

THE REGISTER-HERALD

Thursday, February 20, 2014 Beckley, West Virginia ♦ Single copy: 75 cents

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2014 WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

Bill aims to pave a way to better public wellness

Division of Highways, Bureau of Public Health would work to move state toward exercise

Pamela Pitt
REGISTER-HERALD REPORTER

CHARLESTON — The Senate's Select Committee on Children and Poverty moved a

bill Wednesday designed to put West Virginians on the road to better health.

The Healthy Children and Communities Act will require the Division of Highways and the Bureau of Public Health to collaborate to provide options and opportunities for state residents to exercise. The DOH will look at making road projects more accessi-

ble for bicyclists and runners, thus promoting physical activity around the state's roadways if the bill becomes law. However, the DOH will not have to study every state road project because it would be cost-prohibitive. Public health officials must

be invited into communities to help determine how best to keep public facilities like schools open for community uses associated with exercise. Committee members were concerned that the use of public buildings would increase costs for local entities, as well as create liability issues. Sen. Mike Hall, R-Putnam, said it's one thing to say public

buildings should be used, but wanted to know how costs are mitigated. The committee's legal counsel said counties already using their buildings have worked out ways to overcome those obstacles either through grants or private donations. She said the bill purposefully leaves

See HEALTH, 12A



RICK BARBERO/THE REGISTER-HERALD

Watch video
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U.S. Senator Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., is traveling to seven counties to discuss his most recent piece of legislation, The Chemical Safety and Drinking Water Protection Act of 2014. That wasn't the topic today, though, as he spoke and answered questions in Beckley's old courthouse Wednesday.

■ SENATOR IN BECKLEY

Manchin speaks on a variety of topics; answers questions

Minimum wage, health care and budget discussed — but not expected recent water legislation

By Wendy Holdren
REGISTER-HERALD REPORTER

Although Sen. Joe Manchin had planned to discuss the Charleston-area chemical spill and his recent piece of legislation the Chemical Safety and Drinking Water Protection Act of 2014, he instead turned his focus on a hodgepodge of topics, including minimum wage, balancing the nation's budget and health-care issues.

After being introduced by Beckley Mayor Bill O'Brien, Manchin began talking about the possible increase of the federal minimum wage in Beckley at the old courthouse in Judge Burnside's old courtroom.

Like many states, West Virginia lawmakers are taking it upon themselves to try to increase the minimum wage. A bill

See MANCHIN, 12A

■ LIBERTY HIGH BOMB THREATS

Three teens suspended, taken into police custody

By Jessica Farrish
REGISTER-HERALD REPORTER

Three Liberty High School teens were suspended from school and taken into police custody Tuesday after allegedly making two threats at the high school this week, West Virginia State Police officials reported Wednesday.

The bomb threats were made Monday morning and Tuesday morning, according to Sgt. J.K. Cooper of the Whitesville detachment.

Police identified the three 15-year-old Liberty students Tuesday evening, said Cooper.

The threats were made on two handwritten notes, added Cooper.

The boys admitted to "having knowledge" of the notes but had not admitted Tuesday evening to having penned them, Cooper reported. They had also not offered a motive.

Cooper said Wednesday that terrorist threats and possibly other charges were pending against the boys.

The boys had not been named suspects in a bomb threat that was made at Trap Hill Middle School Tuesday, Cooper said.

He urged students to think twice about making false bomb threats.

"It puts a strain on manpower and stops school and school activities, and you're putting yourself in a lot of trouble, as far as criminal charges," said the trooper. "It's just not worth it."

Two bomb-sniffing dogs were brought from Charleston to inspect Liberty this week, he added.

"If you've got one of the bomb dogs in a school, and somewhere else, there's an actual bomb, (help) could be hours away," he said.

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F. BRIAN FERGUSON/THE REGISTER-HERALD

Ilene Evans portrays Underground Railroad leader Harriet Tubman Wednesday during a Black History Month program at Daniels Elementary School. Children got to ask questions and Evans responded in character.

■ HISTORY ALIVE

Harriet Tubman, Underground Railroad come to life for students

By Chris Boyd
REGISTER-HERALD REPORTER

The struggles and victories of Harriet Tubman were brought to life Wednesday for Daniels Elementary students. Storyteller Ilene Evans became the iconic abolitionist, even answering questions in character after the presentation.

Eager children sat on the floor of the gymnasium while Evans told the stories of Tubman through bold gestures, suggestive of her past as a dancer, and a strong, captivating voice. She sang songs and selected students from the crowd to illustrate, through movement, the grapevine, chain gangs and Underground Railroad.

The seasoned dramatist commanded

See TUBMAN, 12A

WEATHER



Mostly cloudy.
20% chance
a.m. rain.
High 57, Low 50.
Details, Page 12A

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• SIX-DAY FORECAST



• ALMANAC

Yesterday's high	59°	Precipitation (period ending 6 p.m. yesterday)	0.11 inches
Yesterday's low	43°	For month	2.88 inches
Record high	72° in 1939	For year	4.82 inches
Record low	-3° in 2006, 1936	Sunrise today	7:06 a.m.
		Sunset today	6:09 p.m.

• LAKES, STREAMS, FISHING

By the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, phone the following numbers:

Bluestone Lake	304-466-0156
Lake, New River, Greenbrier River information	304-872-5809
Summersville Lake	304-872-5809
Lake, Meadow River information	304-664-9587
R.D. Bailey Lake	304-664-9587
Lake information	

For statewide fishing reports on-line, visit: www.wvdnr.gov/fishing/weekly_fishreport.shtml

For the latest river and stream reports, which are updated at 8 a.m. each day

• W.VA. FORECAST



www.register-herald.com

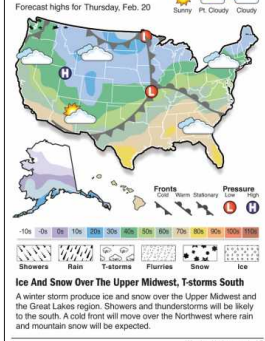
• SEVERE WEATHER, ROAD CONDITIONS

To report severe weather, call the National Weather Service toll-free at 877-432-4772.

Current weather and alerts on-line: www.WVVA.com

West Virginia road conditions: www.transportation.wv.gov/877-WVA-ROAD

• NATIONAL FORECAST



• LOTTERY

Daily 3: 4-4-4	Daily 4: 9-5-0-7
Hot Lotto: 10-20-28-33-45	Powerball: 1-17-35-49-54
Hot Ball: 12	Powerball: 34
Est.: \$3.59 million	Est.: \$400 million

Obama pressed by neighbor allies on sensitive issues

By Jim Kuhnhehn
ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOLUCA, Mexico — Pressed by North American allies on an array of politically fraught issues, President Barack Obama on Wednesday vowed to press ahead with stalled efforts to expand trade agreements for the Americas into Asia and overhaul fractured U.S. immigration laws. But Obama made no

promises to frustrated Canadian leaders about his long-anticipated decision on the Keystone XL pipeline. Closing a day of talks with the leaders of Mexico and Canada, Obama said the North American partners must maintain their "competitive advantage" on trade, in agreements by expanding into the fast-growing Asia-Pacific region. While Obama acknowledged that "ele-

ments in my party" oppose the Trans-Pacific Partnership deal, he disputed the notion that Democratic concerns would derail the agreement. "We'll get this passed if it's a good agreement," Obama declared during a joint news conference with Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

MANCHIN

Continued from 1A

raising the state's minimum pay rate of \$7.25 an hour to \$8.75 an hour by 2016 has passed the House and is awaiting Senate action.

Yet be it state or federal, Manchin said the wage rate increase will not bring people out of poverty.

A bill to increase the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour is being debated in Congress. On Tuesday, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office released a report that said such an increase would cause the loss of about 500,000 jobs but would boost earnings for about 16.5 million low-wage workers.

In 1968, Manchin said the minimum wage was \$1.60. Adjusting for inflation, he said the 2014 minimum wage should be around \$10.10.

Raising the minimum wage could well cause business owners to reduce staff or hire fewer people, so Manchin is urging business owners to step forward and be heard on the issue.

On federal finances, Manchin said in 2001, the nation had a budget surplus, but just a little over a decade later, the U.S. is \$17 trillion in debt.

"The Democrats blame the Republicans and the Republicans blame the Democrats. We should be saying it's our problem, let's fix it. I think that's where we are now."

He said this is the first time a bipartisan budget has been reached in 17 years, and although the two-year fix is a small one, "It's a step in the

right direction in a toxic environment."

Each administration has had its faults, Manchin said, as he mentioned former President George W. Bush's economic stimulus package, which cost \$2 trillion.

He said \$800 billion of that stimulus money went to the government to keep needed services afloat, such as sewer, water and broadband services.

That topic transitioned to a brief mention of the water crisis in Charleston, which he described as a "wake-up call."

"People don't think we care at all about the environment, that we value jobs and business over the environment," he said. "But that's the exception, not the rule."

Manchin said he hopes to resolve differences with the Environmental Protection Agency, especially to work together on clean coal efforts.

"We blame them, but then we need them. I'm an environmentalist, I care about the environment, but I'm a realist too. I care about my job."

He asked for the listeners to let him and other lawmakers know their thoughts on the variety of topics, including the Affordable Care Act.

"We spend more on health care than any state, but we rank 43rd on wellness and longevity."

Both parties agree on many aspects of the ACA, such as pre-existing conditions not being excluded from coverage and no lifetime caps, but there are still many things that need to be fixed, Manchin said.

"I will vote tomorrow to repeal (the ACA), but

I want to fix the problems in it."

He said the ACA is essentially a product and the government needs to find a way to "sell it" and make their customers want to buy it.

When Manchin opened the floor for questions, one disabled veteran asked him about his vote to cut veterans' pensions.

Manchin said that cut was part of the budget bill, which was either a yes or no vote, and he voted yes because "we had to keep the country running."

He did not note that the budget was passed, the veterans' benefits were corrected and only cost of living funds were cut.

While waiting for Manchin's arrival, U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall addressed the crowd and opened the floor to questions.

One man asked Rahall, like Manchin a Democrat, how the government plans to help the long-term unemployed.

"We need to get through the current downturn," Rahall responded.

He said the low prices of natural gas have shifted power generation to natural gas over coal. He also noted that the regulatory climate is difficult and the demand for coal worldwide is down.

"We need to diversify our economy," Rahall said. "We cannot put all our eggs in one basket."

He said West Virginia does need to focus on domestically produced energy, but also must consider technology, health care, timbering, agriculture and tourism as cylinders in its economic engine.

Rust-Oleum plans Martinsburg distribution center

MARTINSBURG, W.Va. — Rust-Oleum Corporation plans to open a distribution center in Martinsburg that's expected to employ between 80 and 100 workers. Media outlets report that the Berkeley County Development Authority and the company announced the project on Tuesday.

Rust-Oleum plans to consolidate operations in Williamsport, Md., into the Martinsburg facility.

The company manufactures home and industrial protective paints and coatings.

With the Boy Scouts of America making its permanent home here, Rahall said he believes there are great opportunities for the state's economy.

"I'm not saying for one second that we should forget about coal, but we need to diversify our economy."

Executive Director of the Raleigh County Senior Center Jack Tanner, his question to Manchin was on how he planned to contribute to rebuilding the nation's confidence in government.

"It's a challenge with a 24-hour news cycle," he said, but told Tanner that seniors would not lose their Social Security or Medicare benefits.

One man expressed his concerns with campaign financing and special interest groups funneling their ideas into the political system.

"It's not honest and it's not right. We get a lot of lip service, but we're forgotten about until election time."

Manchin agreed that special interest groups should not line the pockets of the politicians, but there is no limit on how much a politician can spend on his or her campaign.

One woman asked Manchin to remember her and her 10-year-old twin granddaughters as he travels back to Washington and remember that he represents West Virginia and the interest of the citizens who live here.

"We take that very seriously," Manchin said. "There are over 1.8 million people in the state and we are the voice for them."

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HEALTH

Continued from 1A

funding sources open so that communities can develop programs that fit their needs.

Sen. Ron Stollings, D-Boone, said the bill doesn't deal with limiting liability. Stollings said the legislature will have to deal with liability in the future.

"If it wasn't a litigious society that we live in, we wouldn't be having this

meeting, we'd already be using all (these buildings) after-hours," he said.

Stollings said a waiver may work in the short term.

The bill moves on to the Committee on Health and Human Resources.

Committee chair Sen. John Unger, D-Berkeley, said future meetings will take place around the state, beginning in Greenbrier County.

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TUBMAN

Continued from 1A

respect from the children and they listened intently to everything she said and sang. They were especially responsive to the movement exercises she led them through and erupted in applause many times during the piece.

Harriet Tubman, born in Dorchester, Md., was an African-American abolitionist and humanitarian. Born into slavery, Tubman escaped and subsequently made around 20 missions to rescue more than 300 slaves using the network of antislavery activists and safe houses known as the Underground Railroad. She later helped John Brown recruit men for his raid on Harpers Ferry, and after the Civil War worked for women's suffrage.

On Wednesday, Daniels Elementary students asked questions such as, "How did you find the courage to help free the slaves?"

To which Evans responded, as Tubman: "When you are afraid, that's when you make mistakes. And remember what I told you, where courage comes from. Keeping the people that you love here, in your heart, in your mind. They will help your feet do what they need to do."

Another child asked, "What did you eat while you were on the Underground Railroad?"

She responded, "We ate what we could find and what people would leave for us in secret. Sometimes you would eat the things you (would) find in the forest."

When asked about her program's inclusion in the schools' observance of Black History Month, she responded with a smile, "I do this 365 days a

year so it's always an aspect of history for me. This is an everybody story."

Additionally, Evans expanded on how the presentation brings a piece of the past forward so the children can interact with history.

In the portrayal of the Underground Railroad we are trying to help bring to life some issues and aspects of our history that are so different from today's world, it's hard to imagine until you have a more physical presentation, visually.

This is one of the reasons why ... If you can have the clothing of the time, the materials of the time ... All these things I have are hand-made, they are made with some significance to her life, (so) that if one of the students asks me a question about it, it would relate."

The message that she brought was a history of the life of Harriet Tubman, but it was also a vehicle to engage the children and cause them to think of their own freedom and the idea of slavery.

"How do I use my freedom in a way that makes this world a better place? That's what I left these 4th, 5th and 6th graders with today. How do we recognize when we are losing our freedom?"

Elene Evans is artistic director for Voices from the Earth whose mission is to bring to life tales of courage, freedom and valor through storytelling, theater and historical portrayal to promote listening, learning, respect and thoughtfulness. The West Virginia Humanities Council sponsored the performance as a part of their History Alive! program.

For more information about this program and others offered in the History Alive! series, visit www.wvhumanities.org

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