

# **West Virginia Legislative Brief: Commentary from Gil White**

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### **My View from the Capitol**

Today marks the 10th day of the 60 day Regular Legislative Session. The revenue estimates for the coming fiscal year are \$108 million below last year. This is in part due to a decrease in the energy sector, particularly lower natural gas prices, and a drop in coal exports. Legislative leaders plan to fill the gap by spending reserves while at the same time considering some new initiatives. The overall state budget is projected to be \$4.7 billion in general revenue.

That said, the Justice Administration would like to see a \$150 million rainy day fund for Medicaid spending in case dollars are short in future budgets. The Governor would also like to see \$19.7 million used to eliminate the waiting list for those with intellectual/developmental disabilities. In addition, Justice proposed \$26.4 million on child protective services where approximately 1/3 of the state workers turn over annually. Rounding out the Governor's proposed new initiatives is \$1.9 million to establish a narcotics enforcement division, \$2 million for a backpack program for youth and \$1 million for our state food banks. One item that has been in the forefront recently is the proposal to eliminate the property tax on manufacturing equipment. If passed by the Legislature, it would be placed upon the ballot for the voters of West Virginia to ultimately decide. If passed and enacted, there would have to be approximately \$150 million generated to replace this in the state budget going forward.

The filing period for individuals to run for office officially opened on January 13th and ends on January 25th. All West Virginia Constitutional officers are up for election (Governor, Secretary of State, Attorney General, Treasurer, Agriculture Commissioner) as well as all 100 members in the House of Delegates and 17 of the 34 members in the State Senate. With President Trump head of the ticket, it is expected that the current Republican majority will continue.

### **Legislative Calendar - Important Days to Remember**

First Day - January 8

20th Day - January 27 - Submission of Legislative Rule-Making Review Bills Due

35th Day - February 11 - Last day to introduce bills in the House

41st Day - February 17 - Last day to introduce bills in the Senate

47th Day - February 23 - Bills due out of committee in house of origin to ensure three full days for readings

50th Day - February 26 - Last day to consider bills on third reading in house of origin. Does not apply to the budget bill or supplemental appropriation bills.

60th Day - March 7 - Adjournment at midnight

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