

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 759

By Senator Thorne

[Introduced February 5, 2026; referred
to the Committee on Government Organization; and
then to the Committee on Finance]

FISCAL NOTE

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §19-2C-1, §19-2C-2, §19-2C-3, §19-2C-3a, §19-2C-4, §19-2C-5b,
2 §19-2C-6, §19-2C-6a, §19-2C-7, §19-2C-8, §19-2C-9, and §19-2C-10 of the Code of West
3 Virginia, 1931, as amended, relating to auctioneers; providing definitions; updating
4 exceptions; requiring fees be established by legislative rule; raising the amount of bond an
5 auctioneer must have; removing the board from being authorized to use records for
6 screening applicants for licenses; extending how long apprentice auctioneer can perform
7 after license has expired; clarifying investigation of complaints; providing board members
8 with compensation; clarifying hearing procedure; requiring civil penalties be payable to the
9 Department on Agriculture; updating contract terms; and clarifying what is prohibited when
10 advertising or promoting an auction.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE

2C.

AUCTIONEERS.

§19-2C-1. Definitions.

1 For the purposes of this article:

2 (a) "Absolute auction" means the sale of real or personal property at auction whereby every
3 item offered from the block is sold to the highest bidder without reserve and without the
4 requirements of a minimum bid or other conditions which limit the sale other than to the highest
5 bidder.

6 "Auction" means any sale of real or personal property in which offers or bids are made by
7 prospective purchasers, by means of verbal exchange, physical gesture, or written
8 communication, whether bids are made in person, phone, via mail, electronically, or online, the
9 property is sold to the highest bidder, and the close of the auction is determined by either the
10 auctioneer or the persons bidding on the item or items. The term "auction" includes public
11 auctions.

12 "Auction firm" means any licensed business entity that provides auction services and
13 employs auctioneers to carry out service. Auction firm can provide services online, in-person
14 auctions, or brick-and-mortar at locations.

15 (b)"Auctioneer" means a person who sells goods or real estate at public auction for another
16 on commission or for other compensation.

17 (e)"Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Agriculture of West Virginia or his or her
18 designee.

19 (d)"Department" means the West Virginia Department of Agriculture.

20 (e)"Escrow account" means a separate custodial or trust fund account maintained by the
21 auctioneer.

22 (f)"Estate auction" means the sale at auction of property of a specified deceased person or
23 the property of a specified living person's estate. Estate auctions may contain property other than
24 that of the specified living or deceased person. However, the inclusion of additional property must
25 be included in all advertising and auction announcements.

26 (g)"In this state" means that an auction satisfies one of the following criteria:

27 (1)(A) The auctioneer performed the auction within the borders of the state of West
28 Virginia;

29 (2)(B) The auctioneer is selling items for a person located in the state of West Virginia;

30 (3)(C) The auctioneer is auctioning real or personal property located in the state of West
31 Virginia;

32 (4)(D) The auctioneer delivers purchased property to a location in the state of West
33 Virginia; or

34 (5)(E) The auctioneer is otherwise subject to the laws, including taxation authority, of the
35 state of West Virginia.

~~(h) "Public auction" or "auction" means any public sale of real or personal property in any manner, whether in person, via written offers or bids, or online, when offers or bids are made by prospective purchasers and the property sold to the highest bidder~~

§19-2C-2. License required; exceptions.

(a) Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, no person shall conduct an auction as an auctioneer in this state unless he or she shall have first obtained from the commissioner a license therefor.

(b) The provisions of this section do not apply to:

(1) Persons conducting sales at auctions conducted by or under the direction of any public authority or pursuant to any judicial order or direction or to any sale required by law to be at auction;

~~(2) The owner of any real or personal property when personally sold at auction by the owner and the owner has not personally conducted an auction within the previous 12-month period~~
Persons selling their own real or personal property, not more than once within a 12-month period;

(3) Persons conducting sales pursuant to a deed of trust;

(4) Fiduciaries of estates when selling real or personal property of the estate;

(5) Persons conducting sales without compensation on behalf of charitable, religious, fraternal, or other nonprofit organizations: *Provided*, That the commissioner shall promulgate rules to limit the number of charitable auctions an exempt person may perform in a 12-month period;

(6) Persons properly licensed pursuant to the provisions in §30-40-1 *et seq.* of this code when conducting an auction, any portion of which contains any leasehold or any estate in land whether corporeal or incorporeal, freehold or non-freehold, when the person is retained to conduct an auction by a receiver or trustee in bankruptcy, a fiduciary acting under the authority of a deed of trust or will, or a fiduciary of a decedent's estate: *Provided*, That nothing contained in this article exempts persons conducting sales at public markets from the provisions of §19-2A-1 *et seq.* of this

code, where the sale is confined solely to livestock, poultry, and other agriculture and horticulture products; and

~~(7) Persons listing items online for sale via a platform that establishes a fixed time for the conclusion of the sale without extension~~ Platforms that allow for person-to-person sales of their own goods where the platform has established terms and conditions for auction sales: *Provided*, That the commissioner may further define this exemption in legislative rules.

§19-2C-3. Procedure for license; Department of Agriculture as statutory agent for licensees.

(a) An applicant for an auctioneer license shall:

(1) Apply on forms prescribed by the commissioner;

(2) Pay a nonreturnable application fee and a license fee; and, upon successful completion of the application process, a license fee; and

(3) File a bond as required by this article.

(b) The commissioner shall, within 30 days after the receipt of an application, notify the applicant of his or her eligibility to be examined at the next regularly scheduled examination, as well as the date of the examination.

(c) If the license is denied, the commissioner shall refund the license fee submitted with the application to the applicant.

(d) All licenses expire on June 30 of each year: *Provided*, That an auctioneer may continue to perform auctions for up to 30 days after June 30, so long as he or she has submitted the required paperwork to renew his or her auctioneer license. ~~*Provided, however*, That licenses issued in 2019 shall continue to be active through June 30, 2020~~ A license may be renewed upon the payment of the annual renewal fee within 60 days of the expiration date. Renewals received more than 60 days after the expiration date are subject to a late renewal fee in addition to the annual renewal fee.

(e) A license that has been expired for more than two years cannot be renewed until the auctioneer or apprentice auctioneer takes the written and oral examination, pays the examination fee, and complies with the other requirements of this article.

(f) Where an auctioneer or apprentice auctioneer requires a duplicate or replacement license or a license reflecting a change in information, the auctioneer or apprentice auctioneer shall submit the fee with the request.

(g) The state Department of Agriculture is the agent for the purpose of service of process on a licensed auctioneer for any action occasioned by the performance of the duties of the auctioneer. Every licensed auctioneer, by virtue of his or her application for a license, shall be considered to have consented to the statutory agency.

§19-2C-3a.

Rulemaking.

(a) The commissioner shall propose rules for legislative approval in accordance with the provisions of §29A-3-1 *et seq.* of this code, to:

(1) Establish the license requirements for auctioneers and apprentice auctioneers, including the bond requirements;

(2) Set a fee schedule;

(3) Establish the renewal and expiration requirements for licenses;

(4) Establish the continuing education requirements for licensees;

(5) Establish waiver of examination requirements for apprentice auctioneers;

(6) Permit consent agreements or negotiated settlements for the civil penalties; and

(7) Implement the provisions of this article.

(b) The fees shall be established by legislative rule. ~~in effect on January 1, 2014, shall remain in effect until modified by legislative rule~~

§19-2C-4.

Bond

required.

Every person applying for a license as an auctioneer, apprentice auctioneer or continuing to act as a licensed auctioneer or apprentice auctioneer shall file with the commissioner and

3 maintain in full effect a bond satisfactory to the commissioner and in form and amount as
4 prescribed by the commissioner pursuant to the rules and regulations promulgated in accordance
5 with this article: *Provided*, That in no event shall the amount of such bond be less than \$40,000
6 \$25,000 for an auctioneer and in no event less than \$5,000 for an apprentice auctioneer. The bond
7 may include, at the option of the applicant, corporate surety bonding, collateral bonding (including
8 costs and securities), establishment of an escrow account, an irrevocable letter of credit or a
9 combination of these methods. If collateral bonding is used, the auctioneer may elect to deposit
10 cash, or any of the following collateral securities or certificates: Bonds of the United States or its
11 possessions, of the federal land bank, or of the homeowners' loan corporation; full faith and credit
12 general obligation bonds of the state of West Virginia, or other states, and of any county, district, or
13 municipality of the state of West Virginia or other states; or certificates of deposit in a bank in this
14 state, which certificates shall be in the name of the department. The cash deposit or market value
15 of such securities or certificates shall be equal to or greater than the sum of the bond. It shall be the
16 duty of the applicant to ensure the market value of such bonds is sufficient. The commissioner
17 shall, upon receipt of any such deposits of cash, securities, or certificates, promptly place the
18 same with the Treasurer of the state of West Virginia whose duty it shall be to receive and hold the
19 same in the name of the state in trust for the purpose for which the deposit is made when the
20 license is issued. The applicant making the deposit shall be entitled, from time to time, to receive
21 from the state Treasurer, upon written approval of the commissioner, the whole or any portion of
22 any cash, securities or certificates so deposited, upon depositing with him or her in lieu thereof,
23 cash or other securities or certificates of the classes herein specified having value equal to or
24 greater than the sum of the bond. Such bond shall be conditioned upon the faithful compliance by
25 the auctioneer with the provisions of this article and the payment of all required taxes, fees, and
26 penalties imposed by this state and its political subdivisions, as well as the payment by any
27 auctioneer of any final judgment obtained for damages arising out of his or her conduct or duties
28 as an auctioneer. Such bond shall be open to public inspection.

§19-2C-5b. Background checks required.

(a) A person applying for a license pursuant to §19-2C-5, §19-2C-6, or §19-2C-6c of this code may be required to submit to a state and national criminal history record check. The criminal history record check shall be based on fingerprints submitted to the West Virginia State Police or its assigned agent for forwarding to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

(b) The applicant shall meet all requirements necessary to accomplish the state and national criminal history record check, including:

(1) Submitting fingerprints for the purposes set forth in this subsection; and

(2) Authorizing ~~the board~~ the West Virginia State Police, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to use all records submitted and produced for the purpose of screening the applicant for a license.

(c) The results of the state and national criminal history record check may not be released to or by a private entity except:

(1) To the individual who is the subject of the criminal history record check;

(2) With the written authorization of the individual who is the subject of the criminal history record check; or

(3) Pursuant to a court order.

(d) The criminal history record check and related records are not public records for the purposes of chapter 29B of this code.

(e) The applicant shall pay the actual costs of the fingerprinting and criminal history record check.

(f) The commissioner may not disqualify an applicant for initial licensure, certification, or registration because of a prior criminal conviction that has not been reversed unless that conviction is for a crime that bears a rational nexus to the occupation requiring licensure.

(g) The commissioner may not use crimes involving moral turpitude in making licensure, certification, or registration determinations.

(h) If an applicant is disqualified for licensure, certification, or registration because of a criminal conviction that has not been reversed, the commissioner shall afford the applicant the opportunity to reapply for licensure, certification, or registration after the expiration of five years from the date of conviction or date of release from the penalty that was imposed, whichever is later, if the individual has not been convicted of any other crime during that period of time: *Provided*, That convictions for violent or sexual offenses or offenses shall subject an individual to a longer period of disqualification, to be determined by the individual board or licensing authority.

(i) An individual with a criminal record who has not previously applied for licensure, certification, or registration may petition the commissioner at any time for a determination of whether the individual's criminal record will disqualify the individual from obtaining a license or other authorization. This petition shall include sufficient details about the individual's criminal record to enable the commissioner to identify the jurisdiction where the conviction occurred, the date of the conviction, and the specific nature of the conviction. The commissioner shall inform the individual of his or her standing within 60 days of receiving the petition from the applicant. The licensing authority may charge a fee to recoup its costs for each petition.

(j) Nothing in this section alters the standards and procedures the commissioner uses for evaluating licensure, certification, or registration renewals.

(k) The commissioner shall propose rules or amendments to existing rules for legislative approval to comply with the provisions of this section. These rules or amendments to rules shall be proposed pursuant to the provisions of §29A-3-1 *et seq.* of this code within the applicable time limit to be considered by the Legislature during its regular session in the year 2020.

(l) The provisions of this section, enacted during the 2019 regular session of the Legislature, shall not apply to current licensees who maintain active licensure, but shall apply to individuals currently holding an apprentice auctioneer license who are applying for an auctioneer license, or to any current license holder whose license lapses and who is required to reapply.

§19-2C-6. Requirements for apprentice auctioneer license.

(a) A person seeking an apprentice auctioneer license shall furnish to the commissioner, on forms provided by the commissioner, satisfactory proof that he or she:

(1) Has a good reputation;

(2) Is a trustworthy character;

(3) Is a citizen of the United States; and

(4) Has taken and passed a written examination relating to the skills and knowledge of the statutes and rules governing auctioneers.

(b) An apprentice auctioneer may take the examination to become an auctioneer after completing one of the following:

(1) Serving a two-year apprenticeship under a licensed auctioneer; or

(2) Attending a nationally accredited graduate school of auctioneering, approved by the commissioner, and serving an apprenticeship of six months.

(c) Before an apprentice auctioneer may take the auctioneer's examination, the apprentice auctioneer shall conduct at least six auction sales under the direct supervision of the sponsoring auctioneer. The commissioner may waive the requirements of this section, on an individual basis, upon the presentation of written evidence that the applicant has educational training or exceptional experience in the auctioneering profession and that the applicant has been unable to obtain sponsorship by a licensed auctioneer: *Provided*, That the commissioner may not waive apprenticeship requirements for an applicant without the concurrence of the board of review.

(d) When an apprentice auctioneer is discharged or terminates his or her employment with an auctioneer for any reason, the auctioneer shall immediately provide written notification to the commissioner. No discharged or terminated apprentice auctioneer may thereafter perform any acts under the authority of his or her license until the apprentice auctioneer receives a new license bearing the name and address of his or her new employer. No more than one license may be issued to an apprentice auctioneer for the same period of time.

(e) The commissioner may not issue an apprentice auctioneer license until bond has been filed. All apprentice auctioneer licenses expire on June 30 of each year, but are renewable upon the payment of the annual fee: *Provided*, That an apprentice auctioneer may continue to perform auctions for up to ~~20~~ 30 days after June 30, so long as he or she has submitted the required paperwork to renew his or her apprentice auctioneer license. ~~*Provided, however*, That licenses issued in 2019 shall continue to be active through June 30, 2020~~

(f) A person cannot be licensed as an apprentice auctioneer for more than three years without applying for an auctioneer license. Should an apprentice auctioneer allow the three-year limit to lapse, then the apprentice auctioneer shall be required to take the apprentice examination and meet all the requirements of this article.

§19-2C-6a. Investigation of complaints; board of review.

(a) The Department of Agriculture may, upon its own action, and shall upon the verified written complaint of any person, investigate the actions of any auctioneer, apprentice auctioneer, any applicant for an auctioneer's or apprentice auctioneer's license, or any person who assumes to act in that capacity, if the complaint, together with other evidence presented in connection with it, establishes probable cause. Upon verification of the complaint, the department shall present the complaint, facts gathered during investigation, and legal options to the board of review. The board of review shall consider all of the facts of the complaint and recommend a course of action to the commissioner.

(b) The board of review shall be appointed by the Governor, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, and shall consist of three members, each appointed for a staggered three-year term. Two members of the board of review shall be licensed auctioneers in West Virginia and residents of this state and shall have been licensed and been practicing the profession of auctioneering for five years immediately preceding their appointment. The third member shall be a lay person from the commercial or agricultural community who has utilized services of auctioneers for at least three years. No more than two board members shall be from any one congressional

district and no more than two members shall be from the same political party. Board members shall receive no compensation for their service on the board, but shall be entitled to receive reimbursement for expenses in accordance with the Department of Agriculture travel regulations. There shall be no limit on the number of consecutive terms a member may serve on the board. The Governor is authorized to fill a vacancy when it occurs on the board for any reason. An appointment to fill a vacancy shall be for the remainder of the existing term of the vacant position.

§19-2C-7. Orders of commissioner; hearing; review.

Any order of the commissioner shall be served by him or her upon all persons affected thereby by ~~registered~~ certified mail. Within 10 days of the receipt of such order any party adversely affected thereby may, in writing, request a hearing before the commissioner. Such hearing and any judicial review thereof shall be conducted in accordance with the applicable provisions of §29A-5-1 *et seq.* and §29A-6-1 *et seq.* of this code as if the same were set forth herein in extenso. The effect of any order shall be suspended during the course of any hearing or subsequent appeals.

§19-2C-8. Penalties.

(a) *Criminal penalties.* — Any person, firm, association, or corporation violating a provision of this article or the rules, is guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, shall be fined not less than \$250 nor more than \$500 for the first offense, and not less than \$500 nor more than \$1,000 for the second and subsequent offenses. Magistrates have concurrent jurisdiction with circuit courts to enforce the provisions of this article.

(b) *Civil penalties.* — Any person violating a provision of this article or the rules may be assessed a civil penalty by the commissioner.

(1) In determining the amount of the civil penalty, the commissioner shall give due consideration to the history of previous violations by the person, the seriousness of the violation, and the demonstrated good faith of the person charged in attempting to achieve compliance with this article before and after written notification of the violation. The commissioner may assess a

penalty of not more than \$500 for a first offense, and not more than \$1,000 for each second and subsequent offense.

(2) In addition to a penalty assessed against an unlicensed auctioneer for practicing without the required license, the commissioner may assess penalties against an unlicensed auctioneer for violations of the provisions of this article that would have applied to the individual's conduct had he or she held the required license.

(3) The civil penalty is payable to the ~~State of West Virginia~~ West Virginia Department of Agriculture and is collectible in any manner provided for collection of debt. If any person liable to pay the civil penalty neglects or refuses to pay the penalty, the amount of the civil penalty, together with interest at 10 percent, is a lien in favor of the state of West Virginia upon the property, both real and personal, of the person after the same has been entered and docketed to record in the county where the property is situated. The clerk of the county, upon receipt of the certified copy of the lien, shall enter it to record without requiring the payment of costs as a condition precedent to recording.

(c) No state court may allow for the recovery of damages for any administrative action taken if the court finds that there was probable cause for such action.

§19-2C-9. Written contracts.

(a) No person may act as an auctioneer on the sale at public auction of any goods, wares, merchandise, or of any other property, real or personal, until he or she has entered into a written contract in duplicate with the owner or consignor of the property to be sold. No apprentice auctioneer may be authorized to enter into a contract without the written consent of his or her sponsoring auctioneer. All contracts shall be in the name of and on behalf of the sponsoring auctioneer.

(b) The written contract shall:

(1) State the terms and conditions upon which the auctioneer receives or accepts the property for sale at auction;

- 10 (2) Be between the auctioneer and the seller;
- 11 (3) Be made in duplicate;
- 12 (4) Be retained by the auctioneer for a period of three years from the date of final
13 settlement;
- 14 (5) Be furnished to each person that entered into the contract;
- 15 (6) State that an apprentice auctioneer may not contract directly with a client but only
16 through his or her sponsoring auctioneer;
- 17 (7) State that an apprentice auctioneer may not engage in a sale with an auctioneer by
18 whom he or she is not sponsored without first obtaining the written consent of his or her
19 sponsoring auctioneer;
- 20 (8) Have a prominent statement indicating that the auctioneer is licensed by the
21 Department of Agriculture and is bonded in favor of the state of West Virginia; and
- 22 (9) Include the following information:
- 23 (A) The name, address, and phone number of the owner of the property to be sold or the
24 consignor;
- 25 (B) The date of the auction or a termination date of the contract;
- 26 (C) The terms and conditions of the auction;
- 27 (D) The location of the auction;
- 28 (E) The date the owner or consignor is to be paid;
- 29 (F) A statement establishing the responsibility for bad checks, debts, and unpaid auction
30 items;
- 31 (G) A detailed list of all fees to be charged to the seller by the auctioneer, including
32 commissions, rentals, advertising, and labor;
- 33 (H) A statement of the auctioneer's policy regarding absentee bidding;
- 34 (I) A statement above the owner's signature line: "I have read and accept the terms of the
35 contract"; and

(J) A statement indicating that an explanation of settlement of the auction, or settlement sheet, will be provided to the owner or consignor at the end of the auction;

(K) A provision to disclose if subcontracting auctions and subcontracts must meet the same contracting requirements in this section of code;

(L) Disclosure of buyer's fee, if applicable, and the amount; and

(M) A provision concerning the disposition and responsibility for items remaining after auction of unsold items, and uncollected items.

(c) As a condition of entering into a contract, the auctioneer shall be provided with proof or certificate of ownership for all titled property, or assurances of ownership for all other property. The auctioneer shall have such proof or certificate or ownership with him or her at the time the auction is held.

(d) Notwithstanding the provisions of subsection (a) of this section, an auctioneer may conduct an auction on behalf of an auction house firm or other business entity without having entered into a contract directly with the seller of the auctioned goods, so long as the following conditions are satisfied:

(1) The auction house firm or business must have a written contract with both the seller of the goods and the auctioneer;

(2) The contract between the auction house firm or business entity must satisfy all the requirements set forth in subsection (b) of this section; and

(3) The auction house firm or business entity must file with the commissioner a bond satisfying the requirements of §19-2C-4 of this code.

(e) By entering into contracts with sellers of property pursuant to this section, the owners and partners of any auction house firm or business entity agree to submit to the jurisdiction of the commissioner and the board of review and are subject to the penalties set forth in §19-2C-8 of this code.

61 (f) All auction firms must register and submit a fee to the department on a form to be
62 prescribed by the commissioner and must renew registration annually. All licenses expire on June
63 30 of each year pursuant to §19-2C-6. All licenses expire on June 30 of each year: *Provided*, That
64 he or she may continue to perform auctions for up to 30 days after June 30, so long as the auction
65 firm has submitted the required paperwork to renew his or her auctioneer license. A license may
66 be renewed upon the payment of the annual renewal fee within 60 days of the expiration date.
67 Renewals received more than 60 days after the expiration date are subject to a late renewal fee in
68 addition to the annual renewal fee.

69 (g) Auction firms that are owned by a licensed auctioneer, provided the firm only utilizes a
70 substitute auctioneer less than 14 days a year, and such auctioneer also conducts the live auction,
71 are required to have contracts with the seller. Auction firms are not required to have a bond if
72 operating with the auctioneer's bond.

73 (h) Auction firms that employ auctioneers are subject to the contract provisions in this
74 section, regardless of the auctioneer status of the owner.

75 (i) The auction firm or business shall have a written contract with both the seller of goods
76 and the auctioneer; and required to have a surety bond for the auction firm.

§19-2C-10.

Advertising.

1 (a) In advertising an auction sale by any licensed auctioneer, or auction firm, the principal
2 auctioneer or auctioneers who physically conduct the sale shall be listed prominently in such
3 advertising as used by said auctioneer or auctioneers. The individual auctioneer or auctioneers
4 who conduct the sale shall be the person or persons who call for, accept, and close bids on the
5 majority of items offered for sale.

6 (b) Any apprentice auctioneer who advertises, as provided in this section, shall indicate in
7 his or her advertisement the name of the sponsoring auctioneer under whom he or she is licensed.

8 (c) The auctioneer's name and license number shall be displayed in equal prominence with
9 the name of the apprentice auctioneer and license number in such advertisement.

10 (d) Nothing in the provisions of this article shall be construed so as to prohibit any other
11 auctioneer, licensed pursuant to this article, from assisting with any auction, notwithstanding the
12 failure to list the name of the other auctioneer in any advertising associated with such auction.

13 (e) The following are prohibited in advertising or promoting an auction:

14 ~~(1) It is unlawful~~ To conduct or advertise that an auction is absolute if minimum opening bids
15 are required or other conditions are placed on the sale that limit the sale other than to the highest
16 bidder.

17 (2) No property other than the property of a specified deceased person or the property of a
18 specified living person's estate may be sold at auction if the auction is conducted or advertised
19 only as an estate auction. However, property other than that of the specified estate may be sold at
20 the sale if all advertisements for the sale specify that items will be sold that do not belong to the
21 estate and those items are identified at the sale.

22 (3) It is unlawful for a sale to be advertised as an auction that does not satisfy the definition
23 of an auction as set forth in this article.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to update and clarify the laws on auctioneering.

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