

Date: Mar 14, 2011; Section: Local; Page: 4-A

2 bills affecting city among those passed

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The Dominion Post

CHARLESTON — Here's a look at some bills that passed or saw a change in status during the final hours of Saturday's legislative session.

Delegate Barbara Evans Fleischauer, D-Monongalia, and WVU graduate student Erica Rogers — a House Judiciary intern — were basking in the glow of two victories: SB 335, which enables the city of Morgantown to regulate taxi service, and HB 3202, known as the landlord bill and the security deposit bill., were both on their way to the governor's office.

"It was really great to have the support of the students on it," Fleischauer said of the security deposit bill. "It made a big big difference."

Rogers said, "In my six years that I've been a WVU student, these are the biggest problems I've heard across the board. These are two huge victories for students. ... Every step of the way I've gotten texts, tweets and e-mails and calls from students and friends."

They were especially worried after the Senate sent the security deposit bill over on Thursday and it sat until Saturday night, she said. They tracked and tweeted right up until it passed in the final hours.

■ As House work slowed to a trickle in the final hour, majority leader Brent Boggs, D-Braxton, took a moment to thank all the people behind the scenes: The legislative staffers. "We're backed by what I believe is



the absolute best staff in the nation," he said. A standing ovation ensued.

■ HB 2693, the autism insurance bill, nearly bit the dust after winning sweeping legislative approval, Fleischauer said. There were clerical errors that could have led to a veto, and with just a hour or two left Saturday, it came back to the House to have three missing paragraphs amended in. Where one member voted against it the first time it passed, this time it passed unanimously.

Fleischauer noted the bill commits \$6 million to pay for the insurance coverage for state workers. "What we did is really good. I think that's amazing, it's a big commitment."

■ Delegate Larry Williams, D-Preston, was also basking in a victory. His lifetime senior hunting license bill, HB 2845, is off to the governor.

"I was really pleased," he said. There was a movement on to put out bad information about it — it being an unnecessary tax burden to seniors. "Of course, most people, when they find out the correct information, they fall in love with it."

He said it's not often the Farm Bureau and Division of Natural Resources agree on a bill, but they did this one. He's heard a kickoff is planned at a couple of major sporting goods stores to launch the discount program associated

with the purchase of the \$25 license.

■ While Marcellus regulation failed, another Marcellus-related bill passed: SB 465, the Marcellus Gas and Manufacturing Development Act. It's nicknamed the cracker bill because it lays the groundwork for ethylene cracking plants to produce plastics from natural gas. It provides tax incentives on the valuation of capital assets, research and development, and alternative fuel vehicles and the infrastructure to fuel them. Some legislators commented it seemed a backwards way to work: Approving Marcellus incentives without regulation.

■ SB 439 is going to the governor. It requires the purchaser of a manufactured home to wait 90 days after filing a complaint about the home before filing a civil suit relating to the home's manufacture, installation or sales transaction.

■ HB 2161, creating the Herbert Henderson Office for Minority Affairs, died after the House rejected a Senate action stripping out the funding for its executive director.

■ SB 242 would have sent a portion of coal severance tax revenues back to their counties of origin for economic development projects. It died in conference committee.

■ SB 192 is a price-gouging bill. It sets a 5 percent limit, based on the wholesale price 10 days before, on the markup a retailer can charge on fuel and necessary consumer products during a state of emergency. It goes to

the governor.

■ HB 2159, a "shield law" for journalists also passed. The bill protects journalists — full-time, part-time or college — from divulging confidential sources in court proceedings, without the source's consent, except in cases of imminent death or injury.

■ HB 3105 provides immunity from civil or criminal liability for first responders who use forced entry to a residence. HB 3143 stiffens penalties for killing animals used by firefighters and law enforcement. Both go to the governor.

■ HB 3225 is the bullying bill. Rumor and gossip swirled around this bill for weeks when someone circulated the notion that mandatory pro-homosexual school instruction would be amended in. Delegate Tony Barill, D-Monongalia, said he got 145 calls and e-mails in one day. It didn't happen. The bill goes to the governor.

■ HB 2505 adds synthetic marijuana, hallucinogens and stimulants to the Schedule I controlled substance list.

■ HB 3271 originally created the "Volunteer Fire Department Workers' Compensation Premium Subsidy Fund" as a long-term fix to funding firefighters' workers comp. The Senate limited it to a one-year fix and the House reluctantly agreed. Boggs, visibly shaken, complained about the Senate move, and said the House agreed just to buy time. Firefighters in the gallery stood and applauded his comments.