

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 551

By Senator Woelfel

[Introduced January 21, 2026; referred
to the Committee on Education; and then to the
Committee on the Judiciary]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §18B-2A-1 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating
 2 to institutional boards of governors; and restoring voting rights to faculty, student, and
 3 employee members of the boards of governors.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 2A. INSTITUTIONAL BOARDS OF GOVERNORS.

**§18B-2A-1. Findings; composition of boards; terms and qualifications of members;
 vacancies; eligibility for reappointment.**

1 (a) Findings.

2 The Legislature finds that the State of West Virginia is served best when the membership
 3 of each governing board is informed by the following:

4 (1) The academic expertise and institutional experience of faculty members and a student
 5 of the institution governed by the board;

6 (2) The technical or professional expertise and institutional experience of a classified or
 7 non-classified employee of the institution governed by the board;

8 (3) An awareness and understanding of the issues facing the institution governed by the
 9 board; and

10 (4) The diverse perspectives that arise from a membership that is balanced and
 11 representative of West Virginia and its citizens; and

12 (5) For West Virginia’s land grant institutions at West Virginia University and West Virginia
 13 State University, focused on serving the needs of West Virginia and its citizens.

14 (b) Boards of governors established.

15 A board of governors is continued at each of the following institutions: Bluefield State
 16 University, Blue Ridge Community and Technical College, BridgeValley Community and Technical
 17 College, Concord University, Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College, Fairmont
 18 State University, Glenville State University, Mountwest Community and Technical College,
 19 Marshall University, New River Community and Technical College, Pierpont Community and

20 Technical College, Shepherd University, Southern West Virginia Community and Technical
21 College, West Liberty University, West Virginia Northern Community College, the West Virginia
22 School of Osteopathic Medicine, West Virginia State University, West Virginia University and West
23 Virginia University at Parkersburg.

24 (c) Board membership.

25 (1) An appointment to fill a vacancy on the board or reappointment of a member who is
26 eligible to serve an additional term is made in accordance with the provisions of this section.

27 (2) The Board of Governors for Marshall University consists of 16 persons. The Board of
28 Governors for West Virginia University consists of 19 persons. The boards of governors of the
29 other state institutions of higher education consist of 12 persons.

30 (3) Each board of governors includes the following members:

31 (A) A full-time member of the faculty with the rank of instructor or above duly elected by the
32 faculty of the respective institution, ~~who shall serve as a nonvoting, advisory member;~~

33 (B) A member of the student body in good academic standing, enrolled for college credit,
34 and duly elected by the student body of the respective institution, ~~who shall serve as a nonvoting,~~
35 ~~advisory member;~~ and

36 (C) A member from the institutional classified or non-classified employees duly elected by
37 the classified or non-classified employees of the respective institution, ~~who shall serve as a~~
38 ~~nonvoting, advisory member.~~

39 (4) For the Board of Governors at Marshall University, 13 lay members appointed by the
40 Governor, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, pursuant to this section;

41 (5) For the Board of Governors at West Virginia University, 15 lay members appointed by
42 the Governor, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, pursuant to this section, and a
43 full-time faculty member representing the extension service at the institution or a full-time faculty
44 member representing the health sciences, selected by the faculty senate, ~~who shall serve as a~~
45 ~~nonvoting, advisory member.~~

46 (6) For each board of governors of the other state institutions of higher education, nine lay
47 members appointed by the Governor, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, pursuant
48 to this section.

49 (A) Of the nine members appointed by the Governor, no more than five may be of the same
50 political party. Of the 13 members appointed by the Governor to the governing board of Marshall
51 University, no more than eight may be of the same political party. Of the 15 members appointed by
52 the Governor to the governing board of West Virginia University, no more than nine may be of the
53 same political party.

54 (B) Of the nine members appointed by the Governor, at least five shall be residents of the
55 state. Of the 13 members appointed by the Governor to the governing board of Marshall
56 University, at least eight shall be residents of the state. Of the 15 members appointed by the
57 Governor to the governing board of West Virginia University, at least eight shall be residents of the
58 state.

59 (C) Of the 15 members appointed by the Governor to the governing board of West Virginia
60 University, one shall be specifically designated as a representative of agriculture, forestry, or the
61 agricultural or silvicultural sciences and shall have a background in one or more such fields. One
62 shall be a graduate of the West Virginia University Institute of Technology. One shall be a graduate
63 of Potomac State College of West Virginia University.

64 (D) Of the nine members appointed by the Governor to the governing board of West
65 Virginia State University, one shall be specifically designated as a representative of agriculture,
66 forestry, or the agricultural or silvicultural sciences and shall have a background in one or more
67 such fields.

68 (7) In making lay appointments, the Governor shall consider the institutional mission and
69 membership characteristics including the following:

70 (A) The need for individual skills, knowledge and experience relevant to governing the
71 institution;

72 (B) The need for awareness and understanding of institutional priorities, opportunities, and
73 challenges, including those related to research, teaching and outreach;

74 (C) The value of gender, racial and ethnic diversity;

75 (D) The value of achieving balance in gender and diversity in the racial and ethnic
76 characteristics of the lay membership of each board; and

77 (E) The needs of the State of West Virginia and its citizens.

78 (d) Board member terms.

79 (1) The student member serves for a term of one year. Each term begins on July 1.

80 (2) The faculty member serves for a term of two years. Each term begins on July 1. Faculty
81 members are eligible to succeed themselves for one additional term, not to exceed a total of four
82 consecutive years.

83 (3) The member representing classified or non-classified employees serves for a term of
84 two years. Each term begins on July 1. Members representing classified or non-classified
85 employees are eligible to succeed themselves for one additional term, not to exceed a total of four
86 consecutive years.

87 (4) The appointed lay citizen members serve terms of four years each and are eligible to
88 succeed themselves for no more than one additional term, except that citizen members who are
89 appointed to fill unexpired terms are eligible to succeed themselves for two full terms after
90 completing an unexpired term.

91 (5) A vacancy in an unexpired term of a member shall be filled for the unexpired term within
92 thirty days of the occurrence of the vacancy in the same manner as the original appointment or
93 election. Except in the case of a vacancy, all elections are held and all appointments are made no
94 later than June 30 preceding the commencement of the term. Each board of governors shall elect
95 one of its appointed lay members to be chairperson in June of each year. A member may not serve
96 as chairperson for more than four consecutive years.

97 (6) The appointed members of the boards of governors serve staggered terms of up to four

98 years except that four of the initial appointments to the governing boards of community and
99 technical colleges that became independent July 1, 2008, are for terms of two years and five of the
100 initial appointments are for terms of four years.

101 (e) Board member eligibility, expenses.

102 (1) A person is ineligible for appointment to membership on a board of governors of a state
103 institution of higher education under the following conditions:

104 (A) For a baccalaureate institution or university, a person is ineligible for appointment who
105 is an officer, employee or member of any other board of governors within this state; an employee of
106 any institution of higher education within this state; an officer or member of any political party
107 executive committee; the holder of any other public office or public employment under the
108 government of this state or any of its political subdivisions; an employee of any affiliated research
109 corporation created pursuant to article twelve of this chapter; an employee of any affiliated
110 foundation organized and operated in support of one or more state institutions of higher education;
111 or a member of the council or commission: *Provided*, That if an appointee is an employee or board
112 member of an out-of-state higher education institution, there is no apparent conflict of interest
113 caused by the individual serving in both capacities. This subsection does not prevent the
114 representative from the faculty, classified or non-classified employees, students, or the
115 superintendent of a county board of education from being members of the governing boards.

116 (B) For a community and technical college, a person is ineligible for appointment who is an
117 officer, employee or member of any other board of governors within this state; a member of a
118 board of visitors of any public institution of higher education; an employee of any institution of
119 higher education within this state; an officer or member of any political party executive committee;
120 the holder of any other public office, other than an elected county office, or public employment,
121 other than employment by the county board of education, under the government of this state or
122 any of its political subdivisions; an employee of any affiliated research corporation created
123 pursuant to §18B-12-1 *et seq.* of this code; an employee of any affiliated foundation organized and

124 operated in support of one or more state institutions of higher education; or a member of the
125 council or commission: *Provided*, That if an appointee is an employee or board member of an out-
126 of-state higher education institution, there is no apparent conflict of interest caused by the
127 individual serving in both capacities. This subsection does not prevent the representative from the
128 faculty, classified or non-classified employees, or students from being members of the governing
129 boards.

130 (2) Before exercising any authority or performing any duties as a member of a governing
131 board, each member shall qualify as such by taking and subscribing to the oath of office
132 prescribed by section five, article IV of the Constitution of West Virginia and the certificate thereof
133 shall be filed with the Secretary of State.

134 (3) A member of a governing board appointed by the Governor may not be removed from
135 office by the Governor except for official misconduct, incompetence, neglect of duty or gross
136 immorality and then only in the manner prescribed by law for the removal of the state elective
137 officers by the Governor.

138 (4) The members of the board of governors serve without compensation, but are
139 reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses actually incurred in the performance of
140 official duties under this article upon presentation of an itemized sworn statement of expenses.

141 (5) The president of the institution shall make available resources of the institution for
142 conducting the business of its board of governors. All expenses incurred by the board of governors
143 and the institution under this section are paid from funds allocated to the institution for that
144 purpose.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to restore voting rights to faculty, student, and employee members of the state's institutional boards of governors.

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