



Legislative Update

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SO-CALLED "RIGHT-TO-WORK" PASSED BY LEGISLATURE

The House gave final approval (Third Reading vote) to SS#2/SB 19 (Brown) on February 2 by a vote of 100-59. The bill is now approved by both chambers (Truly Agreed To) and will be sent to the Governor for his approval or veto. Governor Greitens has indicated that he will sign the bill into law. SB 19 (Brown) is the so-called "Right to Work" bill. The bill would remove the ability of labor unions to receive compensation for the costs of fulfilling their duties as exclusive representative. The Association opposes these measures to limit the constitutional collective bargaining rights of Missouri workers.

PAYCHECK DECEPTION BILL

The Senate placed SB 21 (Brown) on the informal calendar on January 31. The Senate could take the bill up for floor debate at any time. The bill applies to all public labor organizations and requires annual, written authorization for payroll deduction of member dues and annual, written authorization for member contributions of dues or fees for political action. The Association strongly opposes SB 21.

GOVERNOR RELEASES PROPOSED BUDGET, CUTS EDUCATION FUNDING

On February 2, Governor Eric Greitens released his proposed budget for next fiscal year. Notably, the budget keeps K-12 formula funding nearly flat, leaving the state \$45 million short of reaching the newly reduced full funding level. The budget also cuts pupil transportation funding by \$36 million.

The proposed budget cuts nearly \$160 million in higher education funding, including \$38 million cut from student financial aid, \$108 million cut from four-year institutions and \$8 million cut from community college funding.

MNEA believes that every student, regardless of zip code, should have the tools and resources they need to learn and succeed. Gov. Greitens' budget is a reminder that our state's leaders are not living up to their primary duty under Missouri's constitution: to adequately fund our public schools.

State leaders need to come together on a plan to restore funding to our public schools by fully funding the school formula and restoring funds to our colleges and universities and our scholarships for students. The Governor and legislature should act to make our state tax credit programs more accountable and reduce their harmful effect on our schools and our students.

TAX CREDIT-STYLE VOUCHERS (EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS)

The Senate Government Reform Committee approved SCS/SB 32 (Emery) on February 1. The bill creates a new 100% state tax credit capped at \$25 million per year for taxpayer contributions to third-party organizations that will use some of the proceeds to fund accounts that parents can use to pay private school tuition and other expenses for their students. The original bill is limited to students with disabilities. The SCS expands the bill to allow public funding of private school expenses for all eligible students. The SCS also allows the funding cap to grow by up to 20% each year. The Association opposes this and similar proposals to divert public funds to private

schools not subject to the same standards of accountability, transparency and respect for the rights of students, staff and parents as apply to public schools.

RECERTIFICATION AND OTHER ANTI-UNION ATTACKS

The Senate General Laws Committee approved SCS/SB 210 (Onder) on February 1. The bill imposes a number of onerous and problematic provisions relating to public union representation. The bill mandates automatic recertification elections every year for every public sector bargaining unit, limits economic factors in contracts to one year, requires all documents in the bargaining process to be public documents and imposes an exhaustive set of financial and other record-keeping requirements on public employee unions. The SCS will require recertification elections every two years and limits contracts to two years. The Association opposes the bill.

DISCRIMINATION AND WHISTLEBLOWER

The Senate Small Business and Industry approved SCS/SB 43 (Romine) on January 31. The SCS version makes several changes, including a change to the legal standard for determining that discrimination has occurred. The bill would make significant changes to the state's anti-discrimination law in employment, disability and housing. The bill also limits the state's "whistle-blower" protections. The Association believes these changes will make it harder to hold employers and their agents responsible for improper acts of discrimination. Missouri NEA believes that unfair, discriminatory treatment in the workplace should remain unlawful and opposes the bill.

TAX CREDIT REFORM

The Senate Ways and Means Committee heard SB 285 (Koenig) on January 31. The bill makes many changes to state tax policy. The bill reduces the corporate income tax rate from 6.25% to 4.0%. The bill also repeals or reduces the authorizations for several tax credit programs. The bill is forecast to have a positive overall effect on state revenues. While the tax credit accountability and reform measures in the bill would have a positive effect on state funding in the long term, the Association is concerned about the impact of the reduction in the corporate tax rate and the elimination of the senior citizen property tax credit for renters.

SECOND TIER RETIREMENT PLAN FOR NEW STATE EMPLOYEES

The Senate Health and Pensions Committee approved SB 228 (Koenig) on February 1. The bill places all new hire state employees in a new, reduced defined benefit (DB) plan along with a defined contribution (DC) component. The defined benefit multiplier will be reduced from the current 1.7% down to 1.0% times years of service times final average salary. The employer will contribute 3% of pay to the state's Deferred Compensation DC plan and the employee will be required to contribute 1% of pay to the DC plan. The Association opposes this reduction of guaranteed retirement benefit and transfer of retirement risk from employers onto Missouri's state employees.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY RETIREMENT PLAN (CURP)

The Senate Health and Pensions Committee approved SB 62 (Hegeman) on February 1. This bill would stabilize the contribution rate of the College and University Retirement Plan (CURP), a defined contribution plan for instructional staff at four-year public institutions other than the University of Missouri. Currently, the CURP contribution rate is required to be one percent below the normal cost rate of MOSERS, which has been declining since changes to the MOSERS plan were adopted in 2010. Currently the contribution rate is just over 5% of salary. The bill decouples the rate from MOSERS and establishes a total rate of 7.5% of salary, including a fixed employer rate of 5.5% and a tax-deferred employee contribution of 2%. The Association supports the bill, which would help the CURP benefit remain a viable pension benefit.

ACT WORKKEYS TEST

The House Workforce Development Committee approved HB 94 (Lauer) on February 1. The bill allows students to choose to take either the ACT or ACT WorkKeys test for their state-funded ACT test. The Association supports the bill.

HOUSE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard several bills on January 30:

HB 138 (Spencer) to establish a new course access program by revising the current MoVIP. The program is available for students enrolled full-time in public school. The Association believes that virtual courses can play an important role for schools and students, and supports the bill.

HB 248 (Travis Fitzwater) to establish a statewide, online STEM career awareness program for middle school students.

HB 253 (Swan) to create the Career and Technical Education Certification (CTEC) Program. The bill requires the CTEC Council to approve appropriate CTE certifications, in collaboration with districts and employers. The Association supports the bill.

HB 634 (Roeber) to allow charter schools to operate in any district in the state. The Association opposes expansion of charter schools until such time as the law is revised to ensure that all charter schools are required to meet the standards of accountability, transparency and respect for the rights of students, parents and staff as are applicable to traditional public schools.

The committee also voted to approve one bill heard previously: HB 469 (Gannon) to authorize reimbursement of the costs of high school equivalency degree testing for first time test takers. The Association supports the bill.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Committee met on January 31 to hear several bills:

SB 115 (Schupp) regarding licensure of early child care facilities.

SB 173 (Schaaf) to require schools and school districts to provide home school students the opportunity to participate in extracurricular activities.

SB 188 (Munzlinger) to allow students enrolled in virtual institutions to participate in the Access Missouri Financial Assistance Program.

In addition to hearing bills, the Committee voted to approve several bills heard previously:

SCS/SBs 44 & 63 (Romine) to create the Career and Technical Education Certification (CTEC) Program. The bill requires the CTEC Council to approve appropriate CTE certifications, in collaboration with districts and employers. The bill will also allow each school district use technical coursework and skills assessments developed for industry-recognized certificates and credentials when establishing career and technical education offerings. The Association supports the bill.

SCS/SB 52 (Nasheed) to establish several provisions relating to suicide awareness and prevention. The bills calls on colleges and universities to have suicide prevention policies and programs. The bill also includes language addressing depression in medical schools. The SCS removes 30-day closing of records relating to incidents. The Association supports the bill.

HOUSE HIGHER EDUCATION

The House Higher Education Committee heard several bills on February 1:

HB 411 (Lightenegger) to allow students enrolled in virtual institutions to participate in the Access Missouri Financial Assistance Program.

HB 472 (Smith) to require a higher education institution to disclose its unaccredited status to students before enrollment.

HB 599 (Hansen) to modify the A+ Schools Program by removing the requirement that the student's attendance of public high school occur in the three years immediately prior to graduation. The Association supports the bill.