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W.Va. Chamber Notes 2015 Legislative Session Successes

Charleston, W.Va. – The W.Va. Chamber of Commerce applauds the hard work of the West Virginia Legislature during the 2015 Session. Senators and Delegates hit the ground running on January 14th and have been hard at work since.

West Virginia Chamber President Steve Roberts stated, “this legislature has shown its ability and willingness to deal with the most basic and important issues to West Virginia - economic development, infrastructure, and rule of law. These are the fundamental building blocks every society must have in place to move forward.”

The Legislature is in the final stages of ironing out the details to HB 2005. This bill will provide a pathway to fill critical need vacancies – classrooms that currently have no teachers – with professionals who wish to give back to their communities by teaching subjects on which they have immense knowledge. This bill is an important step towards improving education outcomes in our state and preparing our students for the jobs of tomorrow. The Chamber notes, however, the immediate need to continue addressing education outcomes in West Virginia. Roberts stated, “Ensuring that every child has access to a great school and removing the red tape so our teachers can do what they do best – teach – must remain at the forefront of the minds of the Legislature.”

On the topic of economic development and infrastructure, the Legislature is expected to pass HB 2878, a one-stop shop for small businesses, which will help small businesses cut through the red tape of maintaining compliance with various state laws, taxes and regulations. SB 488, which passed both the Senate and the House without a dissenting vote, will re-establish and modify the state’s Broadband Deployment Council. This council is charged with working to ensure high speed broadband internet reaches all corners of West Virginia.

The Legislature also passed several bills to ensure fair trials in West Virginia. SB 3 will protect private property owners from being sued if a trespasser is injured, SB 13 will protect private property owners from liability if a person is injured by a hazard that is clearly “open and obvious,” and HB 2002 will ensure that defendants in a trial who are ordered to pay damages will only have to pay their share of the fault. All three of these bills passed with strong bi-partisan support and have been signed into law by Governor Tomblin.

Roberts continued, “I applaud the strong leadership demonstrated by Senate President Bill Cole and House Speaker Tim Armstead. This session has resulted in good, bi-partisan legislation that will help move West Virginia into a more competitive position with other states.”

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