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**Upcoming West Virginia Chamber Events**

**West Virginia Chamber Diversity & Inclusion and HR Conference**

April 9-10, 2019

**West Virginia Chamber Environmental & Energy Conference**

May 15, 2019

**West Virginia Chamber Annual Meeting & Business Summit**

August 28-30, 2019