

A Presidents Day note to News and Sentinel readers

PARKERSBURG — *The Parkersburg News and Sentinel* will not publish a print edition on Monday, Presidents Day, nor any of the other federal holidays: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.

Our newsroom will remain staffed on both the day before and the actual holiday.



Event and breaking news coverage, local sports coverage and obituaries will still be handled and appear on our website on those holiday mornings, and in print on the day after the holidays.

Readers who have not linked their newspaper subscription to the website and e-edition can do so by clicking the Today's Newspaper link at the top of newsandsentinel.com. From there you will be guided through the validation process.

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WEST VIRGINIA GOVERNMENT



Photo Courtesy/WV Legislative Photography

West Virginia Board of Education President Paul Hardesty, center, has been raising issues with the state school aid formula for the last year, including at the board's monthly meetings in October, November and December.

The Sound of Silence

Gov. Morrisey, state education officials clash over budget needs

By STEVEN ALLEN ADAMS
Staff Reporter

CHARLESTON — Gov. Patrick Morrisey and officials with the West Virginia Department of Education and state Board of Education are clashing over requests for additional spending for the next fiscal year and whether state revenue officials were informed of those needs.

During a press conference earlier this week, Morrisey criticized the board and Department of Education for not making their financial needs known when it comes to addressing the growing costs of special education.

"Did we ever get any heads up from the school board that there was this massive need of hundreds of millions of dollars? The answer was no," Morrisey said. "When we don't get a heads up over these kinds of problems, it starts to raise questions. And we'd like to be brought in sooner."

State Board of Educa-



Photo Courtesy/WV Department of Education

State Superintendent of Schools Michele Blatt, right, told members of the House Finance Committee in January that there were items included in the Department of Education's fiscal year 2027 general revenue budget recommendation from the Governor's Office that she was not made aware of.

tion President Paul Hardesty nor's Office said education declined to comment regarding Morrisey's criticisms.

But sources in the department point to evidence showing a governor that has walled himself off from state education officials, while the Gover-

nor's Office said education has been foremost on Morrisey's mind.

■ Cancelled meetings

According to emails provided by the Department of Education through a Freedom of Information Act request,

a one-on-one budget planning meeting between the Governor's Office and the Department of Education last fall was canceled and never rescheduled.

■ SEE EDUCATION, PAGE 7A



Photo Courtesy/

WV Legislative Photography

Senate Assistant Minority Leader Joey Garcia, D-Marion, raised concerns Friday with Senate Bill 531 which he believes is aimed at targeting the free speech of a specific company, NewsGuard, that provides rankings of media outlets based on accuracy and credibility.

"The majority of abortions in America today occur via the abortion pill. Not only do these pills terminate the life of the baby, but studies have shown that in up to 10% of the cases, they also have severe adverse effects on the health of the mother requiring medical attention," said Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Tom Willis, R-Berkeley. "This important legislation is designed to protect life in West Virginia and stop the practice of abortifacients being unlawfully sent to West Virginia residents."

Licensed professionals found in violation of these rules could have their medical licenses revoked and may face civil litigation and fines. The bill includes exemptions protecting the pregnant woman from criminal charges while granting her and the Attorney General's Office the right to sue violators for damages.

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W.Va. House amends bill aimed at helping small businesses

By STEVEN ALLEN ADAMS
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CHARLESTON — The West Virginia House of Delegates amended a bill Friday championed by Senate President Randy Smith, melding it with the House Republican majority's Jobs First - Opportunity Everywhere economic development agenda.

Senate Bill 1, the Small Business Growth Act, passed the House Friday morning in an 87-3 vote with nine members absent or not vot-

"I'm all for trying to bring in the big players. ... But I feel being (a) small business owner, over the years we've kind of neglected the small businesses."

Senate President Smith, R-Preston

ing. The bill heads back to the Senate to concur with the changes made to the bill by the House, setting up SB 1 to be the first bill this session sent to the desk of Gov. Patrick Morrisey.

SB 1 establishes the West Virginia First Small Business Growth Program, under which specialized growth funds collect capital from

investors to provide financing to eligible small businesses that maintain the majority of their operations and workforce within the state. In exchange for these investments, growth investors receive non-refundable tax credits that can be applied against their state tax liabilities starting in 2029.

"This tax credit program

that's in this bill applies to companies that employ less than 250 employees, 60% of the workforce has to be West Virginia-based, or you can move 60% of your workforce into West Virginia," explained House Judiciary Committee Chairman JB Akers, R-Kanawha.

"A lot of the economic development bills we see are geared towards attracting new businesses to the state, and we're all for that," Akers continued. "This bill is focused on existing West

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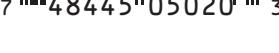


Photo Courtesy/WV Legislative Photography

House Finance Committee Chairman Vernon Criss, right, said Friday a bill creating the West Virginia First Small Business Growth Program would help the state compete to keep small businesses from jumping to neighboring states for better economic development incentives.

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MORNING NEWS BRIEFING

School districts plan for snow makeup days

Local school districts are determining what changes, if any, need to be made to their schedules after layers of ice and snow forced multiple days of cancellations in recent weeks.

Details, Page 1B

North Star Child Advocacy Center outlines finances

With awareness of the North Star Child Advocacy Center growing in recent years, Executive Director Greg Collins said he wants to make sure people understand the nonprofit's financial situation.

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READER

Thank you,
Charles D. Prim
of Harrisville
for being a
News and Sentinel
subscriber.

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