

# House of Representatives

## *Week in Review*

For the Week Ending: Friday, May 7, 2010

### ***Around the Hall*** ***(Briefs from Legislative Hall)***

#### **Student Organizations Make Annual Pilgrimage to the General Assembly**

Observing an annual tradition, students representing six career and technical student organizations presented flowers to state lawmakers at Legislative Hall recently (May 6). The student organizations taking part in the event included the Business Professionals of America; Delaware DECA (a marketing education group); the Delaware Technology Student Association; the Future Farmers of America; Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America; and Skills USA. In all, the groups serve nearly 65,000 Delaware students, providing educational and vocational opportunities that would otherwise not be available. In comments made on the House floor, State Rep. Ruth Briggs King (R-Georgetown) said for all the good work the organizations do, they face a potential loss of state funding under the governor's proposed budget.

#### **New Law Enforcement Memorial**

Vice President Joe Biden, state officials, police, and the families of fallen officers were at Legislative Mall May 3<sup>rd</sup> for the dedication of the new Delaware Law Enforcement Memorial. Almost a year to the day earlier, the General Assembly and Gov. Markell enacted legislation designating the site on the south side of the mall as the home for the monument. A number of police and professional organizations, as well as private businesses and citizens, contributed more than \$100,000 towards the memorial's construction.

#### **Law Enforcement Officers Honor Fallen Brethren**

Hundreds of law enforcement personnel came to Legislative Mall on May 5<sup>th</sup> to honor their comrades who died while serving the citizens of the First State. The event marks the 38<sup>th</sup> time the annual Delaware Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Service has been held. More than three dozen men and women, serving in at least nine different Delaware law enforcement agencies, have lost

their lives in the line-of-duty. The most recent loss occurred September 1, 2009 when Georgetown Patrolman Chad Spicer was fatally shot trying to apprehend a suspect.

## Action on Bills\*

**House Bill 383** – (Sponsors: Rep. Q. Johnson, et. al.) – This act creates a special license plate for veterans for Operation Enduring Freedom. Launched in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the ongoing Operation Enduring Freedom has resulted in scores of military missions fighting Al-Qaeda and its Taliban supporters. The Delaware Division of Motor Vehicles currently offers 91 specialty license plates.

**Status: Passed the House. Pending action in a Senate committee.**

**House Bill 105 (as amended)** – (Sponsors: Reps. Atkins, et. al.) – This bill establishes and clarifies the obligations of landlords and tenants in manufactured housing communities for the maintenance, care and possible removal of trees.

**Status: Approved by the General Assembly. Pending consideration of the governor.**

**House Bill 336** – (Sponsors: Rep. Barbieri, et. al.) – This bill, which has the support of a broad bipartisan coalition, would give Family Court judges greater latitude, allowing them to extend the “no contact” provisions of a “protection from abuse order” (PFAs) from its current one-year limit to two years. The bill would also give judges the discretion to order “no contact” for as long as was deemed necessary in cases where aggravating circumstances existed. Advocates who work with domestic violence victims say current law is inadequate. Although PFAs may be granted for up to one year, after that initial period is up, victims must petition the court for a six-month extension. After the extension expires, the victim must apply for a new PFA and show that they have suffered additional harm. Drafted by the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, HB 336 is supported by Delaware Attorney General Joseph “Beau” Biden III, Governor Jack A. Markell, Rep. Michael A. Barbieri (D-Newark) and Rep. Deborah Hudson (R-Fairthorne). The legislation is co-sponsored by Senate Majority Leader Sen. Patricia Blevins (D-Elsmere) and Senate Minority Whip Sen. Liane Sorenson (R-Hockessin).

**Status: Approved by the General Assembly. Pending consideration of the governor.**

**House Bill 326** – (Sponsors: Rep. Schwartzkopf, et. al.) – This bill would allow the victims of sexual abuse (or their parents/ guardians) to bring lawsuits against doctors, nurses or other healthcare providers thought to have perpetrated the

abuse, regardless of when the alleged acts took place. The measure would also create a two-year “look-back” window, allowing victims in some cases to file lawsuits against their abusers, even though the statute of limitations may have already tolled. An amendment by State Rep. Greg Lavelle, removing a legal protection that prevents the State of Delaware from being sued in most instances, was defeated. Rep. Lavelle argued that state institutions should be on a level playing field with the rest of society and should not be shielded from civil action brought by the victims of sexual abuse. The bill’s prime sponsor, House Majority Leader Pete Schwartzkopf (D-Rehoboth Beach), voted against the amendment, as did 21 of his Democratic colleagues. State Rep. Helene Keeley (D-Wilmington South) was the only House Democrat to join with 16 Republicans to support the change. The bill is a reaction to pending criminal charges against Dr. Earl Bradley. Authorities believe the Lewes pediatrician committed sexual assaults against more than 100 of his young patients.

**Status: Passed the House. Pending action in the Senate Judiciary Committee.**

**House Bill 399** – (Sponsors: Rep. Scott, et. al.) – This bill seeks to create the new Inspire Scholarship Program, to help students who both excel academically and have economic need, attend Delaware State University. Supporters say the intent of this program is to increase the number of Delaware students completing college degree programs. Scholarship recipients would be required to maintain high marks and show continual progress toward their degrees. They would also need to complete at least 10 hours of community service per semester. The amounts available to the grant recipients would be subject to available funds and would be capped at the amounts available to recipients in the state’s current SEED scholarship program.

**Status: Pending action in the House Education Committee.**

**House Bill 398** – (Sponsors: Rep. Outten, et. al.) – This bill would allow the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) to extend the muskrat season. Under the bill, wildlife officials would be able to consider severe winter weather conditions and the status of the muskrat population in deciding whether the season for the aquatic rodents should be lengthened.

**Status: Pending action in the House Natural Resources Committee.**

[\\*partial list](#)