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Legislature moving at warp speed as table games bill goes to Governor

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Bluefield Daily Telegraph

The 2007 session of the West Virginia Legislature was boring for the first month. Now, it's moving so fast it's hard to keep up.

After the House of Delegates passed the table games bill on Thursday morning, House officials sent the message to the Senate immediately.

The runner was followed by some reporters who were trying to keep up with the bill.

They were hardly seated before Senate Majority Leader H. Truman Chafin announced the bill was back to the Senate and Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Jeff Kessler summed up the bill which had not been changed. The Senators voted approval.

In just minutes, the issue which has been fought for years and a really hot topic this session was over.

The bill has been sent to Gov. Joe Manchin for his signature into law. He reportedly has said he will sign the bill which will allow residents of four counties that already have horse or dog track races the opportunity to vote whether they want table games in their communities.

III

Delegate Mike Burdiss reported the "Capitol building can often seem like a zoo with lawmakers, staff, guests and lobbyists running around to complete a day's business." He said it developed into almost the real thing on Wednesday.

Burdiss, like many other West Virginians, enjoyed the life exhibits of eagles, hawks, owls, snakes, fish, butterflies and insects as part of the Division of Natural Resources Wildlife Diversity Day.

Burdiss said, "This was a great way to inform both children and adults about the vast number of animal inhabitants within the state, while giving them a hands-on learning experience."

III

A Mercer County man, who is playing a key role in re-establishing Baghdad's civil defense including fire fighting and rescue, has sent an American flag from Iraq to the Veteran's Museum in Princeton.

Jeff Simpkins, who is advisor for the civil defense for the Iraq Ministry of the Interior, sent three Stars and Stripes flags "home" to his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Elton Simpkins in Princeton, that he flew over Baghdad on President's Day. One flag was for his Dad, another for his wife and the third for the museum located in the Memorial Building.

III

While bids are being advertised for a projected \$20 million bridge construction project leading from the K.A. Ammar Jr. intersection at I-73/74 with Rt. 460 and Rt. 20, local leaders are still wondering about the many more millions needed to finish the road to Mercer County Airport.

The Ammar intersection was completed three years ago and two quarter-mile sections have been constructed. With new funding from the 2005 federal highway bill, the bridge will be built.

No money has been appropriated for the remaining "Stoney Ridge" section to Airport Road.

One additional improvement, when the funding for the final segment is made, is fill dirt from the highway construction will be moved to Mercer County Airport to extend the runway.

Mike Mitchem, the King Coal Highway executive director, has reported the trip from Bluefield to Welch will be greatly reduced.

The sad part is the King Coal Highway from Bluefield to Williamson most likely won't be finished for 20 years or more.

That means some of us "middle aged folks" who have worked and/or followed the development of the highway for many years may not be around to enjoy the highway's advantages.

It's good to know our grandchildren might!

III

Another new business has opened in the fast-developing area at the interchange of I-77 and U.S. Route 460 — Chilli's.

The parking lot was full most of the day Thursday as local people gave the new restaurant a welcome to Princeton.

According to reports, a new motel and a couple more restaurants will soon be underway just past Wal-Mart on Rt. 460.

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