

Publication: The Dominion Post; Date: Feb 1, 2011; Section: Local; Page: 9-A



Longest-serving adjutant general honored

House and Senate give Allen Tackett standing ovations

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The Dominion Post

CHARLESTON — The House and Senate gave retiring West Virginia National Guard Adjutant General Allen Tackett standing ovations Monday, his last day of service to the state.

The two chambers honored Tackett in separate ceremonies, presenting him with resolutions highlighting his career. The resolutions — HR 14 and SR 16 — note:



■ Tackett became a National Guard private in 1963.

■ Gov. Gaston Caperton appointed him adjutant general in 1995.

■ He is the longest-serving adjutant general in the nation and in the state's history.

■ He brought more than \$2.8 billion in federal investment into the state, including \$800 million to modernize Guard facilities and add infrastructure — including the Joint Interagency Training and Education Center facilities at

Camp Dawson in Preston County.

"It is overwhelming for me to be here today," Tackett said on the House floor.

He's especially proud of the Guard's tuition assistance program — 43 percent of the state's Guard members are either in college or have degrees.

"It's been by far the greatest thing I could do for young men and women getting out of high school," who can get an education and six years of leadership training, he said.

Oce Smith says 'Thanks'

Oce Smith, Fairmont native and resident and beloved House

Sergeant-at-Arms, sent his thanks to House members Monday for their well wishes in his long recuperation.

Smith was elected Sergeant-at-Arms in 1967, but has worked with the House more than 50 years. He underwent surgery for a "dissecting aneurysm" — a widening of the aortic artery that causes it to tear open — in 2009 and after rehab returned to light duty in 2010.

He had to go back into rehab this year, and Delegate Mike Caputo, D-Marion, urged all 100 of his colleagues early in the session to write get well letters to Smith. Caputo read a letter from Smith to House

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members Monday morning.

Smith said he has received 75 letters so far. He misses the Capitol, he said, "the prime circuit of my life for over 50 years." He hopes to return to work during the session, but, barring that, aims to be in for the summer redistricting session.

"I miss the institution and process so deeply," he wrote. "Outside of family and friends, you all mean more than anything to me."

Hunting bill on the move

Delegate Larry Williams' lifetime senior hunting license bill — HB 2845 — advanced to second reading. It requires seniors to pay \$25 for a lifetime hunting/fishing/trapping license; in return, they get extra hunting days and bag limits, and access to discounts on sporting goods purchases.

State AARP spokesman Tom Hunter said AARP is still reviewing the bill.

"Each year, thousands of older West Virginians participate in outdoor recreation activities, such as hunting and fishing, with their children and

grandchildren," Hunter said. "We appreciate Delegate Williams' desire to bring added economic and recreational value to our nearly 300,000 members across the state, and to promote intergenerational activity among all older West Virginians."

Bills introduced

■ SB 353 doubles the tax on Marcellus shale as sold or transported out of the state from 5 percent to 10 percent. Sens. Bob Beach, D-Monongalia, and Dave Sypolt, R-Preston, are among the sponsors.

■ SB 353 would enable magistrates to carry concealed handguns without a permit. Sens. Beach, Bob Williams, D-Wetzel, and acting President Jeff Kessler, D-Marshall, are among the sponsors. HB 2510 is the same; Delegate Barbara Evans Fleischauer, D-Monongalia, is a sponsor.

■ SB 362 is another tobacco tax hike, sponsored by Sen. Roman Prezioso, D-Marion, Kessler and others. It raises the cigarette tax a full dollar, to \$1.55 a pack, and the tobacco excise tax from 7 percent of the wholesale price to 50 percent.