

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Committee Substitute

for

House Bill 4799

By Delegates Pinson, Brooks, Flanigan, Marple, and

Masters

[Originating in the Committee on the Judiciary;

Reported on February 18, 2026]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding a new section,
2 designated §15-10-8, relating to the establishment of the cold case task force within the
3 West Virginia State Police; establishing the executive board; clarifying that meetings of the
4 board are not subject to open meetings laws; establishing certain duties for the executive
5 board; establishing certain procedures for the cold case task force; authorizing interagency
6 cooperation; establishing the cold case task force fund; specifying uses of the fund; and
7 requiring certain data sharing.

8 *PREAMBLE: THIS LAW IS DESIGNATED AND MAY BE REFERRED TO AS THE LEAH*
9 *HICKMAN MEMORIAL ACT.*

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 10. COOPERATION BETWEEN LAW-ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES.

§15-10-8. Statewide cold case task force.

1 (a) There is hereby established a statewide multi-jurisdictional cold case task force within
2 the State Police. The executive board of the cold case task force shall consist of the
3 Superintendent of the State Police, the President of the West Virginia Chiefs of Police Association,
4 and the President of the West Virginia Sheriffs' Association. Meetings of the executive board are
5 not subject to the provisions of §6-9A-1 et seq. of this code

6 (b) The purpose of the cold case task force is the investigation and prosecution of
7 offenders in cold cases, as that term is defined in §15A-12-9 of this code. The cold case task force
8 is authorized to cooperate with federal, state, and local law-enforcement agencies to effectuate
9 the purposes of this section: *Provided*, That nothing in this section shall be construed as
10 authorizing the cold case task force to supersede the ongoing investigations of any other law-
11 enforcement agency.

12 (c) The executive board shall establish policies and procedures to effectuate the purposes
13 of this section, including, but not limited to, the number of law-enforcement officers assigned to the
14 cold case task force. Subject to available funds, the cold case task force shall be staffed by a task

15 force director, selected from the membership of the State Police, and other members of the State
16 Police, as designated by the Superintendent of the State Police.

17 (d) The cold case task force director shall perform the following powers and duties:

18 (1) To supervise the members of the State Police assigned to the cold case task force;

19 (2) To request assistance and cooperation of any West Virginia law-enforcement agency
20 pursuant to the provisions of §15-10-4 of this code to augment the establishment of the cold case
21 task force: *Provided*, That the director may provide the opportunity to participate in the cold case
22 task force to any law-enforcement officer from the agency originally investigating the cold case, as
23 directed by the administrator from the agency originally investigating the cold case;

24 (3) To coordinate and cooperate with any other federal or state law-enforcement agencies;

25 (4) To assure compliance with any policies or procedures established by the executive
26 board for the operation of the cold case task force; and

27 (5) To manage and coordinate the day to day operations of any cold case task force
28 established under the provisions of this section and to perform such other duties as may be
29 required to effectuate the purposes of this section.

30 (e) The executive board may request assistance and cooperation of any West Virginia law-
31 enforcement agency pursuant to the provisions of §15-10-4 of this code to augment the
32 establishment of the cold case task force.

33 (f) The cold case task force fund is hereby created within the Treasury of the state. The
34 fund shall be administered by the Superintendent of the State Police and shall consist of all
35 moneys made available for the operations of the cold case task force from any source, including,
36 but not limited to, all fees, gifts, grants, bequests, or transfers from any source, any moneys that
37 may be appropriated and designated for the cold case task force by the Legislature and all interest
38 or other return earned from investment of the fund. Expenditures from the fund shall be for the
39 operations of the cold case task force and are not authorized from collections but are to be made
40 only in accordance with appropriation by the Legislature and in accordance with the provisions of

41 §12-3-1 et seq. of this code and upon the fulfillment of the provisions set forth in §11B-2-1 et seq.
42 of this code: *Provided*, That for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2027, expenditures are authorized
43 from collections rather than pursuant to an explicit appropriation by the Legislature.

44 (g) The Director of the West Virginia Fusion Center shall cooperate with the executive
45 board to the fullest extent practicable to provide information necessary to accomplish the mission
46 of the cold case task force and shall make available any information contained in the cold case
47 database established in §15A-12-9 of this code.