

Southern Middle 8th Graders Attend Senate Committee Hearing on SB 0142

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In the fall of 2018, Mr. Jason Shank, Hickory Environmental Education Center, was contacted by Mary Hughes from the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, to see if he would work with students to learn about the long-tailed salamander. She hoped the students would eventually reach out to local legislators asking for the proposal of a bill to name the long-tailed salamander as the official Maryland amphibian. Mr. Shank worked with Mrs. Carri Guthrie at Southern Middle School to have students research the long-tailed salamander. Then, students wrote letters to Senator Edwards requesting to propose a bill.

Students researched in November, wrote letters in December, and hand-delivered them to Senator Edwards in January. Students spoke with the senator about what they have accomplished and what they wanted him to do. On Thursday, March 7, 2019, thirty-one students from Southern Middle School, along with Mr. Shank and Samantha Stumpf from Hickory Environmental Education Center and Mrs. Guthrie and Susan Duggan from Southern Middle School, visited Annapolis. The purpose of the trip was for students to be present for the Senate Committee hearing on the bill to name the long-tailed salamander as a state symbol of Maryland. Shawn Crisman, Anthony Smith, Morgan Qualls, and Harley Hayhurst spoke during the committee hearing. Students shared what they learned from their research in the hope for the passage of SB 0142. The bill would add the long-tailed salamander to the set of symbols representing the state of Maryland. Senator Edwards asked the committee to support the bill, "so these young people can go down in history to say that they're the ones that got the state amphibian through the Legislature." A companion bill in the House of Delegates is scheduled for a hearing on Tuesday, March 12, 2019.

Later, the students toured the State Capitol building, attended committee hearings on four bills, and toured the U.S. Naval Academy.





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