

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2026 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

Senate Bill 681

By Senators Rose, Rucker, and Willis

[Introduced January 30, 2026; referred

to the Committee on the Judiciary]

1 A BILL to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding a new section,
2 designated §1-1-6, relating to admitting localities or territories contiguous to the borders of
3 West Virginia into the state for all purposes and responsibilities.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 1. LIMITS AND JURISDICTION.

§1-1-6. Localities or territories contiguous to West Virginia borders admitted into the state;

**legislative approval; voters' approval; and procedures to effect admission to be part
of state; and rights to vote and responsibilities in this state.**

1 (a) Any locality that is, or may become, contiguous to the border of the State of West
2 Virginia, including but not limited to towns, townships, cities, municipalities, counties, and hamlets,
3 may join the state of West Virginia pursuant to the following:

4 (1) A binding referendum by that locality on the next available general election date
5 following the voting laws of that state, or, failing the existence of that, according to the
6 requirements of the state of West Virginia for a binding referendum where a majority of the voters
7 voting on that referendum item are in favor of the referendum.

8 (2) Each referendum held by a locality shall include a provision whereby that locality shall
9 submit to Charleston a \$1 tax per member of the population in that locality, as determined by the
10 most recent US Census Count of that locality.

11 (3) A vote by simple majority of the Legislature on the admission of the locality into the
12 state of West Virginia where a "Yea" is to accept the new locality and a "Nay" is a vote to deny the
13 new locality. The legislature may choose the order in which to take up the vote on the counties that
14 wish to join the state of West Virginia, deeming each successfully approved county as newly
15 contiguous for the purposes of satisfying the requirement for a locality being contiguous in order to
16 qualify to petition for admittance to the state of West Virginia.

17 (4) The vote shall be taken during the next regular session of the Legislature and the
18 Legislature may not adjourn sine die until such a vote is taken in that session. The issue of the

19 admission to the state of West Virginia as a singular block shall be submitted to the voters at the
20 next general election for approval. If a majority of the voters approve admission into the state by
21 these localities or territories, then the Legislature at the next regular session, in conformity with the
22 provisions of section 11, article VI of the West Virginia Constitution, shall make provision for the
23 number of members of which each house of the Legislature shall thereafter be increased by
24 representation assigned to the additional localities or territories.

25 (5) Following the procedures set forth in subsection (3) of this section, the Secretary of
26 State, within seven days, shall provide notice to Congress and the Post Master General that the
27 locality or territory is now part of the state of West Virginia and that the Congress and Post Master
28 General should take such steps as are necessary to conform their records and processes to reflect
29 that change within 30 days, and to send receipt of the communication and confirmation upon its
30 completion.

31 (b) The Secretary of State shall send notice to the citizens of the localities or territories
32 where they are to send their state and county taxes, to begin on July 1 of that year.

33 (1) Citizens of these localities or territories shall have a reasonable grace period before
34 enforcement shall begin to ensure that all instructions are able to be delivered to them in a timely
35 manner prior to the enforcement of taxation.

36 (2) The Secretary of State shall send notice to the elected officials of those localities or
37 territories of the structures, processes, and regulations of the governmental subdivisions to which
38 they are now subject, and to offer assistance in complying with those structures, processes, and
39 regulations.

40 (3) Businesses and business owners in the newly admitted localities or territories may file
41 with the appropriate licensing and registration departments of the state free of charge until
42 December 31 of the year in which the locality or territory is admitted to the state of West Virginia.

43 (4) Members of professional occupations subject to re-licensing and continuing education
44 and other regulatory requirements shall have a grandfather provision for the period of time

45 remaining in their current licensing timeframe in the state they seceded from, or the expiration date
46 of a new license from West Virginia; whichever is latest.

47 (5) A six-month extension may be offered for this requirement to ease potential
48 administrative congestion. Upon the end of any grandfathered licensing periods and extensions,
49 or both, members of professional occupations shall abide by the licensing and regulatory
50 provisions of the state of West Virginia.

51 (c) The Legislature shall adopt other provisions to ensure the joining of new localities or
52 territories into the state as quickly and efficiently as possible.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to allow admission as part of West Virginia, localities or territories that are contiguous to the borders of West Virginia.

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