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# Senate workers get raise

Pay bump brings  
them closer to House

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CHARLESTON — Sen. Roman Prezioso's Friday morning effort to give Senate employees a small raise erupted into an extended debate over who's in charge and who's allowed to spend money.

Prezioso, D-Marion and Finance Committee chair, introduced the annual employee pay resolution, SR 15. In it, he proposed a 2 percent raise for permanent staff and a \$5 a day raise for per-diem workers. The Senators themselves do not get raises.

Prezioso said House employees get paid far more, so some attempt at equalization was needed.

In addition, he said, the list is "a mess," and needs an extensive overhaul to create uniform job descriptions — there are none — and pay scales for secretaries, clerks and such. "There's no rhyme or reason to this thing. We need to get it cleaned up."

Applicants have had to negotiate their pay, so there's no consistency, he said, and many applicants turn away when they learn

about the pay.

Sen. Truman Chafin, D-Mingo, part of the ongoing opposition to the current leadership structure, took the opportunity to balk at one particular job, and several lines detailing pay between sessions.

Two lines refer to assistants to the acting president — Jeff Kessler, D-Marshall, while a third details pay for an executive secretary to the president, Earl Ray Tomblin, cur-

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# RAISE

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rently acting as governor.

In a lengthy exchange, Chafin again debated the two-president issue, and the \$2,166.67 per month for the actual president's secretary. He wondered why this "well paid" position is in there.

Prezioso said the position is vacant — but the other two could be vacated and this one filled should Tomblin come back to full-time Senate work.

Chafin also questioned lines that the presiding officer has the authority to hire and set pay for employees between sessions. "Who is the presiding officer?"

Sen. John Fanning, D-McDowell, a former Finance chair and Chafin ally in this matter, echoed his confusion.

Prezioso answered that he just wants to get people their raises, and get the per-diem people a paycheck. They haven't gotten any money since the session started Jan. 12.

Sen. Dave Sypolt, R-Preston, who has opposed the current structure with his fellow Republicans, took Prezioso's side in this case, saying the employees need their paychecks.

Prezioso said fixing the big problems — job descriptions and standard pay — will take some time, and he has a group working on it.

Despite the debate, the resolution passed by voice vote, with no nays. Per-diem staff will get their first checks Feb. 8. Regular staff get a check Feb. 1. The raise kicks in that day, and most will see it on their Feb. 15 check, the payroll office said.

Per-diem staff include the sergeant at arms, doorkeepers and legislator's secretaries. The sergeant at arms will get \$161 a day. The head doorkeeper will get \$118. Secretary rates vary.

There are 32 permanent staff. Monthly salaries range from \$7,806 for the clerk to \$1,572.50 for a custodian.

## Bills passed Friday

The Senate passed SB 71, creating the misdemeanor offense of "child neglect creating substantial risk of bodily harm." Judiciary Chairman Corey Palumbo, D-Kanawha, sought this to fill a gap in current statute.

It also passed SB 80, enabling courts to either excuse breast-feeding mothers from jury duty or make accommodations for them

if they choose to serve.

Both passed 31-0 with three absent. Sen Larry Edgell, D-Wetzel, was among the three granted a leave of absence for the day.

## Bills introduced Friday Senate bills

■ SB 355 authorizes municipalities to regulate taxis and taxi stands. Sponsored by Sen. Bob Beach, D-Monongalia, and Roman Prezioso, D-Marion. Local legislators sponsored similar bills last year that died in committees.

■ SB 337 makes failure to wear seat belts a primary offense.

## House bills

■ HB 2914 allows one or more governing bodies to establish and fund public libraries via property tax or an excess levy.

■ HB 2925 adds an extra magistrate court clerk in Marion County; sponsored by Marion Delegates Tim Manchin, Linda Longstreth and Mike Caputo.

■ HB 2940 requires liners in all new surface coal-waste impoundments. Sponsors include Delegates Mike Manypenny, D-Taylor, and Barbara Evans Fleischauer and Tony Barill, both D-Monongalia.