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Bill may net jobs for state

Legislators act on Marcellus law

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The Dominion Post

CHARLESTON — The Senate Energy Industry and Mining Committee moved SB 465, the Marcellus Gas and Manufacturing Development Act. It provides tax incentives on the valuation of capital assets, research and development, and alternative fuel vehicles and the infrastructure to fuel them.

"This is the most exciting piece of legislation I have seen come before the Legislature" in years, said Karen Price, president of the West Virginia Manufacturer's Association. Manufacturing jobs in the state have dwindled from 135,000 in the early 1980s to 50,000 now. This measure could boost job growth in manufacturing industries averaging \$42,000 annual salaries, and chemical industries averaging \$70,000 a year.

It goes next to the Senate Finance Committee.

The bill is among several passed by the House and Senate and their committees.

Other bills include:

House dental tax credit

The House Health and Human Resources Committee approved HB 2009, developed by Delegate Barbara Evans Fleischauer, D-Monongalia. It provides a tax credit of up to \$15,000 for dentists who provide free care to indigent patients.

"I think this is a wonderful bill," said Delegate Margaret Staggers, D-Fayette.

Richard Stevens, West Virginia Dental Association executive director, told members that while physicians have little capital expenses connected to charity work, dentists have "hard cost" equipment in their offices that they need to examine and treat patients.

Apart from extractions, Medicaid doesn't cover dental care, he said. Indigent adults go without, which can cause other health problems, and can affect their job prospects. Many dentists already do charity care, and the tax credit may motivate more to do so.

The bill died last year, and Fleischauer said she's pleased it's making progress this time. "I think it's great. It's moving."

It goes to the House Finance Committee after a public hearing requested Wednesday by a Health Committee member. A fiscal note projects a \$300,000 annual impact on the state's General Fund.

Bills passed in chambers

The House passed three school-related measures.

■ HB 2709 extends the period for energy-saving contracts from 10 to 15 years. It passed unanimously.

■ HB 2164 adjusts how county boards' local share of financial contribution is calculated; among

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other points, it notes the use of assumed instead of actual property assessments produced undervaluation, increasing the state's share of the burden. It passed 99-0.

■ HB 3116 gives schools that meet Annual Yearly Progress authority to "create a culture of shared decision-making toward the ultimate goal of raising student achievement." It passed 96-4. No area delegates opposed it.

All three go to the Senate.

In the Senate, legislators passed SB 219, which transfers \$20 million from the Rainy Day Fund to the Unemployment Compensation Fund. Finance Chairman Roman Prezioso, D-Marion, said it's a 180-day loan. It passed unanimously.

So did SB 439. 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 manufacturer, installation or sales transaction.

Both Senate bills now go to the House.