

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 483

**FISCAL
NOTE**

By Senator Woodrum

[Introduced January 19, 2026; referred
to the Committee on Government Organization; and
then to the Committee on Finance]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding a new article,
2 designated §6-15-1, §6-15-2, §6-15-3, §6-15-4, §6-15-5, §6-15-6, §6-15-7, §6-15-8, §6-
3 15-9, §6-15-10, §6-15-11, §6-15-12, §6-15-13, §6-15-14, and §6-15-15, relating to the
4 West Virginia Officials Training Program Act; providing a short title; setting out legislative
5 findings and purpose; establishing a training program administered by the State Auditor;
6 creating a new division of the West Virginia State Auditor's Office; setting out applicability;
7 creating a tiered certification system; outlining program curriculum requirements and
8 initiatives; listing training methods; creating a dashboard; permitting national cooperation
9 and reciprocity; establishing funding; requiring state agency cooperation; requiring annual
10 reports; permitting rulemaking; and transferring similar duties to the State Auditor.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 15. THE WEST VIRGINIA OFFICIALS TRAINING PROGRAM ACT

§6-15-1. Short Title.

1 This article shall be known and may be cited as the "West Virginia Officials Training
2 Program Act."

§6-15-2. Legislative Findings and Purpose.

1 (a) The Legislature finds that county governments, municipalities, boards, commissions,
2 authorities, and county boards of education in West Virginia are exercising broader authority and
3 facing increased responsibilities in fiscal oversight, regulatory compliance, infrastructure planning,
4 emergency response, economic development, education oversight, and long-range governance.

5 (b) The Legislature further finds that many appointed, special-purpose, or quasi-
6 independent public bodies — including public service districts, planning commissions, building
7 commissions, parks and recreation boards, development authorities, and similar entities —
8 exercise significant public power, manage public funds, and are subject to open government,
9 ethics, and procurement laws, yet have historically received little or no structured training tailored
10 to their statutory duties.

11 (c) The Legislature recognizes that the complexity of modern public administration makes
12 it unreasonable and impractical to appoint individuals to public office or to boards, commissions, or
13 authorities and expect them to independently acquire, without guidance or support, the knowledge
14 necessary to fulfill their legal, fiduciary, and operational responsibilities.

15 (d) The Legislature therefore finds that effective governance requires more than
16 appointment alone, and that public officials and board members should be provided with
17 structured, role-appropriate training designed to prepare them for the specific responsibilities of
18 the office or board on which they serve.

19 (e) The Legislature further finds that West Virginia's institutions of higher education
20 possess substantial expertise in public administration, leadership, finance, law, workforce
21 development, and organizational management, and are valuable partners in the design and
22 delivery of effective public-official training.

23 (f) The Legislature finds that a unified, statewide framework for training and professional
24 development promotes consistency, accountability, transparency, reduced legal and financial risk,
25 and increased public confidence in government.

26 (g) The Legislature declares its intent to establish within the Office of the State Auditor a
27 comprehensive, modern, and nationally replicable system of local-official and board-member
28 training and leadership development, positioning West Virginia as a leader in strengthening local
29 governance capacity.

30 (h) The purpose of this article is to create a statewide program that provides foundational,
31 advanced, and role-specific training for local public officials and board members; supports
32 continuous professional development; strengthens governance outcomes; and equips public
33 servants to competently perform the duties entrusted to them.

§6-15-3. Establishment of the Program; Administration by the State Auditor.

1 (a) There is hereby created within the Office of the State Auditor the West Virginia Officials
2 Training Program ("the Program").

3 **(b) The State Auditor shall administer, oversee, and maintain the Program and shall serve**
4 **as the principal authority for:**

5 **(1) Curriculum development and approval;**

6 **(2) Training delivery and coordination;**

7 **(3) Certification and continuing-education standards;**

8 **(4) Performance measurement and reporting; and**

9 **(5) Program administration and rulemaking.**

10 **(c) A Local Governance & Training Division is hereby created within the Office of the State**
11 **Auditor. The Auditor may employ staff, engage contractors, and utilize existing resources as**
12 **necessary to implement this article.**

13 **(d) The State Auditor may coordinate with state agencies, institutions of higher education,**
14 **and other entities, including for curriculum design, instructional development, research support,**
15 **and program evaluation; however, final authority over Program content, certification standards,**
16 **and administration shall remain with the State Auditor.**

17 **(e) The State Auditor may convene advisory working groups consisting of representatives**
18 **from institutions of higher education, state agencies, and experienced public officials to assist in**
19 **curriculum development and program evaluation. Such groups are advisory only and do not**
20 **exercise decision-making authority.**

§6-15-4. Applicability.

1 **(a) The Program shall be available to:**

2 **(1) County commissioners and other county elected officials;**

3 **(2) Municipal mayors, recorders or clerks, and members of municipal governing bodies;**

4 **(3) Members of county or municipal boards, commissions, and authorities, including**
5 **appointed, special-purpose, or quasi-independent boards exercising public authority, such as**
6 **public service districts, planning commissions, building commissions, parks and recreation**
7 **boards, development authorities, and similar entities;**

(4) Members of county boards of education through a dedicated Education Leadership Track;

(5) Appointed officials or administrators with responsibility for public funds, procurement, or compliance; and

(6) Any additional public officials designated by the State Auditor.

(b) Participation is voluntary unless otherwise required by law; however, participation is strongly encouraged as a matter of sound governance and public stewardship.

§6-15-5. Tiered Certification System.

(a) The Program shall establish a tiered certification structure consisting of:

(1) Level I – Foundations of Local Governance;

(2) Level II – Governance, Management, and Public Administration;

(3) Level III – Strategic and Long-Range Leadership; and

(4) Education Leadership Track for members of county boards of education.

(b) The State Auditor shall issue certificates of completion and maintain a centralized statewide registry of certified officials.

(c) The State Auditor may establish continuing-education requirements, equivalencies, renewal standards, and credit hours by rule.

§6-15-6. Required Curriculum; Program Components.

(a) The curriculum shall include, at a minimum:

(1) Open Meetings Act and Freedom of Information Act compliance;

(2) Ethics, conflicts of interest, and standards of conduct;

(3) Budgeting, fiscal oversight, and audit preparation;

(4) Purchasing and procurement law;

(5) Personnel and human-resources fundamentals;

(6) Risk management and liability mitigation;

(7) Capital planning and infrastructure management;

9 (8) Economic development, site readiness, and community planning;

10 (9) Intergovernmental and regional cooperation;

11 (10) Crisis communication and emergency preparedness;

12 (11) Strategic planning aligned with statewide economic and educational priorities;

13 (12) Education finance, accountability, and workforce alignment for the Education
14 Leadership Track; and

15 (13) Additional subject areas identified by the State Auditor.

16 (b) Curriculum shall be periodically updated to reflect changes in law, best practices, and
17 statewide needs.

18 (c) Training shall be designed to reflect the distinct legal, fiduciary, and operational
19 responsibilities associated with different offices, boards, commissions, and authorities, and the
20 State Auditor may establish board- or authority-specific training modules tailored to particular
21 classes of public bodies.

§6-15-7. Leadership Development Initiatives.

1 (a) In addition to certification, the Program may include:

2 (1) Advanced leadership institutes;

3 (2) Mentorship or fellowship programs;

4 (3) Regional leadership cohorts;

5 (4) Multi-jurisdictional workshops addressing complex governance challenges; and

6 (5) Partnerships with institutions of higher education or professional organizations for
7 advanced instruction.

§6-15-8. Delivery of Training.

1 (a) Training may be delivered through:

2 (1) Regional in-person academies;

3 (2) Online or remote-learning platforms;

4 (3) Statewide conferences or summits;

5 (4) Recorded or on-demand coursework; and

6 (5) Any other method approved by the State Auditor to ensure accessibility and
7 effectiveness.

§6-15-9. Statewide Local Governance Performance Dashboard.

1 (a) The State Auditor shall maintain a Statewide Local Governance Performance
2 Dashboard tracking:

3 (1) Training participation and certification rates;

4 (2) Continuing-education compliance trends;

5 (3) Aggregate governance and training needs identified through the Program;

6 (4) Regional or statewide trends affecting local governance; and

7 (5) Other performance indicators identified by the Auditor.

8 (b) Data may be aggregated or anonymized as appropriate and shall be updated at least
9 annually.

§6-15-10. National Cooperation and Reciprocity.

1 (a) The State Auditor may enter into cooperative agreements with other states, national
2 associations, or regional organizations for shared curriculum development, reciprocal certification
3 recognition, or joint leadership initiatives.

4 (b) The State Auditor shall ensure the Program remains suitable for adoption or adaptation
5 by other states seeking to improve local governance capacity.

§6-15-11. Funding; Cost Recovery; Organizational Participation Fees.

1 (a) The Program may be funded through legislative appropriations, grants, federal funds,
2 partnerships, organizational participation fees, or other lawful sources.

3 (b) Foundational training required for Level I certification shall be provided at no cost to
4 individual officials.

5 (c) The State Auditor is authorized to establish, by rule, a reasonable organizational
6 participation fee assessed to counties, municipalities, boards, commissions, authorities, or other

7 public entities whose officials participate in the Program.

8 (d) Organizational participation fees:

9 (1) Shall be assessed to the governmental entity, not to individual officials;

10 (2) May be tiered based on population, budget size, or entity classification;

11 (3) Shall be capped to avoid undue burden on small or rural entities; and

12 (4) Shall be used solely for Program administration, curriculum development, and training
13 delivery.

14 (e) The State Auditor may charge additional fees for optional or advanced leadership-level
15 coursework.

§6-15-12. Required Cooperation by State Agencies.

1 (a) All state agencies, boards, commissions, and offices with subject-matter jurisdiction
2 relevant to local governance shall cooperate with the State Auditor in the development and
3 delivery of training under this article.

4 (b) Upon request, cooperating agencies shall, to the extent practicable:

5 (1) Provide subject-matter expertise;

6 (2) Assist in curriculum design or updates;

7 (3) Make available instructional materials or trainers;

8 (4) Designate a liaison for coordination; and

9 (5) Align existing agency training where feasible.

10 (c) Cooperation under this section does not confer approval authority or administrative
11 control over the Program.

12 (d) The State Auditor retains final authority over all Program elements.

13 (e) Nothing in this section requires an agency to expend funds beyond existing
14 appropriations unless otherwise authorized by the Legislature.

§6-15-13. Annual Report.

1 (a) The State Auditor shall submit an annual report to the Joint Committee on Government

2 and Finance summarizing Program participation, certification outcomes, continuing-education
3 trends, aggregate governance needs, expenditures, funding sources, and recommendations for
4 improving training effectiveness.

5 (b) The State Auditor shall also provide the report, or an executive summary thereof, to
6 participating state agencies, counties, municipalities, boards, commissions, authorities, and other
7 entities whose officials are eligible for or participate in the Program.

8 (c) Reports distributed under this section shall be informational in nature, may present data
9 in aggregated or anonymized form, and shall not be used for enforcement, disciplinary action, or
10 adverse administrative determinations.

11 (d) The purpose of the report is to promote transparency, continuous improvement, shared
12 understanding of governance challenges, and informed collaboration among state and local
13 entities.

§6-15-14. Rulemaking.

1 The State Auditor may propose legislative rules and promulgate emergency rules pursuant
2 to §29A-3-1 et seq. of this code to implement this article.

§6-15-15. Transition of Duties.

1 All local-official training responsibilities previously exercised by other state entities are
2 transferred to the State Auditor unless prohibited by federal law.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to create the West Virginia Officials Training Program Act, a training program for certain government officials administered by the State Auditor's Office.

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