WEST virginia legislature

2023 regular session

Committee Substitute

for

House Bill 3421

By Delegate Hanshaw (Mr. Speaker)

[Originating in the Committee on the Judiciary; Reported on February 22, 2023]

A BILL to amend and reenact §3-1-30 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended; to amend and reenact §8-12-17 of said code; to amend and reenact §8-13-5 of said code; to amend and reenact §12-7-12 of said code; to amend and reenact §16-5V-2 of said code; to amend and reenact §18-8-1a of said code; to amend and reenact §18A-3-2a, of said code; to amend and reenact §21-5-1 of said code; to amend and reenact §22C-9-4 of said code; to amend and reenact §24-2-1 of said code; to amend and reenact §24A-2-2b of said code; to amend and reenact §29-6-4 of said code; to amend and reenact §46A-8-101 of said code; to amend and reenact §61-12-3 of said code; all relating to recodifying portions of the code to eliminate conflicts.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

CHAPTER 3. ELECTIONS.

ARTICLE 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS AND DEFINITIONS.

§3-1-30. Nomination and appointment of election officials and alternates; notice of appointment; appointment to fill vacancies in election boards.

(a) For any primary, general, or special election held throughout a county, poll clerks and election commissioners may be nominated as follows:

(1) The county executive committee for each of the two major political parties may, by a majority vote of the committee at a duly called meeting, nominate one qualified person for each team of poll clerks and one qualified person for each team of election commissioners to be appointed for the election;

(2) The appointing body shall select one qualified person as the additional election commissioner for each board of election officials;

(3) Each county executive committee shall also nominate qualified persons as alternates for at least 10 percent of the poll clerks and election commissioners to be appointed in the county and is authorized to nominate as many qualified persons as alternates as there are precincts in the county to be called upon to serve in the event any of the persons originally appointed fail to accept appointment or fail to appear for the required training or for the preparation or execution of their duties;

(4) When an executive committee nominates qualified persons as poll clerks, election commissioners, or alternates, the committee, or its chair or secretary on its behalf, shall file in writing with the appointing body, no later than the 70th day before the election, a list of those persons nominated and the positions for which they are designated.

(b) For any municipal primary, general, or special election, the poll clerks and election commissioners may be nominated as follows:

(1) In municipalities which have municipal executive committees for the two major political parties in the municipality, each committee may nominate election officials in the manner provided for the nomination of election officials by county executive committees in subsection (a) of this section;

(2) In municipalities which do not have executive committees, the governing body shall provide by ordinance for a method of nominating election officials or shall nominate as many eligible persons as are required, giving due consideration to any recommendations made by voters of the municipality or by candidates on the ballot.

(c) The governing body responsible for appointing election officials is:

(1) The county commission for any primary, general, or special election ordered by the county commission and any joint county and municipal election;

(2) The municipal governing body for any primary, general or special municipal election ordered by the governing body.

(d) The qualifications for persons nominated to serve as election officials may be confirmed prior to appointment by the clerk of the county commission for any election ordered by the county commission or for any joint county and municipal election and by the official recorder of the municipality for a municipal election.

(e) The appropriate governing body shall appoint the election officials for each designated election board no later than the 49th day before the election as follows:

(1) Those eligible persons whose nominations for poll clerk and election commissioner were timely filed by the executive committees and those additional persons selected to serve as an election commissioner are to be appointed; and

(2) The governing body shall fill any positions for which no nominations were filed.

(f) At the same time as the appointment of election officials or at a subsequent meeting the governing body shall appoint persons as alternates: *Provided*, That no alternate may be eligible for compensation for election training unless the alternate is subsequently appointed as an election official or is instructed to attend and actually attends training as an alternate and is available to serve on election day. Alternates shall be appointed and serve as follows:

(1) Those alternates nominated by the executive committees shall be appointed;

(2) The governing body may appoint additional alternates who may be called upon to fill vacancies after all alternates designated by the executive committees have been assigned, have declined to serve or have failed to attend training; and

(3) The governing body may determine the number of persons who may be instructed to attend training as alternates.

(g) The clerk of the county commission shall appoint qualified persons to fill all vacancies existing after all previously appointed alternates have been assigned, have declined to serve, or have failed to attend training.

(h) Within seven days following appointment, the clerk of the county commission shall notify, by first-class mail, all election commissioners, poll clerks and alternates of the fact of their appointment and include with the notice a response notice form for the appointed person to return indicating whether or not he or she agrees to serve in the specified capacity in the election.

(i) The position of any person notified of appointment who fails to return the response notice or otherwise confirm to the clerk of the county commission his or her agreement to serve within 14 days following the date of appointment is considered vacant and the clerk shall proceed to fill the vacancies according to the provisions of this section.

(j) If the governing body and the clerk of the county commission are unable to nominate a sufficient number of qualified persons agreeing to serve on a standard receiving board for each precinct, the clerk may assign members of one precinct’s standard receiving board to serve simultaneously on the standard receiving board of another precinct where the polling places of both precincts are located within the same physical building or facility: *Provided*, That no more than three precincts within the same building or facility may share board members in this manner.

(k) On election day, if an appointed election official or a poll clerk working a full day fails to appear at the polling place by 5:45 a.m. or, for a poll clerk working a half day, later than a time designated by the clerk of the county commission, the election officials present shall contact the office of the clerk of the county commission for assistance in filling the vacancy. The clerk shall proceed as follows:

(1) The clerk may attempt to contact the person originally appointed, may assign an alternate nominated by the same political party as the person absent if one is available or, if no alternate is available, may appoint another eligible person;

(2) If the election officials present are unable to contact the clerk within a reasonable time, they shall diligently attempt to fill the position with an eligible person of the same political party as the party that nominated the person absent until a qualified person has agreed to serve;

(3) If two teams of election officials, as defined in §3-1-29 of this code, are present at the polling place, the person appointed to fill a vacancy in the position of the additional commissioner may be of either political party.

(l) In a municipal election, the recorder or other official designated by charter or ordinance to perform election responsibilities shall perform the duties of the clerk of the county commission as provided in this section.

(m) Nothing in this section shall be construed to require any county executive committee or county commission to offer half-day shifts for poll clerks during any election.

CHAPTER 8. MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS.

ARTICLE 12. GENERAL AND SPECIFIC POWERS, DUTIES AND ALLIED RELATIONS OF MUNICIPALITIES, GOVERNING BODIES AND MUNICIPAL OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES; SUITS AGAINST MUNICIPALITIES.

§8-12-17. Sale or lease of municipal public utility.

In any case where a municipality owns a gas system, an electric system, a waterworks system, a sewer system, or other public utility and a majority of not less than 60 percent of the members of the governing body thereof determines it for the best interest of the municipality that the utility be sold or leased, the governing body may so sell or lease the gas system, electric system, waterworks system, sewer system, or other public utility upon such terms and conditions as the governing body in its discretion considers in the best interest of the municipality: *Provided,* That the sale or lease may be made only upon: (1) The publication of notice of a hearing before the governing body of the municipality, as a Class I legal advertisement in compliance with §59-3-1 *et seq.* of this code, in a newspaper published and of general circulation in the municipality, the publication to be made not earlier than 20 days and not later than seven days prior to the hearing; and (2) the approval by the Public Service Commission of West Virginia. The governing body, upon the approval of the sale or lease by a majority of its members of not less than 60 percent of the members of the governing body, shall have full power and authority to proceed to execute or effect the sale or lease in accordance with the terms and conditions prescribed in the ordinance approved as aforesaid, and shall have power to do any and all things necessary or incident thereto: *Provided, however,* That if at any time after the approval and before the execution of the authority under the ordinance, any person should present to the governing body an offer to buy the public utility at a price which exceeds by at least five percent the sale price which shall have been so approved and authorized or to lease the same upon terms which the governing body, in its discretion, shall consider more advantageous to the municipality than the terms of the lease which shall have been previously approved as aforesaid, the governing body shall have the power to accept the subsequent offer, and to make the sale or the lease to the person making the offer, upon approval of the offer by a majority of not less than 60 percent of the members of the governing body; but, if a sale shall have been approved by the governing body as aforesaid, and the subsequent proposition be for a lease, or, if a lease shall have been approved by the governing body, and the subsequent proposition shall be for a sale, the governing body shall have the authority to accept the same upon approval of the offer by a majority of not less than 60 percent of the members of the governing body. The person making the proposition shall furnish bond, with security to be approved by the governing body, in a penalty of not less than 25 percent of the proposed bid, conditioned to carry the proposition into execution, if the same shall be approved by the governing body. In any case where any such public utility shall be sold or leased by the governing body as hereinabove provided, no part of the moneys derived from the sale or lease shall be applied to the payment of current expenses of the municipality, but the proceeds of the sale or lease may be applied in payment and discharge of any indebtedness created in respect to the public utility, and in case there be no indebtedness, the governing body, in its discretion, shall have the power and authority to expend all such moneys when received for the purchase or construction of firefighting equipment and buildings for housing the equipment, a municipal building, or city hall, and the necessary land upon which to locate the same, for capital investments in public works projects, vehicles and equipment and law-enforcement vehicles and equipment, for the demolition of dilapidated and abandoned buildings, or for the construction of paved streets, avenues, roads, alleys, ways, sidewalks, sewers, storm water systems, floodwalls, and other like permanent improvements, for fulfilling municipal pension and other post-employment benefit obligations, or for reducing taxes, and for no other purposes. In case there be a surplus after the payment of the indebtedness, the surplus shall be used as aforesaid.

The requirements of this section shall not apply to the sale or lease of any part of the properties of any such public utility determined by the governing body to be unnecessary for the efficient rendering of the service of the utility.

ARTICLE 13. TAXATION AND FINANCE.

§8-13-5. Business and occupation or privilege tax; limitation on rates; effective date of tax; exemptions; activity in two or more municipalities; administrative provisions.

(a) *Authorization to impose tax. —* (1) Whenever any business activity or occupation, for which the state imposed its annual business and occupation or privilege tax under article thirteen, chapter eleven of this code, prior to July 1, 1987, is engaged in or carried on within the corporate limits of any municipality, the governing body thereof shall have plenary power and authority, unless prohibited by general law, to impose a similar business and occupation tax thereon for the use of the municipality.

(2) Municipalities may impose a business and occupation or privilege tax upon every person engaging or continuing within the municipality in the business of aircraft repair, remodeling, maintenance, modification and refurbishing services to any aircraft or to an engine or other component part of any aircraft as a separate business activity.

(b) *Maximum tax rates. —* In no case shall the rate of such municipal business and occupation or privilege tax on a particular activity exceed the maximum rate imposed by the state, exclusive of surtaxes, upon any business activities or privileges taxed under sections two-a, two-b, two-c, two-d, two-e, two-g, two-h, two-i and two-j, article thirteen of said chapter eleven, as such rates were in effect under said article thirteen, on January 1, 1959, or in excess of one percent of gross income under section two-k of said article thirteen, or in excess of three tenths of one percent of gross value or gross proceeds of sale under section two-m of said article thirteen. The rate of municipal business and occupation or privilege tax on the activity described in subdivision (2), subsection (a) of this section shall be ten one-hundredths of one percent. The rate of municipal business and occupation or privilege tax on the activity of a health maintenance organization holding a certificate of authority under the provisions of article twenty-five-a, chapter thirty-three of this code, shall not exceed one half of one percent to be applied solely to that portion of gross income received from the Medicaid program pursuant to Title XIX of the Social Security Act, the state employee programs administered by the Public Employees Insurance Agency pursuant to article sixteen, chapter five of this code, and other federal programs, for health care items or services provided directly or indirectly by the health maintenance organization, that is expended for administrative expenses; and shall not exceed one half of one percent to be applied to the gross income received from enrollees, or from employers on behalf of enrollees, from sources other than Medicaid, state employee programs administered by the Public Employees Insurance Agency and other federal programs for health care items or services provided directly or indirectly by the health maintenance organization*: Provided,* That this tax rate limitation shall not extend to that part of the gross income of health maintenance organizations which is received from the use of real property other than property in which any such company maintains its office or offices in this state, whether such income is in the form of rentals or royalties. This provision concerning the maximum municipal business and occupation tax rate on the activities of health maintenance organizations is effective beginning after December 31, 1996. Any payments of business and occupation tax made by a health maintenance organization to a municipality for calendar year 1997 shall not be subject to recovery by the health maintenance organization. Administrative expenses shall include all expenditures made by a health maintenance organization other than expenses paid for claims incurred or payments made to providers for the benefits received by enrollees.

(c) *Effective date of local tax. —* Any taxes levied pursuant to the authority of this section may be made operative as of the first day of the then current fiscal year or any date thereafter: *Provided,* That any new imposition of tax or any increase in the rate of tax upon any business, occupation or privilege taxed under section two-e of said article thirteen shall apply only to gross income derived from contracts entered into after the effective date of such imposition of tax or rate increase, and which effective date shall not be retroactive in any respect: *Provided, however,* That no tax imposed or revised under this section upon public utility services may be effective unless and until the municipality provides written notice of the same by certified mail to said public utility at least sixty days prior to the effective date of said tax or revision thereof.

(d) *Exemptions. –*

(1)A municipality shall not impose its business and occupation or privilege tax on any activity that was exempt from the state’s business and occupation tax under the provisions of section three, article thirteen of said chapter eleven, prior to July 1, 1987, and determined without regard to any annual or monthly monetary exemption also specified therein: *Provided,* That on and after July 1, 2007, a municipality may impose its business and occupation or privilege tax on any activity of a corporation, association or society organized and operated exclusively for religious or charitable purposes that was exempt from the state’s business and occupation tax under the provisions of section three, article thirteen of chapter eleven, prior to July 1, 1987, but only to the extent that the income generated by the activity is subject to taxation under the provisions of section 511 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended.

(2) Effective July 1, 2023, the municipal business and occupation or privilege tax on the sale of new automobiles that have never been registered in the name of an individual shall be reduced by 50% percent of the total amount of the tax: *Provided,* That, effective July 1, 2024, the remaining municipal business and occupation or privilege tax on the sale of new automobiles that have never been registered in the name of an individual shall be reduced by an additional 50% of the total amount of the tax: *Provided, however,* That effective July 1, 2025, the municipal business and occupation or privilege tax on the sale of new automobiles that have never been registered in the name of an individual shall be completely eliminated. For the purposes of this section an automobile is a self-propelled vehicle used primarily for the transportation of passengers and their effects and operated on the roads and highways by the use of motor vehicle fuel or propelled by one or more electric motors using energy stored in batteries or a combination thereof. An automobile shall include a light-duty truck with an enclosed cabin and an open loading area at the rear and a sport utility vehicle. An automobile does not include a motorcycle.

(e) *Activity in two or more municipalities. —* Whenever the business activity or occupation of the taxpayer is engaged in or carried on in two or more municipalities of this state, the amount of gross income, or gross proceeds of sales, taxable by each municipality shall be determined in accordance with ~~such~~ legislative ~~regulations as~~ rules as prescribed by the Tax Commissioner. ~~may prescribe.~~ It being the intent of the Legislature that multiple taxation of the same gross income, or gross proceeds of sale, under the same classification by two or more municipalities shall not be allowed, and that gross income, or gross proceeds of sales, derived from activity engaged in or carried on within this state, that is presently subject to state tax under section two-c or two-h, article thirteen, chapter eleven of this code, which is not taxed or taxable by any other municipality of this state, may be included in the measure of tax for any municipality in this state, from which the activity was directed, or in the absence thereof, the municipality in this state in which the principal office of the taxpayer is located. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed as permitting any municipality to tax gross income or gross proceeds of sales in violation of the Constitution and laws of this state or the United States, or as permitting a municipality to tax any activity that has a definite situs outside its taxing jurisdiction.

(f) Where the governing body of a municipality imposes a tax authorized by this section, such governing body ~~shall have the authority to~~ may offer tax credits from such tax as incentives for new and expanding businesses located within the corporate limits of the municipality.

(g) *Administrative provisions. —* The ordinance of a municipality imposing a business and occupation or privilege tax shall provide procedures for the assessment and collection of such tax, which shall be similar to those procedures in article thirteen, chapter eleven of this code, as in existence on June 30, 1978, or to those procedures in article ten, chapter eleven of this code, and shall conform with such provisions as they relate to waiver of penalties and additions to tax.

(h) *Timely payment.* — Payments for taxes due under this section that are postmarked after the due date by which they are owed shall be considered late and may be subject to late fees or penalties: *Provided,* That payments that are received by the municipality after the due date, but that were postmarked on or before the due date shall be considered to be on time and shall not be assessed any late fees or penalties.

CHAPTER 12. PUBLIC MONEYS AND SECURITIES.

ARTICLE 7. JOBS INVESTMENT TRUST FUND.

§12-7-12. Reports of board; report of housing development fund.

(a) The board shall prepare annually, or more frequently if deemed necessary by the board, a report of its operations and the performance of the various investments administered by it. A copy thereof shall be furnished to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Delegates, the Legislative Auditor, and, upon request, to any legislative committee. Such report shall be kept available for inspection by any citizen of this state. The report required in this subsection may be made available electronically on the board’s website or through the website of the West Virginia Economic Development Authority. The report may be submitted to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Delegates, the Legislative Auditor, or to any legislative committee electronically and paper copies must be provided upon request.

(b) The West Virginia Economic Development Authority shall prepare annually and submit to the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Delegates, the Legislative Auditor, and, upon request, any legislative committee, a report on the performance of the board and the quality of its investments for the preceding year. The report required in this subsection may be made available electronically on the West Virginia Economic Development Authority’s website. The report may be submitted to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Delegates, the Legislative Auditor, or to any legislative committee electronically and paper copies must be provided upon request.

CHAPTER 16. PUBLIC HEALTH.

ARTICLE 5V. EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES RETIREMENT SYSTEM ACT.

§16-5V-2. Definitions.

As used in this article, unless a federal law or regulation or the context clearly requires a different meaning:

(a) "Accrued benefit" means on behalf of any member two and six 10ths percent per year of the member’s final average salary for the first 20 years of credited service. Additionally, two percent per year for 21 through 25 years and one and one-half percent per year for each year over 25 years will be credited with a maximum benefit of 67 percent. A member’s accrued benefit may not exceed the limits of section 415 of the Internal Revenue Code and is subject to the provisions of §16-5V-12 of this code.

(1) The board may, upon the recommendation of the board’s actuary, increase the employees’ contribution rate to 10 and five-tenths percent should the funding of the plan not reach 70 percent funded by July 1, 2012. The board shall decrease the contribution rate to eight and one-half percent once the plan funding reaches the 70 percent support objective as of any later actuarial valuation date.

(2) Upon reaching the 75 percent actuarial funded level, as of an actuarial valuation date, the board shall increase the two and six-tenths percent to two and three-quarter percent for the first 20 years of credited service. The maximum benefit will also be increased from 67 percent to 90 percent.

(b) "Accumulated contributions" means the sum of all retirement contributions deducted from the compensation of a member, or paid on his or her behalf as a result of covered employment, together with regular interest on the deducted amounts.

(c) "Active military duty" means full-time active duty with any branch of the armed forces of the United States, including service with the National Guard or reserve military forces when the member has been called to active full-time duty and has received no compensation during the period of that duty from any board or employer other than the armed forces.

(d) "Actuarial equivalent" means a benefit of equal value computed upon the basis of the mortality table and interest rates as set and adopted by the board in accordance with the provisions of this article.

(e) "Annual compensation" means the wages paid to the member during covered employment within the meaning of section 3401(a) of the Internal Revenue Code, but determined without regard to any rules that limit the remuneration included in wages based upon the nature or location of employment or services performed during the plan year plus amounts excluded under section 414(h)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code and less reimbursements or other expense allowances, cash or noncash fringe benefits or both, deferred compensation and welfare benefits. Annual compensation for determining benefits during any determination period may not exceed the maximum compensation allowed as adjusted for cost of living in accordance with §5-10D-7 of this code and section 401(a)(17) of the Internal Revenue Code.

(f) "Annual leave service" means accrued annual leave.

(g) "Annuity starting date" means the first day of the month for which an annuity is payable after submission of a retirement application. For purposes of this subsection, if retirement income payments commence after the normal retirement age, "retirement" means the first day of the month following or coincident with the latter of the last day the member worked in covered employment or the member’s normal retirement age and after completing proper written application for retirement on an application supplied by the board.

(h) "Board" means the Consolidated Public Retirement Board.

(i) "Contributing service" or "contributory service" means service rendered by a member while employed by a participating public employer for which the member made contributions to the plan.

(j) "County commission or political subdivision" has the meaning ascribed to it in this code.

(k) "Covered employment" means either: (1) Employment as a full-time emergency medical technician, emergency medical technician/paramedic or emergency medical services/registered nurse and the active performance of the duties required of emergency medical services officers; or (2) the period of time during which active duties are not performed but disability benefits are received under this article; or (3) concurrent employment by an emergency medical services officer in a job or jobs in addition to his or her employment as an emergency medical services officer where the secondary employment requires the emergency medical services officer to be a member of another retirement system which is administered by the Consolidated Public Retirement Board pursuant to this code: *Provided,* That the emergency medical services officer contributes to the fund created in this article the amount specified as the member’s contribution in §16-5V-8 of this code.

(l) "Credited service" means the sum of a member’s years of service, active military duty, disability service and accrued annual and sick leave service.

(m) "Dependent child" means either:

(1) An unmarried person under age 18 who is:

(A) A natural child of the member;

(B) A legally adopted child of the member;

(C) A child who at the time of the member’s death was living with the member while the member was an adopting parent during any period of probation; or

(D) A stepchild of the member residing in the member’s household at the time of the member’s death; or

(2) Any unmarried child under age 23:

(A) Who is enrolled as a full-time student in an accredited college or university;

(B) Who was claimed as a dependent by the member for federal income tax purposes at the time of the member’s death; and

(C) Whose relationship with the member is described in paragraph (A), (B) or (C), subdivision (1) of this subsection.

(n) "Dependent parent" means the father or mother of the member who was claimed as a dependent by the member for federal income tax purposes at the time of the member’s death.

(o) "Disability service" means service received by a member, expressed in whole years, fractions thereof or both, equal to one half of the whole years, fractions thereof, or both, during which time a member receives disability benefits under this article.

(p) "Early retirement age" means age 45 or over and completion of 20 years of contributory service.

(q) "Effective date" means January 1, 2008.

(r) "Emergency medical services officer" means an individual employed by the state, county or other political subdivision as a medical professional who is qualified to respond to medical emergencies, aids the sick and injured and arranges or transports to medical facilities, as defined by the West Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services. This definition is construed to include employed ambulance providers and other services such as law enforcement, rescue or fire department personnel who primarily perform these functions and are not provided any other credited service benefits or retirement plans. These persons may hold the rank of emergency medical technician/basic, emergency medical technician/paramedic, emergency medical services/registered nurse, or others as defined by the West Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services and the Consolidated Public Retirement Board.

(s) "Employer error" means an omission, misrepresentation or deliberate act in violation of relevant provisions of the West Virginia Code or of the West Virginia Code of State Rules or the relevant provisions of both the West Virginia Code and of the West Virginia Code of State Rules by the participating public employer that has resulted in an underpayment or overpayment of contributions required.

(t) "Final average salary" means the average of the highest annual compensation received for covered employment by the member during any five consecutive plan years within the member’s last 10 years of service while employed, prior to any disability payment. If the member did not have annual compensation for the five full plan years preceding the member’s attainment of normal retirement age and during that period the member received disability benefits under this article, then "final average salary" means the average of the monthly salary determined paid to the member during that period as determined under §16-5V-19 of this code multiplied by 12. Final average salary does not include any lump sum payment for unused, accrued leave of any kind or character.

(u) "Full-time employment" means permanent employment of an employee by a participating public employer in a position which normally requires 12 months per year service and requires at least 1040 hours per year service in that position.

(v) "Fund" means the West Virginia Emergency Medical Services Retirement Fund created by this article.

(w) "Hour of service" means:

(1) Each hour for which a member is paid or entitled to payment for covered employment during which time active duties are performed. These hours shall be credited to the member for the plan year in which the duties are performed; and

(2) Each hour for which a member is paid or entitled to payment for covered employment during a plan year but where no duties are performed due to vacation, holiday, illness, incapacity including disability, layoff, jury duty, military duty, leave of absence or any combination thereof and without regard to whether the employment relationship has terminated. Hours under this subdivision shall be calculated and credited pursuant to West Virginia Division of Labor rules. A member will not be credited with any hours of service for any period of time he or she is receiving benefits under §16-5V-19 or §16-5V-20 of this code; and

(3) Each hour for which back pay is either awarded or agreed to be paid by the employing county commission or political subdivision, irrespective of mitigation of damages. The same hours of service shall not be credited both under subdivision (1) or (2) of this subsection and under this subdivision. Hours under this paragraph shall be credited to the member for the plan year or years to which the award or agreement pertains, rather than the plan year in which the award, agreement or payment is made.

(x) "Member" means a person first hired as an emergency medical services officer by an employer which is a participating public employer of the Public Employees Retirement System or the Emergency Medical Services Retirement System after the effective date of this article, as defined in subsection (q) of this section, or an emergency medical services officer of an employer which is a participating public employer of the Public Employees Retirement System first hired prior to the effective date and who elects to become a member pursuant to this article. A member shall remain a member until the benefits to which he or she is entitled under this article are paid or forfeited.

(y) "Monthly salary" means the W-2 reportable compensation received by a member during the month.

(z) "Normal form" means a monthly annuity which is one twelfth of the amount of the member’s accrued benefit which is payable for the member’s life. If the member dies before the sum of the payments he or she receives equals his or her accumulated contributions on the annuity starting date, the named beneficiary shall receive in one lump sum the difference between the accumulated contributions at the annuity starting date and the total of the retirement income payments made to the member.

(aa) "Normal retirement age" means the first to occur of the following:

(1) Attainment of age 50 years and the completion of 20 or more years of regular contributory service, excluding active military duty, disability service and accrued annual and sick leave service;

(2) While still in covered employment, attainment of at least age 50 years and when the sum of current age plus regular contributory years of service equals or exceeds 70 years;

(3) While still in covered employment, attainment of at least age 60 years and completion of 10 years of regular contributory service; or

(4) Attainment of age 62 years and completion of five or more years of regular contributory service.

(bb) "Participating public employer" means any county commission or political subdivision in the state which has elected to cover its emergency medical services officers, as defined in this article, under the West Virginia Emergency Medical Services Retirement System.

(cc) "Plan" means the West Virginia Emergency Medical Services Retirement System established by this article.

(dd) "Plan year" means the 12-month period commencing on January 1 of any designated year and ending the following December 31.

(ee) "Political subdivision" means a county, city or town in the state; any separate corporation or instrumentality established by one or more counties, cities or towns, as permitted by law; any corporation or instrumentality supported in most part by counties, cities or towns; and any public corporation charged by law with the performance of a governmental function and whose jurisdiction is coextensive with one or more counties, cities or towns: *Provided*, That any public corporation established under §7-15-4 of this code is considered a political subdivision solely for the purposes of this article.

(ff) "Public Employees Retirement System" means the West Virginia Public Employee’s Retirement System created by West Virginia Code.

(gg) "Regular interest" means the rate or rates of interest per annum, compounded annually, as the board adopts in accordance with the provisions of this article.

(hh) "Required beginning date" means April 1 of the calendar year following the later of: (1) The calendar year in which the member attains age 70.5 (if born before July 1, 1949) or age 72 (if born after June 30, 1949); or (2) the calendar year in which he or she retires or otherwise separates from covered employment.

(ii) "Retirant" means any member who commences an annuity payable by the plan.

(jj) "Retire" or "retirement" means a member’s withdrawal from the employ of a participating public employer and the commencement of an annuity by the plan.

(kk) "Retirement income payments" means the monthly retirement income payments payable under the plan.

(ll) "Spouse" means the person to whom the member is legally married on the annuity starting date.

(mm) "Surviving spouse" means the person to whom the member was legally married at the time of the member’s death and who survived the member.

(nn) "Totally disabled" means a member’s inability to engage in substantial gainful activity by reason of any medically determined physical or mental impairment that can be expected to result in death or that has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of not less than 12 months.

For purposes of this subsection:

(1) A member is totally disabled only if his or her physical or mental impairment or impairments is so severe that he or she is not only unable to perform his or her previous work as an emergency medical services officer but also cannot, considering his or her age, education and work experience, engage in any other kind of substantial gainful employment which exists in the state regardless of whether: (A) The work exists in the immediate area in which the member lives; (B) a specific job vacancy exists; or (C) the member would be hired if he or she applied for work. For purposes of this article, substantial gainful employment is the same definition as used by the United States Social Security Administration.

(2) "Physical or mental impairment" is an impairment that results from an anatomical, physiological or psychological abnormality that is demonstrated by medically accepted clinical and laboratory diagnostic techniques. The board may require submission of a member’s annual tax return for purposes of monitoring the earnings limitation.

(oo) "Year of service" means a member shall, except in his or her first and last years of covered employment, be credited with years of service credit based upon the hours of service performed as covered employment and credited to the member during the plan year based upon the following schedule:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Hours of Service | Years of Service Credited |
| Less than 500 | 0 |
| 500 to 999 | 1/3 |
| 1000 to 1499 | 2/3 |
| 1500 or more | 1 |

During a member’s first and last years of covered employment, the member shall be credited with one twelfth of a year of service for each month during the plan year in which the member is credited with an hour of service for which contributions were received by the fund. A member is not entitled to credit for years of service for any time period during which he or she received disability payments under §16-5V-19 or §16-5V-20 of this code. Except as specifically excluded, years of service include covered employment prior to the effective date.

Years of service which are credited to a member prior to his or her receipt of accumulated contributions upon termination of employment pursuant to §16-5V-18 of this code or §5-10-30 of this code, shall be disregarded for all purposes under this plan unless the member repays the accumulated contributions with interest pursuant to section §16-5V-18 of this code or has prior to the effective date made the repayment pursuant to §5-10-18 of this code.

CHAPTER 18. EDUCATION.

ARTICLE 8. COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.

§18-8-1a. Commencement and termination of compulsory school attendance; public school entrance requirements; exceptions.

(a) Compulsory school attendance begins with the school year in which the sixth birthday is reached prior to July 1 of such year or upon enrolling in a full-time publicly funded kindergarten program, and continues to the 17th birthday or for as long as the student continues to be enrolled in a school system after the 17th birthday.

(1) A child may be removed from such kindergarten program when the parent or guardian determines that the best interest of the child would not be served by requiring further attendance.

(2) The compulsory school attendance provision of this article shall be enforced against a person 18 years of age or older for as long as the person continues to be enrolled in a school system and may not be enforced against the parent, guardian, or custodian of the person.

(b) A parent, as defined in §18-31-2 of this code, shall have the option, prior to enrolling in a publicly supported kindergarten program, to apply for a Hope Scholarship on behalf of his or her child as set forth in §18-31-1 *et seq.* of this code. Every year thereafter, a parent shall have the option to renew his or her child’s enrollment in the Hope Scholarship Program pursuant to §18-31-8 of this code.

(c) Attendance at a state-approved, nonpublic kindergarten program, including a Montessori kindergarten program as provided in §18-5-18 of this code, homeschool kindergarten program, Hope Scholarship kindergarten program, or private, parochial, or church kindergarten program recognized under §18-8-1(k) of this code is deemed school attendance for the purposes of this section. Students entering the public school system after such kindergarten program shall be placed in the developmentally and academically appropriate grade level.

(d) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section and §18-5-18 of this code, a county board may provide for advanced entrance or placement under policies adopted by said board for any child who has demonstrated sufficient mental and physical competency for such entrance or placement.

(e) A student from another state, or who is eligible to enroll in a public school in this state, shall be enrolled in the same grade in a public school in West Virginia as the student was enrolled at the school or program from which the student transferred. A transcript or other credential provided by a public school program, private school program, homeschool program or HOPE scholarship program shall be accepted by a public school in this state as a record of a student’s previous academic performance for the purposes of placement and credit assignment.

CHAPTER 18A. SCHOOL PERSONNEL.

ARTICLE 3. TRAINING, CERTIFICATION, LICENSING, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.

§18A-3-2a. Certificates valid in the public schools that may be issued by the State Superintendent.

In accordance with state board rules for the education of professional educators adopted pursuant to §18A-3-1 if this code and subject to the limitations and conditions of that section, the State Superintendent may issue the following certificates valid in the public schools of the state:

(a) *Professional teaching certificates*. —

(1) A professional teaching certificate for teaching in the public schools may be issued to a person who meets the following conditions: (A) Holds at least a bachelor’s degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education, and:

(i) Has passed appropriate state board approved basic skills and subject matter tests in the area for which licensure is being sought; and

(ii) Has completed a program for the education of teachers which meets the requirements approved by the state board; or

(iii) Has met equivalent standards at institutions in other states; or

(iv) Has completed three years of successful teaching experience within the last seven years under a license issued by another state in the area for which licensure is being sought; or

(v) Has completed an alternative program approved by another state; or

(B) Holds at least a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution of higher education, and:

(i) Has passed appropriate state board approved basic skills and subject matter tests; and

(ii) Has completed an alternative program for teacher education as provided in this article; and

(iii) Is recommended for a certificate in accordance with the provisions of §18A-3-1i of this code relating to the program; and

(iv) Is recommended by the State Superintendent based on documentation submitted; or

(C) Holds a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution of higher education, and:

(i) Submits to a criminal history check pursuant to §18A-3-10 of this code: *Provided*, That information discovered during the criminal history check may form the basis for the denial of a certificate for just cause; and

(ii) Successfully completes pedagogical training or a pedagogical course or courses in substantive alignment with nationally recognized pedagogical standards, or approved or established by the state board; and

(iii) Passes the same subject matter and competency test or tests required by the state board for traditional program applicants for licensure.

(2) The certificate shall be endorsed to indicate the grade level or levels or areas of specialization in which the person is certified to teach or to serve in the public schools.

(3) The initial professional certificate is issued provisionally for a period of three years from the date of issuance:

(A) The certificate may be converted to a professional certificate valid for five years subject to successful completion of a beginning teacher induction program, if applicable; or

(B) The certificate may be renewed subject to rules adopted by the state board.

(4) Teaching certificates granted pursuant to §18A-3-2a(a)(1)(C) of this code shall be equivalent to certificates granted to graduates of teacher preparation programs at public higher education institutions.

(b) *Alternative program teacher certificate*. — An alternative program teacher certificate may be issued to a candidate who is enrolled in an alternative program for teacher education approved by the state board.

(1) The certificate is valid only for the alternative program position in which the candidate is employed and is subject to enrollment in the program.

(2) The certificate is valid while the candidate is enrolled in the alternative program, up to a maximum of three years, and may not be renewed.

(c) *Professional administrative certificate*. —

(1) A professional administrative certificate, endorsed for serving in the public schools, with specific endorsement as a principal, vocational administrator, supervisor of instructions, or superintendent, may be issued to a person who has completed requirements all to be approved by the state board as follows:

(A) Holds at least a master’s degree from an institution of higher education accredited to offer a master’s degree, and:

(i) Has successfully completed an approved program for administrative certification developed by the state board in cooperation with the chancellor for higher education; and

(ii) Has successfully completed education and training in evaluation skills through the Center for Professional Development, or equivalent education and training in evaluation skills approved by the state board; and

(iii) Possesses three years of management level experience.

(2) Any person serving in the position of dean of students on June 4, 1992, is not required to hold a professional administrative certificate.

(3) The initial professional administrative certificate is issued provisionally for a period of five years. This certificate may be converted to a professional administrative certificate valid for five years or renewed, subject to the regulations of the state board.

(d) *Paraprofessional certificate*. — A paraprofessional certificate may be issued to a person who meets the following conditions:

(1) Has completed 36 semester hours of post-secondary education or its equivalent in subjects directly related to performance of the job, all approved by the state board; and

(2) Demonstrates the proficiencies to perform duties as required of a paraprofessional as defined in §18A-4-8 of this code.

(e) *Other certificates; permits*. —

(1) Other certificates and permits may be issued, subject to the approval of the state board, to persons who do not qualify for the professional or paraprofessional certificate.

(2) A certificate or permit may not be given permanent status and a person holding one of these credentials shall meet renewal requirements provided by law and by regulation, unless the state board declares certain of these certificates to be the equivalent of the professional certificate.

(3) Within the category of other certificates and permits, the State Superintendent may issue certificates for persons to serve in the public schools as athletic coaches or coaches of other extracurricular activities, whose duties may include the supervision of students, subject to the following limitations:

(A) The person is employed under a contract with the county board of education.

(i) The contract specifies the duties to be performed, specifies a rate of pay that is equivalent to the rate of pay for professional educators in the district who accept similar duties as extra duty assignments, and provides for liability insurance associated with the activity; and

(ii) The person holding this certificate is not considered an employee of the board for salary and benefit purposes other than as specified in the contract.

(B) The person completes an orientation program designed and approved in accordance with state board rules.

(f) *Clinical Teacher of Record Permit*. —

(1) A clinical teacher of record permit may be issued to a candidate who is enrolled in a clinical teacher of record program in accordance with an agreement between an institution of higher education and a county board. The agreement is developed pursuant to §18A-3-1(e) of this code and requires approval by the state board.

(2) The permit is valid only for the clinical teacher of record program position in which the candidate is enrolled and is subject to enrollment in the program. The permit is valid for no more than one school year and may not be renewed.

(g) *Temporary teaching certificates for armed forces spouses*. —

(1) A temporary teaching certificate for an armed forces spouse may be issued to an individual who meets the following criteria:

(A) He or she is married to a member of the armed forces of the United States who is on active duty;

(B) He or she holds a current unencumbered teaching certificate or license issued by an equivalent credentialing department, board, or authority, as determined by the State Superintendent, in another state of the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the United States Virgin Islands, another territory or protectorate of the United States or a foreign country; and

(C) He or she provides proof acceptable to the State Superintendent that his or her spouse is assigned to a duty station in this state or at a military installation within 50 air miles of the West Virginia border and that he or she is also assigned to a duty station in this state or at a military installation within 50 air miles of the West Virginia border under his or her spouse’s official active duty military orders.

(2) The State Superintendent shall deny a temporary teaching certificate to an individual described in paragraph (1) of this subdivision for fraud, material misrepresentation or concealment in the person’s application for a temporary teaching certificate or for a conviction for which an individual’s teaching certificate may be revoked under §18A-3-6 of this code.

(3) A temporary teaching certificate issued under paragraph (1) of this subdivision is valid for one year and may be renewed for additional one-year terms if the State Superintendent determines the individual holding the temporary teaching certificate continues to meet the requirements of paragraph (1) of this subdivision. The State Superintendent may revoke a temporary teaching certificate for a conviction for which an individual’s teaching certificate may be revoked under §18A-3-6 of this code.

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ARTICLE 5. WAGE PAYMENT AND COLLECTION.

§21-5-1. Definitions.

As used in this article:

(a) The term "firm" includes any partnership, association, joint-stock company, trust, division of a corporation, the administrator or executor of the estate of a deceased individual, or the receiver, trustee, or successor of any of the same, or officer thereof, employing any person.

(b) The term "employee" or "employees" includes any person suffered or permitted to work by a person, firm, or corporation, except those classified as an independent contractor pursuant to §21-5I-4 of this code.

(c) The term "wages" means compensation for labor or services rendered by an employee, whether the amount is determined on a time, task, piece, commission, or other basis of calculation. As used in §21-5-4, §21-5-5, §21-5-8a, §21-5-10, and §21-5-12 of this code, the term "wages" shall also include then accrued fringe benefits capable of calculation and payable directly to an employee: *Provided*, That nothing herein contained shall require fringe benefits to be calculated contrary to any agreement between an employer and his or her employees which does not contradict the provisions of this article.

(d) The term "commissioner" means Commissioner of Labor or his or her designated representative.

(e) The term "railroad company" includes any firm or corporation engaged primarily in the business of transportation by rail.

(f) The term "special agreement" means an arrangement filed with and approved by the commissioner whereby a person, firm, or corporation is permitted upon a compelling showing of good cause to establish regular paydays less frequently than once in every two weeks: *Provided*, That in no event shall the employee be paid in full less frequently than once each calendar month on a regularly established schedule.

(g) The term "deductions" includes amounts required by law to be withheld, and amounts authorized for union, labor organization, or club dues or fees, pension plans, payroll savings plans, credit unions, charities, and any form of insurance offered by an employer: *Provided*, That for a public employee, other than a municipal employee covered by a collective bargaining agreement with a municipality which is in effect on July 1, 2021, the term "deductions" shall not include any amount for union, labor organization, or club dues or fees.

(h) The term "officer" shall include officers or agents in the management of a corporation or firm who knowingly permit the corporation or firm to violate the provisions of this article.

(i) The term "wages due" shall include at least all wages earned up to and including the twelfth day immediately preceding the regular payday.

(j) The term "construction" means the furnishing of work in the fulfillment of a contract for the construction, alteration, decoration, painting, or improvement of a new or existing building, structure, roadway, or pipeline, or any part thereof, or for the alteration, improvement, or development of real property: *Provided*, That construction performed for the owner or lessee of a single family dwelling or a family farming enterprise is excluded.

(k) The term "minerals" means clay, coal, flagstone, gravel, limestone, manganese, sand, sandstone, shale, iron ore, and any other metallurgical ore.

(l) The term "fringe benefits" means any benefit provided an employee or group of employees by an employer, or which is required by law, and includes regular vacation, graduated vacation, floating vacation, holidays, sick leave, personal leave, production incentive bonuses, sickness and accident benefits, and benefits relating to medical and pension coverage.

(m) The term "employer" means any person, firm, or corporation employing any employee.

(n) The term "doing business in this state" means having employees actively engaged in the intended principal activity of the person, firm, or corporation in West Virginia.

(o) The term "assignment", as used in §21-5-3 of this code, shall have the same meaning as the term "assignment of earnings" set forth in §46A-2-116(2)(b) of this code.

CHAPTER 22C. ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES; BOARDS, AUTHORITIES, COMMISSIONS AND COMPACTS.

ARTICLE 9. OIL AND GAS CONSERVATION.

§22C-9-4. Oil and gas conservation commissioner and commission; commission membership; qualifications of members; terms of members; vacancies on commission; meetings; compensation and expenses; appointment and qualifications of commissioner; general powers and duties.

(a) The "oil and gas conservation commission" is composed of seven members. The director of the Department of Environmental Protection, and the Chief of the Office of Oil and Gas are members of the commission ex officio. The remaining five members of the commission shall be appointed by the Governor, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, and may not be employees of the Department of Environmental Protection. Of the five members appointed by the Governor, one shall be an independent producer and at least one shall be a public member not engaged in an activity under the jurisdiction of the Public Service Commission or the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The third appointee shall possess a degree from an accredited college or university in engineering or geology and must be a registered professional engineer with particular knowledge and experience in the oil and gas industry and shall serve as commissioner and as chair of the commission. The fourth appointee shall be an individual who has substantial experience in the agricultural industry, who is engaged in the business of farming in this state, and who is not and never has been, either himself or herself nor through a member of his or her immediate family, engaged in the business of oil and gas other than as a royalty recipient. When this member is to be appointed, the Governor shall request from the primary organization representing the agriculture industry in this state a list of three nominees for the member to be appointed. The fifth appointee shall be a resident owner of minerals in this state who is not and never has been affiliated with an operator of oil or gas wells. The term "affiliated", as used in the immediately preceding sentence, means someone who directly, or indirectly through one or more intermediaries, controls, or is controlled by, or is under common control with an operator of oil and gas wells by virtue of the power to direct or cause the direction of the management and policies of that operator, whether through the ownership of voting shares, by contract or otherwise.

(b) The members of the commission appointed by the Governor shall be appointed for overlapping terms of six years each, except that any initial appointments shall be for terms of two, four, or six years to achieve staggered ends of terms. Each member appointed by the Governor shall serve until the members successor has been appointed and qualified. Members may be appointed by the Governor to serve any number of terms. The members of the commission appointed by the Governor, before performing any duty hereunder, shall take and subscribe to the oath required by section 5, article IV of the Constitution of West Virginia. Vacancies in the membership appointed by the Governor shall be filled by appointment by the Governor for the unexpired term of the member whose office is vacant and the appointment shall be made by the Governor within 60 days of the occurrence of such vacancy. Any member appointed by the Governor may be removed by the Governor in case of incompetency, neglect of duty, gross immorality, or malfeasance in office. A commission member’s appointment is terminated as a matter of law if that member fails to attend three consecutive meetings. The Governor shall appoint a replacement within 30 days of the termination.

(c) The commission shall meet at such times and places as are designated by the chair. The chair may call a meeting of the commission at any time, and shall call a meeting of the commission upon the written request of two members or upon the written request of the oil and gas conservation commissioner or the Chief of the Office of Oil and Gas. Notification of each meeting shall be given in writing to each member by the chair at least 14 calendar days in advance of the meeting. Four members of the commission, at least two of whom are appointed members, constitute a quorum for the transaction of any business.

(d) The commission shall pay each member the same compensation as is paid to members of the Legislature for their interim duties as recommended by the citizens legislative compensation commission and authorized by law for each day or portion thereof engaged in the discharge of official duties and shall reimburse each member for actual and necessary expenses incurred in the discharge of official duties.

(e) The commission is hereby empowered and it is the commission’s duty to execute and carry out, administer, and enforce the provisions of this article in the manner provided herein. Subject to the provisions of §22C-9-3 of this code, the commission has jurisdiction and authority over all persons and property necessary therefor. The commission is authorized to make such investigation of records and facilities as the commission considers proper. In the event of a conflict between the duty to prevent waste and the duty to protect correlative rights, the commission’s duty to prevent waste is paramount.

(f) Without limiting the commission’s general authority, the commission has specific authority to:

(1) Regulate the spacing of deep wells;

(2) Issue horizontal well unit orders;

 (3) Make and enforce reasonable rules and orders reasonably necessary to prevent waste, protect correlative rights, govern the practice and procedure before the commission and otherwise administer the provisions of this article;

 (4) Issue subpoenas for the attendance of witnesses and subpoenas duces tecum for the production of any books, records, maps, charts, diagrams, and other pertinent documents, and administer oaths and affirmations to the witnesses, whenever, in the judgment of the commission, it is necessary to do so for the effective discharge of the commission’s duties under the provisions of this article; and

 (5) Serve as technical advisor regarding oil and gas to the Legislature, its members and committees, to the Chief of Office of Oil and Gas, to the Department of Environmental Protection and to any other agency of state government having responsibility related to the oil and gas industry.

(g) The commission may delegate to the commission staff the authority to approve or deny an application for new well permits, to establish drilling units or special field rules if:

(1) The application conforms to the rules of the commission; and

(2) No request for hearing has been received.

(h) The commission may not delegate its authority to:

(1) Propose legislative rules;

(2) Approve or deny an application for new well permits, to establish drilling units or special field rules if the conditions set forth in subsection (g) of this section are not met; or

(3) Approve or deny an application for the pooling of interests within a drilling unit.

(i) Any exception to the field rules or the spacing of wells which does not conform to the rules of the commission, and any application for the pooling of interests within a drilling unit, must be presented to and heard before the commission.

(j) The commission is hereby empowered and it is the commission’s duty to execute and carry out, administer, and enforce the relevant provisions of §37B-1-1 *et seq.* of this code concerning mineral development by cotenants for all wells at all depths and §22-11B-1 *et seq.* of this code concerning underground carbon dioxide sequestration storage facilities at all depths. The commission has jurisdiction and authority over all persons and property necessary therefor. The commission is authorized to make such investigation of records and facilities as the commission deems proper.

CHAPTER 24. PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION.

ARTICLE 2. POWERS AND DUTIES OF PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION.

§24-2-1. Jurisdiction of commission; waiver of jurisdiction.

(a) The jurisdiction of the commission extends to all public utilities in this state and includes any utility engaged in any of the following public services:

(1) Common carriage of passengers or goods, whether by air, railroad, street railroad, motor, or otherwise, by express or otherwise, by land, water, or air, whether wholly or partly by land, water, or air;

(2) Transportation of oil, gas, or water by pipeline;

(3) Transportation of coal and its derivatives and all mixtures and combinations thereof with other substances by pipeline;

(4) Sleeping car or parlor car services;

(5) Transmission of messages by telephone, telegraph, or radio;

(6) Generation and transmission of electrical energy by hydroelectric or other utilities for service to the public, whether directly or through a distributing utility;

(7) Supplying water, gas, or electricity by municipalities or others: (A) *Provided,* That natural gas producers who provide natural gas service to not more than 25 residential customers are exempt from the jurisdiction of the commission with regard to the provisions of the residential service; (B) *Provided however*, That upon request of any of the customers of the natural gas producers, the commission may, upon good cause being shown, exercise authority as the commission may consider appropriate over the operation, rates, and charges of the producer and for the length of time determined proper by the commission; (C) *Provided further*, That the provision of a solar photovoltaic energy facility located on and designed to meet only the electrical needs of the premises of a retail electric customer, the output of which is subject to a power purchase agreement (PPAs) with the retail electric customer, shall not constitute a public service, subject to the following conditions and limitations:

(i) PPAs must be 11 point font or larger.

(ii) The aggregate of all PPAs and net metering arrangements in the state for any utility shall not exceed three percent (3%) of the utility’s aggregate customer peak demand in the state during the previous year;

(iii) There shall be individual customer on-site generator limits of designing the photovoltaic energy facility to meet only the electrical needs of the premises of the retail electric customer and which in no case shall exceed 25kW for residential customers, 500 kW for commercial customers, and 2,000 kW for industrial customers;

(iv) Customers who enter into PPAs relating to photovoltaic facilities are to notify the utility of its intent to enter into a transaction. In response, the utility shall notify within 30 days if any of the caps have been reached. If the utility does not respond within 30 days, the generator may proceed and the caps will be presumed not to have been reached; and

(v) The Public Service Commission may promulgate rules to govern and implement the provisions of interconnections for PPAs, except the PSC does not have authority over the power rates for the arrangements between the on-site generator and the customer;

(8) Sewer systems servicing 25 or more persons or firms other than the owner of the sewer systems; *Provided*, That if a public utility other than a political subdivision intends to provide sewer service by an innovative, alternative method, as defined by the federal Environmental Protection Agency, the innovative, alternative method is a public utility function and subject to the jurisdiction of the Public Service Commission, regardless of the number of customers served by the innovative, alternative method;

(9) Any public service district created under the provisions of §16-13A-1 *et seq.* of this code, except that the Public Service Commission has no jurisdiction over the provision of stormwater services by a public service district;

(10) Toll bridges located more than five miles from a toll-free bridge which crosses the same body of water or obstacle, wharves, ferries; solid waste facilities; and

(11) Any other public service.

(b) The jurisdiction of the commission over political subdivisions of this state providing separate or combined water and/or sewer services and having at least 4,500 customers and annual combined gross revenues of $3 million or more that are political subdivisions of the state is limited to:

(1) General supervision of public utilities, as granted and described in §24-2-5 of this code;

(2) Regulation of measurements, practices, acts, or services, as granted and described in §24-2-7 of this code;

(3) Regulation of a system of accounts to be kept by a public utility that is a political subdivision of the state, as granted and described in §24-2-8 of this code;

(4) Submission of information to the commission regarding rates, tolls, charges, or practices, as granted and described in §24-2-9 of this code;

(5) Authority to subpoena witnesses, take testimony, and administer oaths to any witness in any proceeding before or conducted by the commission, as granted and described in §24-2-10 of this code; and

(6) Investigation and resolution of disputes between a political subdivision of the state providing wholesale water and/or wastewater treatment or other services, whether by contract or through a tariff, and its customer or customers, including, but not limited to, rates, fees, and charges, service areas and contested utility combinations: *Provided,* That any request for an investigation related to a dispute that is based on the act or omission of the political subdivision shall be filed within 30 days of the act or omission of the political subdivision and the commission shall resolve the dispute within 120 days of filing. The 120-day period for resolution of the dispute may be tolled by the commission until the necessary information showing the basis of the rates, fees, and charges or other information required by the commission is filed: *Provided, however*, That the disputed rates, fees, and charges fixed by the political subdivision providing separate or combined water and/or sewer services shall remain in full force and effect until set aside, altered or, amended by the commission in an order to be followed in the future.

(7) Customers of water and sewer utilities operated by a political subdivision of the state may bring formal or informal complaints regarding the commission’s exercise of the powers enumerated in this section and the commission shall resolve these complaints: *Provided,* That any formal complaint filed under this section that is based on the act or omission of the political subdivision shall be filed within 30 days of the act or omission complained of and the commission shall resolve the complaint within 180 days of filing. The 180-day period for resolution of the dispute may be tolled by the commission until the necessary information showing the basis of the matter complained of is filed by the political subdivision: *Provided, however*, That whenever the commission finds any regulations, measurements, practices, acts, or service to be unjust, unreasonable, insufficient, or unjustly discriminatory, or otherwise in violation of any provisions of this chapter, or finds that any service is inadequate, or that any service which is demanded cannot be reasonably obtained, the commission shall determine and declare, and by order fix reasonable measurement, regulations, acts, practices or services, to be furnished, imposed, observed, and followed in lieu of those found to be unjust, unreasonable, insufficient, or unjustly discriminatory, inadequate, or otherwise in violation of this chapter, and shall make an order that is just and reasonable: *Provided further*, That if the matter complained of would affect rates, fees, and charges fixed by the political subdivision providing separate or combined water and/or sewer services, the rates, fees, or charges shall remain in full force and effect until set aside, altered, or amended by the commission in an order to be followed in the future.

(8) If a political subdivision has a deficiency in either its bond revenue or bond reserve accounts, or is otherwise in breach of a bond covenant, any bond holder may petition the Public Service Commission for any redress that will bring the accounts to current status or otherwise resolve the breached covenant. The commission has jurisdiction to fully resolve the alleged deficiency or breach.

(c) The commission may, upon application, waive its jurisdiction and allow a utility operating in an adjoining state to provide service in West Virginia when:

(1) An area of West Virginia cannot be practicably and economically served by a utility licensed to operate within the State of West Virginia;

(2) The area can be provided with utility service by a utility which operates in a state adjoining West Virginia;

(3) The utility operating in the adjoining state is regulated by a regulatory agency or commission of the adjoining state; and

(4) The number of customers to be served is not substantial. The rates the out-of-state utility charges West Virginia customers shall be the same as the rate the utility may charge in the adjoining jurisdiction. The commission, in the case of any such utility, may revoke its waiver of jurisdiction for good cause.

(d) Any other provisions of this chapter to the contrary notwithstanding:

(1) An owner or operator of an electric generating facility located or to be located in this state that has been designated as an exempt wholesale generator under applicable federal law, or will be so designated prior to commercial operation of the facility, for which the facility the owner or operator holds a certificate of public convenience and necessity issued by the commission on or before July 1, 2003, is subject to §24-2-11c(e) through §24-2-11c(j) of this code as if the certificate of public convenience and necessity for the facility were a siting certificate issued under §24-2-11c of this code, and is not otherwise subject to the jurisdiction of the commission or to the provisions of this chapter with respect to the facility except for the making or constructing of a material modification thereof as provided in §24-2-1(d)(5) of this code.

(2) Any person, corporation, or other entity that intends to construct or construct and operate an electric generating facility to be located in this state that has been designated as an exempt wholesale generator under applicable federal law, or will be designated prior to commercial operation of the facility, for which facility the owner or operator does not hold a certificate of public convenience and necessity issued by the commission on or before July 1, 2003, shall, prior to commencement of construction of the facility, obtain a siting certificate from the commission pursuant to the provisions of §24-2-11c of this code in lieu of a certificate of public convenience and necessity pursuant to the provisions of §24-2-11 of this code. An owner or operator of an electric generating facility as is described in this subdivision for which a siting certificate has been issued by the commission is subject to §24-2-11c(e) through §24-2-11c(j) of this code and is not otherwise subject to the jurisdiction of the commission or to the provisions of this chapter with respect to the facility except for the making or constructing of a material modification thereof as provided in §24-2-1(d)(5) of this code.

(3) An owner or operator of an electric generating facility located in this state that had not been designated as an exempt wholesale generator under applicable federal law prior to commercial operation of the facility that generates electric energy solely for sale at retail outside this state or solely for sale at wholesale in accordance with any applicable federal law that preempts state law or solely for both sales at retail and sales at wholesale and that had been constructed and had engaged in commercial operation on or before July 1, 2003, is not subject to the jurisdiction of the commission or to the provisions of this chapter with respect to the facility, regardless of whether the facility subsequent to its construction has been or will be designated as an exempt wholesale generator under applicable federal law: *Provided*, That the owner or operator is subject to §24-2-1(d)(5) of this code if a material modification of the facility is made or constructed.

(4) Any person, corporation, or other entity that intends to construct or construct and operate an electric generating facility to be located in this state that has not been or will not be designated as an exempt wholesale generator under applicable federal law prior to commercial operation of the facility that will generate electric energy solely for sale at retail outside this state or solely for sale at wholesale in accordance with any applicable federal law that preempts state law or solely for both sales at retail and sales at wholesale and that had not been constructed and had not been engaged in commercial operation on or before July 1, 2003, shall, prior to commencement of construction of the facility, obtain a siting certificate from the commission pursuant to the provisions of §24-2-11c of this code in lieu of a certificate of public convenience and necessity pursuant to the provisions of §24-2-11 of this code. An owner or operator of an electric generating facility as is described in this subdivision for which a siting certificate has been issued by the commission is subject to §24-2-11c(e) through §24-2-11c(j) of this code, and is not otherwise subject to the jurisdiction of the commission or to the provisions of this chapter with respect to the facility except for the making or constructing of a material modification thereof as provided in §24-2-1(d)(5) of this code.

(5) An owner or operator of an electric generating facility described in this subsection shall, before making or constructing a material modification of the facility that is not within the terms of any certificate of public convenience and necessity or siting certificate previously issued for the facility or an earlier material modification thereof, obtain a siting certificate for the modification from the commission pursuant to the provisions of §24-2-11c of this code, in lieu of a certificate of public convenience and necessity for the modification pursuant to the provisions of §24-2-11 of this code and, except for the provisions of §24-2-11c of this code, is not otherwise subject to the jurisdiction of the commission or to the provisions of this chapter with respect to the modification.

(6) The commission shall consider an application for a certificate of public convenience and necessity filed pursuant to §24-2-11 of this code, to construct an electric generating facility described in this subsection or to make or construct a material modification of the electric generating facility as an application for a siting certificate pursuant to §24-2-11c of this code if the application for the certificate of public convenience and necessity was filed with the commission prior to July 1, 2003, and if the commission has not issued a final order as of that date.

(7) The limitations on the jurisdiction of the commission over, and on the applicability of the provisions of this chapter to, the owner or operator of an electric generating facility as imposed by and described in this subsection do not affect or limit the commission’s jurisdiction over contracts or arrangements between the owner or operator of the facility and any affiliated public utility subject to the provisions of this chapter.

(e) The commission does not have jurisdiction of Internet protocol-enabled service or voice-over Internet protocol-enabled service. As used in this subsection:

(1) "Internet protocol-enabled service" means any service, capability, functionality, or application provided using Internet protocol, or any successor protocol, that enables an end user to send or receive a communication in Internet protocol format, or any successor format, regardless of whether the communication is voice, data, or video.

(2) "Voice-over Internet protocol service" means any service that:

(i) Enables real-time, two-way voice communications that originate or terminate from the user’s location using Internet protocol or a successor protocol; and

(ii) Uses a broadband connection from the user’s location.

(3) The term "voice-over Internet protocol service" includes any service that permits users to receive calls that originate on the public-switched telephone network and to terminate calls on the public-switched telephone network.

(f) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this article, the commission does not have jurisdiction to review or approve any transaction involving a telephone company otherwise subject to §24-2-12 and §24-2-12a of this code, if all entities involved in the transaction are under common ownership.

(g) The Legislature finds that the rates, fees, charges, and ratemaking of municipal power systems are most fairly and effectively regulated by the local governing body. Therefore, notwithstanding any other provisions of this article, the commission does not have jurisdiction over the setting or adjustment of rates, fees, and charges of municipal power systems. Further, the jurisdiction of the Public Service Commission over municipal power systems is limited to that granted specifically in this code.

CHAPTER 24A. COMMERCIAL MOTOR CARRIERS.

ARTICLE 2. COMMON CARRIERS BY MOTOR VEHICLES.

§24A-2-2b. Rule-making authority; establishing rates for recovering, towing, hauling, carrying, or storing wrecked or disabled vehicles; complaint process; and required Legislative Audit.

(a) On or before July 1, 2016, the Commission shall promulgate rules to effectuate the provisions of this article.

(b) The rules promulgated pursuant to the provisions of this section shall describe:

(1) Factors determining the fair, effective, and reasonable rates levied by a carrier for recovering, towing, hauling, carrying, or storing a wrecked or disabled vehicle. The commission shall consider, but shall not be limited to:

(A) Tow vehicle or vehicles and the special equipment required to complete recovery or tow;

(B) Total time to complete the recovery or tow;

(C) Number of regular and extra employees required to complete the recovery or tow;

(D) Location of vehicle recovered or towed;

(E) Materials or cargo involved in recovery or tow;

(F) Comparison with reasonable prices in the region;

(G) Weather conditions; and

(H) Any other relevant information having a direct effect on the pricing of the recovery, towing, and storage of a recovered or towed vehicle;

(2) The process for filing a complaint, and the review and investigation process to ensure it is fair, effective, and timely: *Provided*, That in any formal complaint against a carrier relating to a third-party tow, the burden of proof to show that the carrier’s charges are just, fair, and reasonable is on the carrier;

(3) The process for aggrieved parties to recover the cost, from the carrier, for the charge or charges levied by a carrier for recovering, towing, hauling, carrying, or storing a wrecked or disabled vehicle where the commission determines that such charge or charges are not otherwise just, fair, or reasonable; and

(4) The process to review existing maximum statewide wrecker rates and special rates for the use of special equipment in towing and recovery work to ensure that rates are just, fair, and reasonable: *Provided*, That the commission shall generally disapprove hourly and flat rates for ancillary equipment.

(c) All carriers regulated under this article shall list their approved rates, fares, and charges on every invoice provided to an owner, operator, or insurer of a wrecker or disabled motor vehicle.

(d) The rules promulgated pursuant to this section shall sunset on July 1, 2023, unless reauthorized.

(e) On or before December 31, 2022, the Legislative Auditor shall review the rules promulgated by the Public Service Commission under this section. The audit shall evaluate the rate-making policy for reasonableness, the complaint process for timeliness, the penalties for effectiveness, and any other metrics the Legislative Auditor deems appropriate. The Legislative Auditor may recommend that the rule be reauthorized, reauthorized with amendment, or repealed.

CHAPTER 29. MISCELLANEOUS BOARDS AND OFFICERS.

ARTICLE 6. CIVIL SERVICE SYSTEM.

§29-6-4. Classified-exempt service; additions to classified service; exemptions.

(a) The classified-exempt service includes all positions included in the classified-exempt service on the effective date of this article.

(b) Except for the period commencing on July 1, 1992, and ending on the first Monday after the second Wednesday of the following January and except for the same periods commencing in the year 1996, and in each fourth year thereafter, the Governor may, by executive order, with the written consent of the State Personnel Board and the appointing authority concerned, add to the list of positions in the classified service, but the additions may not include any positions specifically exempted from coverage as provided in this section.

(c) The following offices and positions are exempt from coverage under the classified service:

(1) All judges, officers, and employees of the judiciary;

(2) All members, officers, and employees of the Legislature;

(3) All officers elected by popular vote and employees of the officer;

(4) All secretaries of departments and employees within the office of a secretary;

(5) Members of boards and commissions and heads of departments appointed by the Governor or heads of departments selected by commissions or boards when expressly exempt by law or board order;

(6) Excluding the policy-making positions in an agency, one principal assistant or deputy and one private secretary for each board or commission or head of a department elected or appointed by the Governor or Legislature;

(7) All policy-making positions, which includes newly hired Deputy Commissioners within the Department of Health and Human Resources;

(8) Patients or inmates employed in state institutions;

(9) Persons employed in a professional or scientific capacity to make or conduct a temporary and special inquiry, investigation, or examination on behalf of the Legislature or a committee thereof, an executive department, or by authority of the Governor;

(10) All employees of the office of the Governor, including all employees assigned to the executive mansion;

(11) Part-time professional personnel engaged in professional services without administrative duties;

(12) Temporary employees;

(13) Members and employees of the board of trustees and board of directors or their successor agencies;

(14) Uniformed personnel of the State Police;

(15) Temporary employees in the state forests, parks, and recreational areas; and

(16) Any person hired as an attorney beginning July 1, 2022.

(d) The Legislature finds that the holding of political beliefs and party commitments consistent or compatible with those of the Governor contributes in an essential way to the effective performance of and is an appropriate requirement for occupying certain offices or positions in state government, such as the secretaries of departments and the employees within their offices, the heads of agencies appointed by the Governor and, for each such head of agency, a private secretary and one principal assistant or deputy, all employees of the office of the Governor including all employees assigned to the executive mansion, as well as any persons appointed by the Governor to fill policy-making positions, in that those offices or positions are confidential in character and require their holders to act as advisors to the Governor or the Governor’s appointees, to formulate and implement the policies and goals of the Governor or the Governor’s appointees, or to help the Governor or the Governor’s appointees communicate with and explain their policies and views to the public, the Legislature, and the press.

(e) All county road supervisor positions are covered under the classified service effective July 1, 1999. A person employed as a county road supervisor on the effective date of this section is not required to take or pass a qualifying or competitive examination upon, or as a condition of, becoming a classified service employee. All county road supervisors who become classified service employees pursuant to this subsection who are severed, removed, or terminated in his or her employment must be severed, removed, or terminated as if the person was a classified service employee.

CHAPTER 46A. WEST VIRGINIA CONSUMER CREDIT AND PROTECTION ACT.

ARTICLE 8. OPERATIVE DATE AND PROVISIONS FOR TRANSITION.

§46A-8-101. Time of becoming operative; provisions for transition; enforceability of prior transactions; applicability and effective dates of amendments.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this section, this chapter shall become operative at 12:01 a.m. on September 1, 1974.

(b) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, in order to allow sufficient time to prepare for the implementation and operation of this chapter and to act on applications for licenses to make regulated consumer loans under this chapter as amended, the provisions of §46A-4-1 *et seq.* of this code relating to regulated consumer lenders, and the provisions of §46A-7-1 *et seq.* of this code relating to their administration, shall, to the extent necessary, become operative for such purposes at 12:01 a.m. on September 1, 1996.

(c) Transactions entered into before this chapter becomes operative and the rights, duties, and interests flowing from them thereafter may be terminated, completed, consummated, or enforced as required or permitted by any statute, rule of law, or other law amended, repealed, or modified by this chapter as though the repeal, amendment, or modification had not occurred, but this chapter applies to:

(1) Refinancings and consolidations made after this chapter becomes operative of consumer credit sales, consumer leases, and consumer loans whenever made;

(2) Consumer credit sales or consumer loans made after this chapter becomes operative pursuant to revolving charge accounts or revolving loan accounts entered into, arranged, or contracted for before this chapter becomes operative; and

(3) All consumer credit transactions made before this chapter becomes operative insofar as this chapter limits the remedies of creditors.

(d) *Applicability*. —

(1) The amendments made during the regular session of the Legislature, 2017, to §46A-2-105 of this code shall apply to consumer credit sales or consumer loans entered into on after the effective date of those amendments.  The amendments made during the regular session of the Legislature, 2017, to §46A-2-128 and §46A-2-140 of this code, shall apply to all causes of accruing on or after the effective date of those amendments.  The amendments made during the regular session of the Legislature, 2017, to §46A-2-122 and §46A-5-108 of this code shall apply to all causes of action filed on or after the effective date of those amendments.

(2) The amendments made during the regular session of the Legislature, 2021, to §46A-5-104, §46A-5-108, §46A-5-109, §46A-6-105, and §46A-6-106 of this code shall apply to all causes of action filed on or after the effective date of those amendments.

CHAPTER 61. CRIMES AND THEIR PUNISHMENT.

ARTICLE 12. POSTMORTEM EXAMINATIONS.

§61-12-3. Office of Chief Medical Examiner established; appointment, duties, etc., of Chief Medical Examiner; assistants and employees; promulgation of rules.

(a) The Office of Chief Medical Examiner is continued within the Bureau of Public Health in the Department of Health and Human Resources. The office shall be directed by a Chief Medical Examiner, who may employ pathologists, toxicologists, other forensic specialists, laboratory technicians, and other staff members as needed to fulfill the responsibilities set forth in this article.

(b) All persons employed by the Chief Medical Examiner shall be responsible to him or her and may be discharged for any reasonable cause. The Chief Medical Examiner shall specify the qualifications required for each position in the Office of Chief Medical Examiner.

(c) The chief medical examiner shall be a physician licensed to practice medicine or osteopathic medicine in the State of West Virginia, who is a diplomat of the American Board of Pathology in forensic pathology, or equivalent, and who has experience in forensic medicine. The Chief Medical Examiner shall be appointed by the Commissioner for the Bureau of Public Health to serve a five-year term unless sooner removed, but only for cause, by the Governor or by the commissioner.

(d) The Chief Medical Examiner shall be responsible to the commissioner in all matters except that the chief medical examiner shall operate with independent authority for the purposes of:

(1) The performance of death investigations conducted pursuant to section eight of this article;

(2) The establishment of cause and manner of death; and

(3) The formulation of conclusions, opinions, or testimony in judicial proceedings.

(e) The Chief Medical Examiner, or his or her designee, shall be available at all times for consultation as necessary for carrying out the functions of the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

(f) The Chief Medical Examiner shall cooperate with procurement organizations as defined in §16-19-3 of this code to maximize the opportunity to recover anatomical gifts for the purpose of transplantation, therapy, research, or education. The Chief Medical Examiner may enter into contracts and agreements with a procurement organization when necessary to facilitate the efficient and economical recovery of anatomical gifts, including contracts or agreements authorizing persons approved or assigned by the procurement organization to perform a specific type of duty or duties at the office of the chief medical examiner.

 (g) The Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Resources shall propose legislative rules in accordance with the provisions of §29A-3-1 *et seq.* of this code concerning:

(1) The proper conduct of medical examinations into the cause of death;

(2) The proper methods and procedures for postmortem inquiries conducted by county medical examiners and coroners;

(3) The examination of substances taken from human remains in order to determine the cause and manner of death;

(4) The training and certification of county medical examiners and coroners; and

(5) The procedures necessary to maximize the recovery of anatomical gifts for the purpose of transplantation, therapy, research, or education.

(h) The Chief Medical Examiner may prescribe specific forms for record books and official papers which are necessary to the functions and responsibilities of the office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

(i) The Chief Medical Examiner, or his or her designee, may order and conduct an autopsy in accordance with the provisions of this code. The Chief Medical Examiner, or his or her designee, shall perform an autopsy upon the lawful request of any person authorized by the provisions of this code to request the performance of the autopsy.

(j) The salary of the Chief Medical Examiner and the salaries of all assistants and employees of the office of the Chief Medical Examiner shall be fixed by the Legislature from funds appropriated for that purpose. The Chief Medical Examiner shall take an oath as required by law. The Chief Medical Examiner and his or her assistants may lecture or instruct in the field of legal medicine and other related subjects to the West Virginia University or Marshall University School of Medicine, the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, the West Virginia State Police, other law-enforcement agencies and other interested groups.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to recodify certain portions of the code to eliminate conflicts.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.