

# House debates private-eye licensing bill

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CHARLESTON — The House passed a bill Wednesday changing the canvassing dates for primary elections.

But the bill that drew the most debate concerned who handles the licensing of private investigators and security guards.

## Canvassing bill

HB 2936 changes the canvassing date following a primary from Friday to the fifth day — as long as it isn't a Saturday, Sunday or legal holiday. Canvassing would then begin on a Monday, except for Monday holidays. It passed, 96-2, with all local delegates supporting it.



## Private-eye bill

HB 2787 transfers authority for licensing P.I.s and security guards from the secretary of state to the Division of Justice and Community Services (DJCS).

The fiscal note attached to the bill estimates it will cost about \$300,000 a year. One person at the secretary's office now handles licensing, but DJCS anticipates employing four people to handle the additional licensing, training courses for businesses, investigations of complaints and compliance spot checks.

Delegate Patrick Lane, R-Kanawha, argued that the bill serves no good purpose and will cost \$300,000. "At some point, we've got to start worrying about the taxpayers," he said.

Delegate Harold Michael, D-Hardy, countered that under current law only security firm owners get background checks, and they can hire anyone they please.

The bill requires checks and licenses for all guards and P.I.s, and funds the program through license fees — so taxpayers won't be tapped.

The bill passed, 64-34. Delegate Amanda Pasdon, R-Monongalia, was the only local delegate registering a no vote.

## Bills introduced

■ HB 3072 establishes a Class VI hunting license to accommodate hunters with visual impairments. It provides for a person without impairments to accompany the hunter to assist in aiming and firing the weapon, dispatching the animal, and tagging and retrieving it. The person assisting must have a valid hunting permit. Delegates Stan Shaver and Larry Williams, both D-Preston, and Tony Barill, D-Monongalia, are among the sponsors.

■ HB 3074 is intended to provide competition for taxi service by requiring the Public Service Commission to permit two eli-

gible businesses to operate within the boundaries of any Class II or higher city containing a land grant university of 20,000 or more students — which means Morgantown. All four Mon County delegates, along with Williams and Delegate Mike Caputo, D-Marion, are sponsors.

■ HB 3079 mandates random drug testing for welfare recipients and legislators.

■ HB 3086 is called the Good Jobs Internet Reporting Act. It authorizes state departments and agencies to provide developmental assistance — tax credits, tax exemptions, grants and loans — to qualified recipients. It requires the Department of Revenue to

submit an annual unified economic development budget to the Legislature. Delegate Barbara Evans Fleischauer, D-Monongalia, is lead sponsor, joined by Mon colleague Charlene Marshall and nine others — including some Republicans.

■ SB 470 is another texting ban. It makes texting a misdemeanor carrying fines of \$50, \$100 and \$200 for first and subsequent offenses. Every senator from Mon, Marion and Preston counties is on the sponsor list.

■ SB 478 prevents a public body from charging a fee for an electronic copy of a public record, unless the fee is established in code or a legislative rule.