



Stateline

A Newsletter For West Virginia State Government Employees

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Governor's Address Identifies Accomplishments

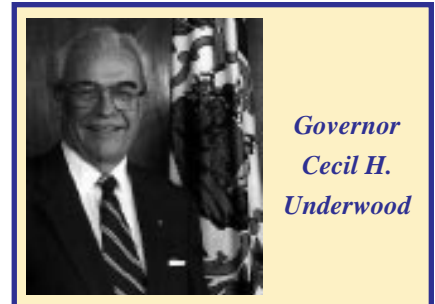
Gov. Cecil H. Underwood delivered the annual State of the State address January 13, 1999 and highlighted State government's accomplishments over the past year as well as several issues that affect State workers. Some of the accomplishments over the past 2 years which the Governor highlighted were:

- ☆ The ATM (Asynchronous Transfer Mode) network, a cornerstone of the West Virginia 2001 public-private initiative by the State and Bell Atlantic, has made it possible to develop the West Virginia Statewide Unified Network. Through it, the Courtroom of the Future has been a pilot program which connects courtrooms with jails to transfer video and data to facilitate judicial proceedings.
- ☆ Road bonds in the amount of \$220 million were sold at an interest rate of less than 5%. The Division of Highways will use these funds immediately for projects already advertised for bids. The sale of an additional \$10 million in bonds has been proposed.
- ☆ In the past year, the Division of Highways has announced the

widening of some of our critical Interstate highways, including I-64, I-79, and I-81. It has renovated or replaced 84 bridges and resurfaced 1,600 miles of highways.

- ☆ The 24-hour Courtesy Patrol has been re-instituted, staffed by 133 West Virginia Works participants in 25 counties. The patrol already has traveled more than one million miles and assisted 2,620 stranded drivers on West Virginia interstates and Appalachian corridors.
- ☆ The purchasing card program is an unqualified success for State government. The program averages 18,000 transactions totaling \$2.5 million per month. Based on industry standards, the program has saved taxpayers \$8.4 million, and these savings could reach \$25 million next year.

Governor Underwood, as part of his ongoing commitment to reduce the size of State government, suggested some privatization initiatives, such as the expansion of the privately operated child support collection pilot project, successful in Kanawha County, to the entire State.



Other privatization measures include the warehousing and wholesaling of liquor, and the distribution of food to schools and food pantries across the State.

The State of the State address coincided with the opening of the legislative session during which Department of Administration Secretary Joseph Markus presented the Governor's budget.

The budget included a general revenue line-item appropriation in the amount of \$200,000 for the *Mountain Stage* radio program. "*Mountain Stage* is a huge billboard for West Virginia that helps to attract business and tourism. Currently the radio program reaches more than 110 stations that serve major markets across the nation," Underwood said.

The suggested budget also included \$51 million set aside to support the second installment of a 3-year pay raise for State employees, and \$10.7 million to cover the State's share of the solution to the \$50 million deficit expected in the Public Employees Insurance Agency. That's in addition to \$35 million that was added to last year's budget to supply State agencies with more money for premiums.



It's Time for the Health Fair!

Through a cooperative effort between the Division of Highways and Thomas Memorial Hospital, the 10th Annual Health Fair will be held March 8, 1999. The fair is free to all State employees and includes a variety of screenings. The event will be held in the Capitol Conference Center, Room C, from 8 A.M. to approximately 4 P.M. If you need additional information, call Becky Haley (558-3862) or Mary Perry (558-3111).

Cultural Center Flourishing with News/Activities

All articles contributed by Ginny Painter of the Division of Culture and History.

State Museum Unveils Volunteer Docent Program

The State Museum of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History is pleased to announce its Volunteer Docent Program. The program was introduced at a reception held in the Cultural Center.

As part of the new program, 10 volunteers recently completed an 11-week program to train them in leading tours of the State Museum, providing interpretation of exhibitions, and answering questions. The docents are currently working at special museum events and exhibition openings; however, Renay Conlin, Commissioner of the West Virginia

Division of Culture and History, said the goal is to eventually recruit and train enough volunteers to provide guides for all visitors.

According to Conlin, the purpose of the docent program is to enrich museum visitors' experiences. "In the history of the State Museum, visitors have been left to explore the exhibits and artifacts on their own," she said. "We felt we were missing an opportunity to give people more. This program will help fill that void.

"We knew that if we developed a group of dedicated and enthusiastic volunteer docents to be available in

the museum, they could enhance visitors' understanding and appreciation of our State's culture and history," she continued. "We couldn't be more pleased with the results of the initial recruitment effort. These volunteers are doing a wonderful job. They are ambassadors of our State in the truest sense of the word."

Volunteers in the docent program range in age from 12 years old to senior citizens, and they include both

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State Welcome Center Moved

Effective February 1, 1999, the Capitol Complex Welcome and Information Center formerly located in the lower rotunda of the State Capitol building moved to the nearby Cultural Center. Capitol Complex visitors who want tourist information or a guided tour of the Capitol, Governor's Mansion, or Cultural Center will begin their visit at the desk in the Great Hall of the Cultural Center.

Renay Conlin, commissioner of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, was recently notified by administration officials that the space in the lower rotunda occupied by the Welcome and Information Center was needed to house the House/Senate journal room and that the center and tour guides would have to be relocated.

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Calling All Quilters!!

The Division of Culture and History is pleased to announce a call for entries for its annual juried quilt exhibition. The summer-long exhibition, Quilts '99, will be displayed on the white marble walls in the Great Hall from May 14 through September 6, 1999.

Quilts handmade by West Virginia residents are eligible for the exhibition and awards. Awards will be made as follows: First Place - \$500 pieced and \$500 appliqued; Second Place - \$400 pieced and \$400 appliqued; and Third Place - \$300 pieced and \$300 appliqued. The Division will provide a Purchase Award and add the quilt chosen to the State Museum collection.

A category has been added for entries using a special technique or a significant amount of more than one technique. Awards in this Mixed/Other category will be given at the discretion of the judge as will honorable mention or other non-monetary awards.

All winners will receive ribbons. Awards will be presented on Saturday, May 29, in the State Theater of the Cultural Center as part of the annual Vandalia Gathering.

Quilts shown previously in a Division of Culture and History Quilts juried exhibition are not eligible.

Entries must be postmarked by April 8, 1999. Hand-delivered quilts will be accepted between 10 A.M. and 4 P.M. on April 8-9. A non-refundable entry fee of \$20 must be submitted with each entry.

Lois T. Smith from Rockville, MD will serve as judge for this year's exhibition. She is an award-winning quilt maker, a certified judge and teacher by the National Quilt Association, as well as the author of *Fun and Fancy: Machine Quilting* and *Lois Smith's Machine Quilting*.



State's Prepaid College Program Earns B-

Kaplan, a national educational magazine, gave the West Virginia Prepaid College Plan a "B-" grade. State Treasurer John Perdue, whose office coordinates the program, called it "a fantastic rating."

The newly-implemented tuition program guarantees full college tuition payments for a West Virginia student at any State college, university, or community college.

The plan received a "B-" because it is not absolutely guaranteed. But for West Virginia's plan to be 100% guaranteed, the State Legislature would have to pass a constitutional amendment.

West Virginia did "considerably better" than other states with comparable programs, based on total applications, market size, and poverty rate, according to Charles Bockway, Deputy Treasurer.

Perdue met with coordinators of prepaid college plans from around the country at a January conference in Florida. He said many of the representatives want to meet with the West Virginia staff and want to use West Virginia's booklets and program structure as a model.

"We have compared ourselves to several programs and found ourselves among the elite," said Perdue. "For once, we're not last. And for once, we're leaders."

More than 4,800 Prepaid College Plan applications were received at the State Treasurer's Office during the plan's 1998 session from October until the deadline December 31, indicating that West Virginia's new college savings plan had a better start than several states with similar plans.

Seventy percent of applications were for 4-year plans, and 77% of the plans were purchased by parents.

Nearly half the applicants chose the lump-sum payment plan. The 60-month plan attracted one-third of the applicants, followed by the extended plan, or monthly payments until the child enters college.

The new session begins October 1, 1999 and will reflect tuition prices set for the year. Some, however, are skeptical of the plan itself because if the market performs significantly better than Perdue's goal of 8.5%, there is no way for buyers of the prepaid plan to benefit. But Perdue said if the plan accumulates considerably more money than it needs, he will keep future contract prices as low as possible.

While there is no absolute guarantee, he said, it is most likely that even in the event of poor investments, those who buy the plan will have enough tuition money to send their children to college.

For more about the WV Prepaid College Plan, call 1-800-307-4701.

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This year, monthly payments for a child in kindergarten are \$47 to guarantee one year of tuition, \$91 for 2 years or \$134 for 3 years.

Today, 4 years of tuition at a West Virginia college or university totals about \$9,000. At State schools, tuition typically comes to about 25% of a student's total expenses. By the year 2016, when today's newborn is likely to enroll as a freshman, tuition will be about \$35,000, according to Perdue's estimates.

During the past 30 years, college tuition has increased by an average of 7.3% per year nationally, higher than the inflation rate, according to Ed Staats, Perdue's chief financial officer. Perdue expects next year's West Virginia prepaid tuition plans to cost from 7-10% more than they cost now.

Webring Links State-Related Websites

Have you been looking for West Virginia-based websites? If so, here's a webring you should check out. The Almost Heaven Webring was started in May 1997 to link together all of the pages that have a tie to West Virginia.

A webring is a group of pages linked together that have something in common. The surfer simply uses the HTML code installed on your page containing the Almost Heaven information to surf from each West Virginia page to the next. Eventually, he will end up where he started in the ring.

The Almost Heaven Webring allows any genre of webpage: small business, education, personal, etc., as long as it mentions that you live or used to live in the State, and is PG-rated (no profanity, off-color jokes, nudity, racism, etc.)

To add your page to the Almost Heaven Webring or to check out the 172 pages already there, go to http://web.mountain.net/~wen/webrings/Almost_Heaven/index.html.

**PUBLIC
SERVICE
RECOGNITION WEEK**



We're in the process of planning festivities for Public Service Recognition Week. This year, the event is scheduled for the week of May 3-9.

VOLUNTEERS ARE
DESPERATELY NEEDED !!

Have you enjoyed the PSRW happenings in the past? Those happenings were possible only through the efforts of many dedicated volunteers.

CAN YOU HELP THIS YEAR?

Contact Jane Fouty, PSRW Chairperson, at 558-3950, ext. 206

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Last year, more than 55,000 visitors from throughout West Virginia, the United States, and the world came to tour the State Capitol, Governor's Mansion, and Cultural Center through the Division's Capitol Complex Tour Program.

Conlin said moving the desk from its accustomed location will require reorienting visitors, but that she sees a number of benefits to the change.

"We anticipate at first that people who are used to the rotunda location may feel it is inconvenient to start tours of the complex at the Cultural Center," said Conlin. "In the long run, however, we see this change can be quite positive. Most visitors walk right past the Cultural Center on the way to the Capitol from their cars or buses anyway and the Cultural Center location will expose more visitors to the West Virginia State Museum and our wonderful Archives and History Library."

Both the museum and library are located at the Cultural Center, as are the Division's administrative offices.

Conlin added that the administration is posting signs around the complex to direct visitors to the Cultural Center for tours and information. In addition, notices about the change are being sent to schools, tour bus operators, and other groups that frequently use the tour program.

The telephone number tourists and school groups call for information and to schedule tours of the State Capitol Complex will change to 304/558-4839. In addition, tourists can still schedule Capitol Complex tours through the toll-free number, 1-800-CALL-WVA.

For more information, call Ginny Painter at 558-0220, ext. 120.

COULD UNCLAIMED \$\$\$ BE WAITING FOR YOU?

At the end of 1998, the IRS said it was searching for 100,000 people who hadn't claimed their 1997 tax refunds, for a total of \$68 million. The total of unclaimed refunds from 1994 to 1997 is \$208 million. Check the following website for unclaimed refunds, unclaimed bank accounts, and utility deposits: <http://unclaimedassets.com>

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males and females. Program volunteer Barbara Ratliff of Elkview was one among the first to enthusiastically sign up.

"What a distinct pleasure it is to serve as a docent in the State Museum," Ratliff said. "As a native West Virginian and an Air Force wife for 20 years, I was probably one of the State's best spokespersons everywhere we lived.

"West Virginia is my home and by being a docent, I am sharing my heritage with others. When I greet someone with, 'Welcome to the State Museum,' I am also welcoming them to my home. It's very fulfilling."

Conlin said Ratliff's attitude is a common thread in the corps of volunteers.

"These docents are so obviously proud of their heritage and this State, that it is quite natural for them to greet visitors, guide them through the State Museum, and answer their questions," she added. "It's the ideal situation and we look forward to the program's continued growth."

Volunteers are needed for the next docent training program which is scheduled to begin this spring at the Cultural Center. To volunteer, or for more information about the docent program, call Joe McCullough, Education Coordinator, at 304/558-0220, ext. 131.

Pencil In ...

Approximately 4,000 people were involved in **highway-rail grade crossing collisions** last year. To cross safely:

■ Never try to drive around the gates.

■ Never stop on a crossing, even if waiting for a traffic light. Wait until you are sure there is enough room to clear the tracks before proceeding across them.

■ Watch for a second train. Another one could be coming on a second track.

■ At unmarked crossings, be prepared to stop if the train is within 1,500 feet of the crossing.

The Insurance Information Institute says 75% of people who have automobile insurance now have enough insurance to cover **damage to rental cars**. They don't need to buy the industry's collision-damage waiver. Check with your insurance agent to see if you are covered.



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