

Publication: The Dominion Post; Date: Aug 2, 2011; Section: Front Page; Page: 1-A



Mon to gain 5th delegate under plan

House votes today on redistricting bill

PROPOSAL: Mon to stay divid-
ed between 3 Senate districts.

Page 2-A.

LEGISLATURE ALSO tackles
food, coal severance tax.

Page 2-A.

BY DAVID BEARD

The Dominion Post

CHARLESTON — Monongalia
County's 44th House of Delegates
District gains a fifth delegate under
the proposed House redistricting
plan. It also gains a new number as
the new 50th District.

The proposed map was released

late Monday afternoon, at the beginning of the Redistricting Committee's public hearing. The committee will review the draft bill detailing the plan at 9 a.m. today.

All told, under the plan, the state will have 66 delegate districts instead of the current 58; single-member districts will increase from 36 to 47.

Twelve people spoke at the 5 p.m. public hearing, which was called just hours before, at about 12:30. All 12 called for single-member districts and several complained about the manner in which the House has gone about the redistricting process.

The 44th's proposed new delegate is a result of population growth — from 75,897 people in 2000 to 89,802 in 2010, according to U.S. Census data. For 2010, each delegate is constitutionally supposed to represent 18,530 people, plus or minus 5 percent. The 44th's population divided by five is 17,960, which falls within the 5 percent deviation.

Committee member Barbara Evans Fleischauer, D-Monongalia, said the new map was put together regionally. It was the local del-

SEE **GAIN**, 2-A

GAIN

FROM PAGE 1-A

egation's goal to keep Mon whole and get five delegates. "We got that and I'm pleased that we were able to do that."

Mon isn't precisely whole. Right now, members of the 43rd, 5th and 42nd Districts also represent pieces of the county. Under the proposed new map, Marion's 43rd will be the new 49th and lose its share of Mon. The 5th will retain its western piece of Mon, while the 42nd will become the 48th and keep its chunk of southeast Mon.

Delegate Charlene Marshall, D-Monongalia, is a member of the Rules Committee and attended the hearing. She had the chance to see the map before it was released. "We will have five representatives for Monongalia County, as we should have 10 years ago," she said.

Delegate Larry William's Preston 45th District, the new 51st, will lose a little territory to Stan Shaver's 46th — the new 52nd. Shaver, in turn, will lose some ground in Tuck-

er to the 40th, creeping east from Barbour as the new 46th.

Delegate Amanda Pasdon, the 44th's sole Republican, saw both sides of the coin. She and her party support single-member districts.

"I think any improvement in single-member districts is positive," she said. "I wish it was across the board. "

On the other hand, she picks up another colleague in her delegation. "I think it's wonderful that we've grown, I think it's wonderful that we've picked up another delegate. It's great for Monongalia County. It shows that Morgantown is booming. [But] I would have liked to see it more representative of the communities that we live in than we are currently."

House Minority Leader Tim Armstead, R-Kanawha, said the fight isn't over. "Certainly we want to continue our efforts [for 100 single-member districts]. We believe that's the way government should work."

The people are behind the idea, he said. "We will continue to try. We will have a proposal for 100 single-member districts and hopefully have a debate on that and

vote on it.” It shouldn’t have to wait another 10 years.”

The public hearing

Tom Crowser told the committee that he thought the redistricting process was a way to improve government. But the way it unfolded, it was only a means for legislators to “choose their own voters. It’s my feeling that this committee has not lived up to its expectations.”

He recommended that next time West Virginia join some other states in appointing a nonpartisan redistricting commission.

Keith Morgan, president of the West Virginia Citizen’s Defense League, a gun rights group, said that multi-member districts “grant undue influence to urban voters. ... Don’t enable this

travesty for another 10 years.”

Stephen McElroy, of Bridgeport, said West Virginia is one of only 13 states with multi-member districts, and one of only two — with Vermont — to have more than three members in a district. “It’s time for West Virginia to move out of the 19th Century ... to join the rest of the nation.”

Several of the speakers live in the rural parts of the 30th District, represented by seven Charleston residents, and expressed their disenfranchisement under the current system. The message is that “people who don’t live inside city limits are not worthy of their own delegates,” said Patricia Cantrell.