

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 633

By Senators Woodrum, Oliverio, and Rucker

[Introduced January 27, 2026; referred

to the Committee on Education]

1 A BILL to amend and reenact §5-28-1, §5-28-2, and §5-28-3 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as
2 amended; and to amend the code by adding a new section, designated §5-28-1a, relating
3 to the West Virginia Commission on Holocaust Education; establishing legislative findings;
4 modernizing commission membership in light of the passing of Holocaust survivors and
5 second-generation witnesses; strengthening safeguards for historical accuracy and
6 mission integrity; authorizing limited commission-appointed voting members; authorizing
7 non-voting advisory members, including students; clarifying governance, transparency,
8 and duties; and ensuring Holocaust education remains the central and primary purpose of
9 the commission.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 28. COMMISSION ON HOLOCAUST EDUCATION.

§5-28-1. Legislative findings. Short Title.

The Legislature finds and declares:

1 (1) ~~That the holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis during the period between one thousand~~
2 ~~nine hundred thirty-three and one thousand nine hundred forty-five resulted in the genocide of six~~
3 ~~million Jews and millions of nonJews as part of a carefully orchestrated central government~~
4 ~~program;~~

5 (2) ~~That the holocaust stands as a grim reminder and warning to all generations of~~
6 ~~genocidal crimes and atrocities committed by man based on ignorance and fear and that all people~~
7 ~~should rededicate themselves to the principles of human rights and equal protection under the~~
8 ~~laws of a democratic society;~~

9 (3) ~~That education can ensure that citizens are knowledgeable about the events leading up~~
10 ~~to the holocaust and about the organizations and facilities that were created and used purposefully~~
11 ~~for the systematic destruction of human beings and that the lessons of holistic trust and respect for~~
12 ~~peoples of various cultures are important for the citizens of West Virginia as they enter the global~~
13 ~~marketplace and economy;~~

(4) That programs, workshops, institutes, seminars, exhibits and other teacher training and public awareness activities for the study of the holocaust have taken place during recent years, but a central resource for schools, churches and communities studying the holocaust is needed;

(5) That, toward that end, the Governor, by executive order No. 2-98, dated April 16, one thousand nine hundred ninety-eight, created and established the West Virginia holocaust commission on education; and

(6) That, in furtherance of the intent and purposes of the aforesaid executive order, it is the intent of the Legislature to create a permanent state commission which, as an organized body and on a continuous basis, will survey, design, encourage and promote implementation of holocaust education and awareness programs in West Virginia and will be responsible for organizing and promoting the memorialization of the holocaust on a regular basis throughout the state.

This article shall be known and cited as the "West Virginia Holocaust Education Act."

§5-28-1a. Additional legislative findings; purpose.

(a) The Legislature finds that the Holocaust — the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators — is a singular historical event whose memory must be preserved with accuracy, integrity, and moral clarity.

(b) The Legislature further finds that the original statutory structure of the West Virginia Commission on Holocaust Education relied in part upon the participation of Holocaust survivors, liberators, eyewitnesses, and second-generation descendants. Due to the passage of time, most such individuals have now passed away, and those who remain are often advanced in age, geographically dispersed, or otherwise unable to participate regularly in commission duties.

(c) The Legislature finds that antisemitism has risen significantly in the United States and globally, and that the terrorist attack of October 7, 2023, in Israel constituted the deadliest mass murder of Jews since the Holocaust. Education concerning contemporary manifestations of antisemitism is necessary to understand the enduring relevance of Holocaust education.

(d) The Legislature therefore concludes that the commission must be modernized to

14 ensure continuity of expertise, protection of historical truth, and fidelity to its mission, while
15 maintaining the Holocaust as the central and primary focus of its work.

16 (e) It is the intent of the Legislature that Holocaust education remain the sole and primary
17 purpose of the commission. References to other acts of mass violence may be used only as
18 supplemental historical context to enhance understanding of the Holocaust, its origins, its warning
19 signs, or the nature of antisemitism, and shall diminish or redefine the singular nature of the
20 Holocaust.

21 (f) It is further the intent of the Legislature that the commission be structured to endure
22 across generations, including the engagement of students and future educators, while
23 safeguarding against political, ideological, or revisionist distortion.

§5-28-2. Commission on holocaust education; continued; membership; appointment;
terms; governance; compensation.

1 (a) Effective July 1, 2001, there is created the West Virginia commission on holocaust
2 education.

3 (b) The commission is composed of eleven members: Two members currently serving on
4 the state Board of Education, selected by the board; the state Superintendent of Schools or his or
5 her designee; the director of the division of veterans' affairs; one attorney from the Attorney
6 General's office, civil rights division; one teacher who has completed professional development
7 related to holocaust education teaching at the high school level and one teacher who has
8 completed professional development related to holocaust education teaching at the junior high or
9 middle school level, each appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate;
10 and four state residents, appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate,
11 who shall be: Individuals who are holocaust scholars or individuals experienced in the field of
12 holocaust education or survivors, second generation, eye witness/liberators or individuals
13 recommended by the chair of the present holocaust education commission, created by executive
14 order, who, by virtue of their interest, education or long term involvement in human rights,

15 ~~prejudice reduction and holocaust education have demonstrated, through their past commitment~~
16 ~~and cooperation with the existing holocaust commission on education, their willingness to work for~~
17 ~~holocaust awareness and education in West Virginia.~~

18 ~~(c) Members of the commission shall be appointed for terms of three years or until their~~
19 ~~prospective successors are appointed and qualified. Members are eligible for reappointment. Any~~
20 ~~member of the commission who fails to attend more than two consecutive meetings without an~~
21 ~~excuse approved by the commission may be removed from the commission. All vacancies shall be~~
22 ~~filled by appointment in the same manner as the original appointment and the individual appointed~~
23 ~~to fill the vacancy serves for the remainder of the unexpired term.~~

24 ~~(d) The Governor shall appoint a chairperson for the commission for a term of three years~~
25 ~~and until his or her successor is appointed and qualified.~~

26 ~~(e) The Speaker of the House of Delegates shall appoint a member of the House of~~
27 ~~Delegates and the President of the Senate shall appoint a member of the Senate to serve as~~
28 ~~advisors to the commission.~~

29 ~~(f) Members of the commission are not entitled to compensation for services performed as~~
30 ~~members but may be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses incurred for each day~~
31 ~~engaged in the performance of their official commission duties in a manner consistent with the~~
32 ~~guidelines of the travel management office of the Department of Administration.~~

33 (a) Continuation. – The West Virginia Commission on Holocaust Education is hereby
34 continued and reconstituted as provided in this article.

35 (b) Definitions.

36 (1) "Holocaust education" means instruction concerning the historical events, causes,
37 consequences, and enduring lessons of the Holocaust, including antisemitism, totalitarianism,
38 dehumanization, and the moral responsibilities of individuals and societies.

39 (2) "Supplemental historical context" means limited instructional reference to other acts of
40 mass violence or human rights abuses used solely to enhance understanding of the Holocaust

41 and shall not be construed to equate or substitute such events for the Holocaust.

42 (3) "Nationally recognized Holocaust education standards" means instructional
43 frameworks or scholarly resources developed by institutions such as the United States Holocaust
44 Memorial Museum, Yad Vashem, the Shoah Foundation, or equivalent authorities.

45 (c) Membership. – The commission shall consist of thirteen voting members as follows:

46 (1) Ex officio members (3):

47 (A) The State Superintendent of Schools, or designee;

48 (B) The Chair of the West Virginia Human Rights Commission, or designee;

49 (C) The Director of the West Virginia Department of Veterans' Affairs, or designee.

50 (2) Community and civil-rights representatives (4):

51 (A) One representative of a recognized Jewish community organization in West Virginia,
52 appointed jointly by Jewish congregations or community bodies operating in the state;

53 (B) One representative of a national Jewish educational or civil-rights organization with
54 expertise in Holocaust education or antisemitism, appointed by that organization;

55 (C) One representative with experience in civil-rights enforcement or hate-crimes
56 prevention, appointed by the Attorney General from within the Civil Rights Division;

57 (D) One representative of a statewide interfaith or civil-rights council, selected by that
58 council.

59 (3) Educators and scholarship representatives (4):

60 (A) One middle school educator with documented training in Holocaust education,
61 appointed by the West Virginia Council for Social Studies;

62 (B) One high school educator with documented training in Holocaust education, appointed
63 by the same;

64 (C) One representative of higher education, nominated jointly by accredited West Virginia
65 institutions of higher education and confirmed by the State Board of Education;

66 (D) One nationally recognized Holocaust scholar or educator, appointed by a national

67 Holocaust education institution.

68 (4) Public members (2):

69 (A) One public member with expertise in history, ethics, military service, human rights, or
70 civic education, appointed by the Governor;

71 (B) One public member appointed jointly by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of
72 the House of Delegates.

73 (d) Terms; vacancies.

74 (1) Appointed members shall serve four-year terms and may serve no more than two
75 consecutive terms.

76 (2) Terms shall be staggered to ensure continuity.

77 (3) Vacancies shall be filled by the original appointing authority for the unexpired term.

78 (4) Members shall serve until successors are appointed and qualified.

79 (e) Governance; quorum; transparency.

80 (1) The commission shall elect a Chair and Vice Chair from among its voting members for
81 two-year terms.

82 (2) A majority of voting members constitutes a quorum.

83 (3) Action of the commission requires a majority vote of members present.

84 (4) Meetings, minutes, and official guidance shall be publicly available pursuant to Chapter
85 29B of this code, unless otherwise exempt by law.

86 (f) Compensation. – Members shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed
87 for actual and necessary expenses.

88 (g) Commission-appointed voting members.

89 (1) The commission may appoint up to two additional voting members when necessary to
90 advance the mission of Holocaust education or preserve historical integrity.

91 (2) Appointment shall require a two-thirds vote of the full voting membership of the
92 commission.

93 (3) Such members shall meet the same qualification standards as other voting members
94 and shall serve four-year terms, subject to the same term limits.

95 (4) Commission-appointed voting members may be removed only by a two-thirds vote of
96 the full voting membership.

97 (5) At no time may the number of commission-appointed voting members exceed two.

98 (h) Non-voting advisory members.

99 (1) The commission may appoint non-voting advisory members as it deems appropriate to
100 assist in carrying out its mission.

101 (2) Advisory members may include, but are not limited to, Holocaust scholars, educators,
102 survivors or descendants when available, representatives of community or faith-based
103 organizations, and high school, undergraduate, or graduate students.

104 (3) Advisory members shall serve one-year terms and may be reappointed for one
105 consecutive additional term.

106 (4) Nothing in this subsection prohibits the reappointment of a former advisory member
107 after a break in service or upon a change in educational status or professional role. Service in one
108 advisory capacity does not preclude later service in another.

109 (5) Advisory members shall have no voting authority, shall not be counted toward quorum,
110 and shall serve at the pleasure of the commission.

111 (6) The commission may establish additional advisory guidelines by internal policy,
112 provided no voting authority is conferred.

§5-28-3. Commission powers and duties.

1 (a) The commission shall:

2 (1) Provide, based upon the collective knowledge and experience of its members,
3 assistance and advice to public and private schools, colleges and universities with respect to the
4 implementation of holocaust education and awareness programs;

5 (2) Meet with appropriate education officials and other interested public and private

6 organizations, including service organizations, for the purpose of providing information, planning,
7 coordination or modification of courses of study or programs dealing with the subject of the
8 holocaust;

9 (3) Compile a roster of individual volunteers who are willing to share their verifiable
10 knowledge and experiences in classrooms, seminars and workshops on the subject of the
11 holocaust. The volunteers may be survivors of the holocaust, liberators of concentration camps,
12 scholars, members of the clergy, community relations professionals or other persons who, by
13 virtue of their experience, education or interest, have experience with the holocaust;

14 (4) Coordinate events memorializing the holocaust and seek volunteers who are willing
15 and able to participate in commemorative events that will enhance public awareness of the
16 significance of the holocaust; and

17 (5) Prepare annual reports for the Governor and the Legislature regarding its findings and
18 recommendations to facilitate the inclusion of holocaust studies and special programs
19 memorializing the holocaust in educational systems in this state.

20 (b) The commission may accept and use for the benefit of the people of West Virginia any
21 gift or devise of any property or thing which is lawfully given and is authorized to accept state funds
22 as the same may be appropriated by the Legislature.

23 (a) The commission shall:

24 (1) Develop and support accurate Holocaust education in West Virginia schools;

25 (2) Ensure instructional materials align with nationally recognized Holocaust education
26 standards;

27 (3) Support professional development for educators;

28 (4) Preserve and disseminate testimonies and narratives of Holocaust victims, survivors,
29 liberators, and witnesses;

30 (5) Address contemporary manifestations of antisemitism as necessary to support
31 Holocaust education;

32 (6) Submit an annual report to the Legislative Oversight Commission on Education
33 Accountability.

34 (b) The commission shall remain nonpartisan and shall not advocate political positions
35 unrelated to its statutory mission.

36 (c) The Legislature shall review the composition and effectiveness of the commission
37 every ten years.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill relates to the West Virginia Commission on Holocaust Education. The bill establishes legislative findings. The bill modernizes commission membership in light of the passing of Holocaust survivors and second-generation witnesses. The bill strengthens safeguards for historical accuracy and mission integrity. The bill authorizes limited commission-appointed voting members. The bill authorizes non-voting advisory members, including students. The bill clarifies governance, transparency, and duties. Finally, the bill ensures Holocaust education remains the central and primary purpose of the commission.

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