

# WVHA

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## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

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**January 4, 2024**

### **West Virginia Legislature to Begin Next Week**

The West Virginia Legislature is set to begin next week Wed., Jan. 10 thru March 9. The WVHA Legislative Team will keep you up to date on the action through various communications including our: *WVHA Legislative Update*; and any *Call to Action and Alerts*. To help stay informed, please visit the Legislature's [website](#), including lawmaker and committee membership information and streaming video and audio.

### **January Interim Meetings**

Legislative activity will kick off this Sunday with 3-day interim meetings. The schedule is available [here](#). Final reports for several committees will be considered including the Joint Health Committee and the Legislative Oversight Health Commission to name a few.

### **WVHA Legislative Priorities / Resources / Hospital Advocacy Week**

With your grassroots support, we will need to remain engaged throughout the session to advance WVHA's legislative priorities:

- **IMPROVING the FINANCIAL STABILITY FOR HOSPITALS** - The focus here will be on enabling legislation to maximize the federal matching dollars and to expand hospital participation for our hospital directed payment program.
- **ADDRESSING HEALTH CARE WORKFORCE SUPPLY, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION** – On the workforce front, we'll be advocating for the protection of health care workers through anti-doxing legislation to make it a crime to disseminate personal identifying information with the intent to intimidate, abuse, threaten, harass, or frighten. We'll also continue to oppose and play defense on any legislation to mandate nurse staffing ratios.
- **ADVANCING AFFORDABLE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS / PHARMACY ISSUES** – On the pharmacy front, we will be protecting the 340B Drug Pricing Program through legislation that will prohibit discriminatory practices that impact hospitals and other 340B covered entities.
- **PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH** - We will continue to work with various stakeholders to sustain West Virginia's current Childhood Immunization laws. There will be a lot of defense on bills that attempt to add religious and philosophical exemptions to our current process. Also, there will likely be legislation that we'll need to evaluate that modifies the state's current medical exemption process through the Public Health Office.

The WVHA's 2024 Agenda including supporting information is available on our password protected [Advocacy Page](#). The session will also feature many health care proposals introduced and advanced by legislators and other stakeholders that impact hospitals from a financial, clinical, and regulatory view. Please follow our communications for updates. Also, please be on the lookout for details regarding our Hospital Advocacy Week 2024 activities scheduled for February 7-9. Registration is available [here](#). For more information, please contact [Whitney Cherry](#).

### **West Virginia Legislature – Topics on the Radar**

The 2024 session will happen against the backdrop of an election year. Along with congressional seats and statewide offices on the ballot, all 100 House seats and half of the 34-member Senate will be up for election. Some overarching issues that have surfaced in reports include addressing premium costs for the Public Employees Insurance Agency (PEIA); the ongoing shortage of correctional officers in the state's jails and prisons; the state's foster care system; and finding a permanent funding source for EMS and volunteer fire departments, to name just a few topics. Expect to hear more about these and other issues in the coming days and weeks ahead.

On the state budget front, Governor Justice said he plans to present another flat budget close to the \$4.875 billion general revenue budget for the current fiscal year. It was recently reported that overall revenue collections exceeded estimates for December by \$120 million. That puts year-to-date collections at \$406 million ahead of estimates. The state has reached the midway point of the fiscal year, but there are several budget issues facing the state including a reduction in the federal Medicaid match which we've previously reported, and the possibility of pay raises for state employees, teachers, school service personnel, and state troopers to offset PEIA premium increases.

The Governor will present his version of the budget along with priorities during his eighth and final State of the State Address to a joint session of the Legislature on Wed., Jan. 10 at 7 p.m. The address will be livestreamed on [governor.wv.gov](#), the Governor's YouTube, X and Facebook accounts, [wvlegislature.gov](#) and the Legislature's YouTube account, and by West Virginia Public Broadcasting.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at [tgregory@wvha.org](mailto:tgregory@wvha.org) or 304-545-0128.