

WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2025 REGULAR SESSION

ENROLLED

Committee Substitute

for

House Bill 3297

BY DELEGATES MCGEEHAN, HANSHAW (MR. SPEAKER),

PHILLIPS, ELLINGTON, CRISS, JEFFRIES, GEARHEART,

RILEY, AND LEAVITT

[Passed April 12, 2025; in effect 90 days from passage

(July 11, 2025)]

1 AN ACT to amend the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended, by adding a new section,
2 designated §18B-11-8, relating to creating the Washington Center for Civics, Culture, and
3 Statesmanship within West Virginia University; requiring the university to work with the
4 center to provide the center with reasonable infrastructure, classroom space, and office
5 space; stating the center's purposes and goals; stating the center's policies; permitting the
6 appointment of at least five tenure-track faculty; authorizing the center in consultation with
7 the university to offer courses and to develop various degrees for accreditation; providing
8 for a director of the center reporting directly to the president, provost, and vice president
9 of academic affairs of the university; providing for the director's appointment and the filling
10 of vacancies; providing for an academic council; enumerating areas over which the
11 director has authority; providing that the director's authority shall be exercised in
12 consultation with the president and the provost; requiring the center to adhere to
13 institutional policies and procedures; requiring approval of the curriculum by the West
14 Virginia University by the Board of Governors; requiring faculty to meet the university's
15 qualifications policy; providing for limitations on employment and service of legislators;
16 and providing for an annual report.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

ARTICLE 11. MISCELLANEOUS INSTITUTES AND CENTERS.

§18B-11-8. Washington Center for Civics, Culture, and Statesmanship.

1 (a) There is hereby created the Washington Center for Civics, Culture, and
2 Statesmanship, to be located and operated at West Virginia University who shall work with the
3 center to provide reasonable infrastructure, classroom space, and office space. The center is
4 established for the purpose of creating and disseminating knowledge about classical western
5 history and culture and American constitutional thought and forming future leaders of this state
6 through research, scholarship, teaching, collaboration, and mentorship.

7 (b) The center's goals shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

8 (1) To enrich the curriculum in American constitutional studies, including the core texts,
9 influential thinkers, and great debates of western civilization;

10 (2) To educate university students in political philosophy, constitutional governance,
11 economic thought, western history and culture, and the principles that inform republican self-
12 government;

13 (3) To educate university students in the foundations of responsible leadership and
14 informed citizenship and to cultivate future generations of leaders in this state;

15 (4) To offer university-wide programming related to the values of open inquiry and civil
16 discourse;

17 (5) To expand the intellectual diversity of the university's academic community and to
18 create a rich forum for the development of ideas across the political and ideological spectrum;

19 (6) To support faculty and graduate student scholarship that advances understanding of
20 American constitutional thought and institutions;

21 (7) To promote scholarly collaboration within the university and beyond; and

22 (8) To host lectures, debates, and symposia, and sponsor visiting scholars, speakers,
23 teachers, and thinkers.

24 (c) The center shall adhere to the following policies:

25 (1) The center shall educate students by means of free, open, and rigorous intellectual
26 inquiry to seek the truth;

27 (2) The center shall equip students with the skills, habits, and dispositions of mind they
28 need to reach their own informed conclusions on matters of social and political importance;

29 (3) The center shall value intellectual diversity in higher education, including in faculty
30 recruitment, hiring, and appointment, and aspire to enhance the intellectual diversity of academic
31 life at the university; and

32 (4) The center shall create a community dedicated to an ethic of civil and free inquiry,
33 which respects the intellectual freedom of each member, supports individual capacities for growth,
34 and welcomes the differences of opinion that naturally occur in a public university community.

35 (d) The center shall be a unit of the university with the authority to house tenure-track
36 faculty who hold their appointments within the center. Not fewer than five tenure-track faculty
37 positions shall be allotted to the center. Faculty appointed within the center shall not be required,
38 but may be permitted, to hold joint or courtesy appointments within any other division of the
39 university.

40 (e) To maintain accreditation, the center shall work with the university to develop and offer
41 courses and may develop certificate, minor, major, and graduate programs, and offer degrees.
42 The center shall work with the university to also develop a statesmanship minor that allows
43 students taking different majors to study the principles of our republican government.

44 (f) The center shall be led by a director who shall report directly to the president of the
45 university, the provost and the vice president for academic affairs. In consultation with the
46 president of the university, the Governor shall, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate,
47 appoint an initial director. The director shall be an expert on the western tradition, the American
48 founding, and American constitutional thought, and shall have publicly demonstrated, through
49 speeches, publications, or presentations, a commitment to the purposes, goals, and policies of
50 the center. The director's term shall be for five years and shall be renewable. The director shall
51 have the protection of tenure or tenure eligibility. Any existing tenure with the university held by a
52 director shall be maintained with the university.

53 (g)(1) Not later than 120 days after the effective date of this section, the director shall
54 appoint a seven-member center academic council. Four members of the council shall form a
55 quorum.

56 (2) The academic council shall be comprised of scholars with relevant expertise and
57 experience. Not more than one member of the council may be an employee of the university.

58 (3) Three members of the academic council shall serve initial terms of two years and four
59 members shall serve initial terms of four years, which the members shall determine at their first
60 meeting, and select replacements for vacant seats. All subsequent terms after the initial terms
61 shall last for four years.

62 (4) To fill a vacancy for the center director after the initial director, following a national
63 search, the academic council shall transmit to the Governor and the president of the university a
64 list of finalists from which, in consultation with the president of the university, the Governor shall,
65 by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, shall select a director.

66 (h) The director has authority over the following enumerated areas, but shall exercise that
67 authority in consultation with the president and the provost:

68 (1) Managing the recruitment and hiring process and extending offers for employment for
69 all faculty and staff;

70 (2) Terminating the employment of any staff;

71 (3) Tenure decisions affecting the center's professors and teachers;

72 (4) Overseeing and developing the center's curriculum: *Provided*, That the director shall
73 consult with the university pursuant to subsection (e) of this section to ensure that accreditation
74 is maintained;

75 (5) The center's budget and expenditures;

76 (6) Scheduling and holding any conferences relevant to the center's mission; and

77 (7) Scheduling, inviting, and hosting speakers and presenters.

78 (i) Any employment contracts made pursuant to subsection (h) of this section to tenure-
79 track faculty appointed to the center shall, subject to available funding guarantee:

80 (1) Reappointment elsewhere in the university, at the same rank and compensation, in the
81 event the center is discontinued; and

82 (2) An office in the department to which the professor or teacher is reappointed in the
83 event the center is discontinued. The office in the new department shall be comparable, to the

84 extent practicable, to the office space utilized by the professor or teacher during his or her time
85 working for the center.

86 (j) The center, its personnel, and its financial operations, including how personnel are hired
87 and reviewed, and what academic units must spend on office space must adhere to all institutional
88 policies and procedures.

89 (k) Members of the legislature, during or up to two years after the termination of their
90 service in the legislature, shall not:

91 (1) Be employed by the center in any capacity; or

92 (2) Serve as the director of the center.

93 (l) All instructional faculty at the center must meet the institution's faculty qualifications
94 policy which meets Higher Learning Commission requirements and expectations.

95 (m) All curriculum developed at the institution is required to be reviewed and approved
96 through regular Board of Governor's-level processes which includes expectations for faculty to
97 perform meaningful assessment of learning.

98 (n) The director of the center shall submit an annual report to the West Virginia University
99 Board of Governors and to the Joint Committee on Government and Finance. The report shall
100 provide a full account of the center's achievements, opportunities, challenges, and obstacles in
101 the development of this academic unit.

The Clerk of the House of Delegates and the Clerk of the Senate hereby certify that the foregoing bill is correctly enrolled.

.....
Clerk of the House of Delegates

.....
Clerk of the Senate

Originated in the House of Delegates.

In effect 90 days from passage.

.....
Speaker of the House of Delegates

.....
President of the Senate

The within is this the.....
Day of, 2025.

.....
Governor