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## Botched provision has parole bill in limbo

**BY DAVID BEARD** The Dominion Post

A bill intended to speed up the parole process for nonviolent offenders is bouncing like a pingpong ball between the House and Senate because of a botched provision for murderers serving life with mercy.

House Speaker Rick Thompson had promised quick action on HB 2001, intended to fix a mistake made in the 2010 parole bill, SB 218. The bill was set to go into effect this month, and would have mandated annual parole hearings for murderers serving life with mercy. Legislators noted the particular hardship this could place on families of victims.

The House passed the bill the first day of the session, mandating parole hearings every three years.

The Senate passed an amended version Tuesday, allowing parole hearings "up to" every three years. Sen. Evan Jenkins, D-Cabell, worried that this could still set victims' families up for annual hearings. Judiciary Chair Corey Palumbo, D-Kanawha, assured him this wouldn't be the case.

The bill passed 32-0, with Sen. Bob Beach, D-Monongalia, absent and President Earl Ray Tomblin abstaining from all Senate business while acting as governor. It now returns to the House.

Other bills introduced this week:

HB 2540: Requires magistrates to have at least a twoyear degree in criminal justice, a bachelor's of any kind or four years experience. Sponsors include Delegates Barbara Evans Fleischauer, D-Monongalia, and Linda Longstreth, D-Marion.

HB 2530 and SB 198: Mandates a consultant's study to create some form of one-stop permitting shop for the trucking industry. Permits and enforcement are now handled by five agencies.

HB 2510: Allows magistrates to carry concealed handguns without a permit. Sponsors include Fleischauer.