

# **WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE**

## **2026 REGULAR SESSION**

**Introduced**

### **Senate Bill 163**

By Senator Rucker

[Introduced January 14, 2026; referred  
to the Committee on Economic Development; and  
then to the Committee on Government Organization]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §29A-1-2, §29A-3-11, and §29A-3-15 of the Code of West Virginia,  
2 1931, as amended, relating to the submission of legislative rules; requiring the inclusion of  
3 economic impact statements with certain proposed legislative rules; authorizing the  
4 request of economic impact statements; and defining "economic impact statement".

*Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:*

## **ARTICLE 1. DEFINITIONS AND APPLICATION OF CHAPTER.**

### **§29A-1-2. Definitions of terms used in this chapter.**

1 For the purposes of this chapter:

2 (a) "Agency" means any state board, commission, department, office or officer authorized  
3 by law to make rules or adjudicate contested cases, except those in the legislative or judicial  
4 branches.

5 (b) "Contested case" means a proceeding before an agency in which the legal rights,  
6 duties, interests or privileges of specific parties are required by law or constitutional right to be  
7 determined after an agency hearing, but does not include cases in which an agency issues a  
8 license, permit or certificate after an examination to test the knowledge or ability of the applicant  
9 where the controversy concerns whether the examination was fair or whether the applicant  
10 passed the examination and does not include rulemaking.

11 (c) "Economic impact statement" means a detailed written analysis, which measures or  
12 estimates the potential costs to the public of implementation of and compliance with a proposed  
13 legislative rule, considering:

14 (i) Regulatory or transactional costs;

15 (ii) Business productivity, innovation, or competitiveness, including the ability of persons  
16 doing business in the state to compete with persons doing business in other states or domestic  
17 markets;

18 (iii) Private-sector job creation or employment.

19           (iv) Private-sector investment;

20           (v) Economic growth; and

21           (vi) Any other relevant factors.

22           ~~(e)~~ (d) "Interpretive rule" means every rule, as defined in subdivision (j) of this section,  
23 adopted by an agency independently of any delegation of legislative power which is intended by  
24 the agency to provide information or guidance to the public regarding the agency's interpretations,  
25 policy or opinions upon the law enforced or administered by it and which is not intended by the  
26 agency to be determinative of any issue affecting constitutional, statutory or common law rights,  
27 privileges or interests. An interpretive rule may not be relied upon to impose a civil or criminal  
28 sanction nor to regulate conduct or the exercise of constitutional, statutory or common law rights or  
29 privileges nor to confer any right or privilege provided by law and is not admissible in any  
30 administrative or judicial proceeding for that purpose, except where the interpretive rule  
31 established the conditions for the exercise of discretionary power as provided in this subdivision.  
32 However, an interpretive rule is admissible for the purpose of showing that the prior conduct of a  
33 person was based on good faith reliance on the rule. The admission of the rule in no way affects  
34 any legislative or judicial determination regarding the prospective effect of the rule. Where any  
35 provision of this code lawfully commits any decision or determination of fact or judgment to the  
36 sole discretion of any agency or any executive officer or employee, the conditions for the exercise  
37 of that discretion, to the extent that the conditions are not prescribed by statute or by legislative  
38 rule, may be established by an interpretive rule and such rule is admissible in any administrative or  
39 judicial proceeding to prove the conditions.

40           ~~(d)~~ (e) "Legislative exempt rule" means every rule promulgated by an agency or relating to  
41 a subject matter that is exempt from the rule-making provisions of §29A-3-1 *et seq.* of this code,  
42 under §29A-1-3 of this code or any other section of this code.

43           ~~(e)~~ (f) "Legislative rule" means every rule, as defined in subdivision (j) of this section,  
44 proposed or promulgated by an agency pursuant to this chapter. Legislative rule includes every

rule which, when promulgated after or pursuant to authorization of the Legislature, has: (1) The force of law; or (2) supplies a basis for the imposition of civil or criminal liability; or (3) grants or denies a specific benefit. Every rule which, when effective, is determinative on any issue affecting constitutional, statutory or common law rights, privileges or interests is a legislative rule. Unless lawfully promulgated as an emergency rule, a legislative rule is only a proposal by the agency and has no legal force or effect until promulgated by specific authorization of the Legislature. Except where otherwise specifically provided in this code, legislative rule does not include: (A) Findings or determinations of fact made or reported by an agency, including any findings and determinations that are required to be made by any agency as a condition precedent to proposal of a rule to the Legislature; (B) declaratory rulings issued by an agency pursuant to the provisions of §29A-4-1 of this code; (C) orders, as defined in subdivision (e) of this section; or (D) executive orders or proclamations by the Governor issued solely in the exercise of executive power, including executive orders issued in the event of a public disaster or emergency.

~~(f)~~ (g) "Order" means the whole or any part of the final disposition, whether affirmative, negative, injunctive or declaratory in form, by any agency of any matter other than rulemaking.

~~(g)~~ (h) "Person" includes individuals, partnerships, corporations, associations or public or private organizations of any character.

~~(h)~~ (i) "Procedural rule" means every rule, as defined in subdivision (j) of this section, which fixes rules of procedure, practice or evidence for dealings with or proceedings before an agency, including forms prescribed by the agency.

~~(i)~~ (j) "Proposed rule" is a legislative rule, interpretive rule or a procedural rule which has not become effective pursuant to the provisions of this chapter or law authorizing its promulgation.

~~(j)~~ (k) "Rule" includes every rule, standard or statement of policy or interpretation of general application and future effect, including the amendment or repeal of the rule, affecting constitutional, statutory or common law rights, privileges or interests, or the procedures available to the public, adopted by an agency to implement, extend, apply, interpret or make specific the law

enforced or administered by it or to govern its organization or procedure, but does not include rules relating solely to the internal management of the agency, nor rules of which notice is customarily given to the public by markers or signs, nor mere instructions. Every rule shall be classified as "legislative rule", "interpretive rule" or "procedural rule", all as defined in this section, and is effective only as provided in this chapter.

(k) (l) "Rulemaking" means the process for the formulation, amendment or repeal of a rule as provided in this chapter.

### **ARTICLE 3. RULE MAKING.**

#### **§29A-3-11. Submission of legislative rules to the Legislative Rule-Making Review Committee.**

(a) When an agency finally approves a proposed legislative rule for submission to the Legislature, pursuant to the provisions of section nine of this article, the secretary of the executive department which administers the agency pursuant to the provisions of §5F-2-1 *et seq.*, of this code shall submit to the Legislative Rule-Making Review Committee at its offices or at a regular meeting of such committee a number of copies in electronic or paper form as requested by the committee, which shall include the following information:

(1) The full text of the legislative rule as finally approved by the agency, with new language underlined and with language to be deleted from any existing rule stricken through but clearly legible;

(2) A brief summary of the content of the legislative rule and a description and a copy of any existing rule which the agency proposes to amend or repeal;

(3) A statement of the circumstances which require the rule;

(4) A detailed description of the rule's purpose and all proposed changes to the rule;

(5) A fiscal note containing all information included in a fiscal note for either house of the Legislature, ~~a statement of the economic impact of the rule on the state or its residents~~, and, if there are any adjustments to any fees or other special revenue included in the rule, a fiscal note

shall include, for any fund affected by adjustments to fees or other special revenue, the fund name, the fund number, and the past five years of actual revenues and expenses of the fund;

(6) A statement of the economic impact of the rule on the state and its residents, including those doing business in the state, or an economic impact statement if the legislative rule could have an economic impact of more than \$200,000 in any one year or \$1 million over five years on:

(i) Regulatory or transactional costs;

(ii) Business productivity, innovation, or competitiveness, including the ability of persons doing business in the state to compete with persons doing business in other states or domestic markets;

(iii) Private-sector job creation or employment

(iv) Private-sector investment; and

(v) Economic growth.

~~(6)~~ (7) One copy of any relevant federal statutes or regulations;

~~(7)~~ (8) An explanation of the statutory authority for the rule, including a detailed summary of the effect of each provision of the rule with citation to the specific statute which empowers the agency to enact such provision;

~~(8)~~ (9) All public comments for each proposed rule. An agency may consolidate substantially similar comments in the interest of efficiency;

~~(9)~~ (10) All written responses by the agency to the substance of any public comments received, including whether the agency chose to modify the proposed rule in response to the comments or, if no changes were made, the rationale for declining to incorporate or make any suggested changes responding to the public comments. An agency may consolidate substantially similar responses in the interest of efficiency: *Provided*, That the agency's response shall address each issue and concern expressed by all comments received; and

~~(40)~~ (11) Any other information which the committee may request or which may be required by law. If the agency is an agency, board or commission which is not administered by an executive

department as provided for in §5F-2-1 *et seq.*, of this code, the agency shall submit the final agency-approved rule as required by this subsection.

(b) The committee shall review each proposed legislative rule and, in its discretion, may hold public hearings thereon. Such review shall include, but not be limited to, a determination of:

(1) Whether the agency has specific statutory authority to propose the rule and has not exceeded the scope of its statutory authority in approving the proposed legislative rule;

(2) Whether the proposed legislative rule is in conformity with the legislative intent of the statute which the rule is intended to implement, extend, apply, interpret or make specific;

(3) Whether the proposed legislative rule overlaps, duplicates or conflicts with any other provision of this code, any other rule adopted by the same or a different agency, with federal statutes and rules, or with local laws and rules;

(4) Whether federal funding will be impacted by its expiration and explanation as to such;

(5) Whether the proposed legislative rule is necessary to fully accomplish the objectives of the statute under which the rule was proposed for promulgation;

(6) Whether the proposed legislative rule is reasonable, especially as it affects the convenience of the general public or of persons particularly affected by it;

(7) Whether the proposed legislative rule could be made less complex or more readily understandable by the general public; and

(8) Whether the proposed legislative rule was proposed for promulgation in compliance with the requirements of this article and with any requirements imposed by any other provision of this code-; and

(9) Whether the proposed legislative rule would have an economic impact on the state or its residents.

(c) After reviewing the legislative rule, the committee shall recommend that the Legislature:

(1) Authorize the promulgation of the legislative rule;

(2) Authorize the promulgation of part of the legislative rule;

(3) Authorize the promulgation of the legislative rule with certain amendments;

(4) Recommend that the proposed rule be withdrawn; or

(5) Reject the proposed rule.

The committee shall file notice of its action in the State Register and with the agency proposing the rule: *Provided*, That when the committee makes the recommendations of subdivision (2), (3), (4), or (5) of this subsection, the notice shall contain a statement of the reasons for such recommendation, and that the notice shall identify whether the agency's proposed legislative rule followed the established requirements stated in §29A-3-11(a)(1)-(11) of this code.

(d) When the committee recommends that a rule be authorized, in whole or in part, by the Legislature, the committee shall instruct its staff or the office of Legislative Services to draft a bill authorizing the promulgation of all or part of the legislative rule and incorporating such amendments as the committee desires. If the committee recommends that the rule not be authorized, it shall include in its report a draft of a bill authorizing promulgation of the rule together with a recommendation. Any draft bill prepared under this section shall contain a legislative finding that the rule is within the legislative intent of the statute which the rule is intended to implement, extend, apply or interpret and shall be available for any member of the Legislature to introduce to the Legislature.

**§29A-3-15. Emergency legislative rules; procedure for promulgation; definition.**

(a) Any agency with authority to propose legislative rules may, without hearing, find that an emergency exists requiring that an emergency rule be promulgated and promulgate the emergency rule in accordance with this section. The agency shall file the emergency rule, together with a statement of the facts and circumstances constituting the emergency and a listing of state agencies, professions, businesses and other identifiable interest groups affected by the proposed emergency rule, with the Secretary of State, who shall publish a notice of the filing in the State Register. However, an agency's good faith failure to list all known state agencies, professions,



businesses and other identifiable interest groups is not a basis for disapproval of the emergency rule or does not subject the emergency rule to judicial review. The emergency rule becomes effective upon the approval of the Secretary of State in accordance with §29A-1-15a of this code or upon the approval of the Attorney General in accordance with §29A-1-15b of this code or upon the forty-second day following the filing, whichever occurs first. The emergency rule may adopt, amend or repeal any legislative rule, but the agency shall state, with particularity, the circumstances constituting the emergency requiring the adoption, amendment or repeal, and the emergency rule is subject to de novo review by any court having original jurisdiction of an action challenging its validity. An agency shall immediately file a copy of the emergency rule and the required statement with the Secretary of State and one copy with the Legislative Rule-Making Review Committee.

An emergency rule is effective for not more than 15 months and expires earlier if any of the following occurs:

(1) The Secretary of State, acting under the authority provided in §29A-1-15a of this code, or the Attorney General, acting under the authority provided in §29A-1-15a of this code, disapproves the emergency rule because: (A) The emergency rule or an amendment to the emergency rule exceeds the scope of the law authorizing or directing the promulgation of the rule; (B) an emergency does not exist justifying the promulgation of the emergency rule; or (C) the emergency rule was not promulgated in compliance with the provisions of this section. An emergency rule may not be disapproved pursuant to the authority granted by clauses (A) or (B) of this subdivision on the basis that the Secretary of State or the Attorney General disagrees with the underlying public policy established by the Legislature in enacting the authorizing legislation. An emergency rule which would otherwise be approved as being necessary to comply with a time limitation established by this code or by a federal statute or regulation may not be disapproved pursuant to the authority granted by paragraphs (A) or (B) of this subdivision on the basis that the agency has failed to file the emergency rule prior to the date fixed by the time limitation. When the

authorizing statute specifically directs an agency to promulgate an emergency rule, or specifically finds that an emergency exists and directs the promulgation of an emergency rule, the emergency rule may not be disapproved pursuant to the authority granted by paragraph (B) of this subdivision.

An emergency rule may not be disapproved on the basis that the Legislature has not specifically directed an agency to promulgate the emergency rule, or has not specifically found that an emergency exists and directed the promulgation of an emergency rule;

(2) The agency has not previously filed and fails to file a notice of public hearing on the proposed rule within thirty days of the date the proposed rule was filed as an emergency rule, in which case the emergency rule expires on the thirty-first day;

(3) The agency has not previously filed and fails to file the proposed rule as approved by the agency following the close of the public comment period with the Legislative Rule-Making Review Committee within ninety days of the date the proposed rule was filed as an emergency rule, in which case the emergency rule expires on the ninety-first day;

(4) The Legislature has authorized or directed promulgation of an authorized legislative rule dealing with substantially the same subject matter since the emergency rule was first promulgated, in which case the emergency rule expires on the date the authorized rule is made effective; or

(5) The Legislature has, by law, disapproved the emergency rule, in which case the emergency rule expires on the date the law becomes effective.

(b) Any amendment to an emergency rule made by the agency shall be filed in the State Register and does not constitute a new emergency rule for the purpose of acquiring additional time or avoiding the expiration dates in subdivision (2), (3), (4) or (5), subsection (a) of this section: Provided, That the emergency amendment becomes effective upon the approval of the Secretary of State in accordance with §29A-1-15a of this code or upon approval of the Attorney General in accordance with §29A-1-15b of this code or upon the forty-second day following the filing, whichever occurs first.

(c) Once an emergency rule expires due to the conclusion of 15 months or due to the effect of subdivision (2), (3), (4) or (5), subsection (a) of this section, the agency may not refile the same or similar rule as an emergency rule.

(d) An agency may not use the provisions of this section to avoid or evade any provision of this article or any other provisions of this code, including any provisions for legislative review and approval of proposed rules. Any emergency rule promulgated for that purpose may be contested in a judicial proceeding before a court of competent jurisdiction.

(e) The Legislative Rule-Making Review Committee may review any emergency rule to determine: (1) Whether the emergency rule or an amendment to the emergency rule exceeds the scope of the law authorizing or directing its promulgation; (2) whether there exists an emergency justifying the promulgation of the emergency rule; and (3) whether the emergency rule was promulgated in compliance with the requirements and prohibitions contained in this section. The committee may recommend to the agency, the Legislature or the Secretary of State any action it determines appropriate.

(f) For the purposes of this section, an emergency exists when the promulgation of an emergency rule is necessary: (1) For the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, safety or welfare; (2) to comply with a time limitation established by this code or by a federal statute or regulation; or (3) to prevent substantial harm to the public interest.

(g) The members of the Legislative Rule-Making Review Committee may request an economic impact statement from an agency on rules proposed pursuant to this section, in accordance with §29A-3-11(a)(6) of this code, regardless of the estimated economic impact.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to require county and municipal development authorities; to provide updated reports concerning developable commercial properties and facilities and direct the Secretary of Commerce to coordinate with these authorities providing the information.

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