



Legislative Update

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www.mnea.org

REGISTER NOW TO ATTEND YOUR MNEA LEGISLATIVE FORUM ST. LOUIS FORUM TAKES PLACE THIS WEEK ON JANUARY 21!

Missouri NEA's new regional legislative events continue this week with the St. Louis Legislative Forum on January 21. These events provide a chance for members to build relationships with area legislators and support their understanding of MNEA priorities and education issues. Plan to attend and invite fellow members, administrators and school board members who would enjoy and benefit from a discussion regarding support for public education!

PLEASE REGISTER NOW for your regional MNEA Legislative Forum at
<https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/PoliticalAction/5.aspx>

Be sure to click through the "RSVP now" link for your event and then "Send RSVP" to register. For additional information contact Sandy Smith (sandy.smith@mnea.org).

SENATE COMMITTEE APPROVES PAYCHECK BILL

The Senate General Laws Committee approved SB 21 (Brown) on January 18 by a party-line vote of 5-2. 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.

ACTION NEEDED: IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY DONE SO, please call, write or use the link below to send an e-mail to urge your State Senator to oppose SB 21.
<http://www.capwiz.com/nea/mo/issues/alert/?alertid=70144626&type=ST>

HOUSE PASSES SO-CALLED "RIGHT-TO-WORK"

The House gave final round approval (Third Reading vote) to HCS/ HBs 91, 42, 131, 265 & 314 (Rehder) on January 19 by a vote of 100-59. The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration. HCS/HB 91 is the so-called "Right to Work" bill. The Senate General Laws committee approved SB 19 (Brown), a similar bill, on January 18. Both bills 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.

GOVERNOR WITHHOLDS ADDITIONAL EDUCATION FUNDING

On January 16, newly-elected Governor Eric Greitens announced that he would withhold \$146 million in state funding, in addition to the \$210 million already withheld during this fiscal year by former Governor Nixon.

MNEA believes that every student, regardless of zip code, should have the tools and resources they need to learn and succeed. Gov. Greitens' withholds, though expected, are 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.

These withholds will affect students at every level, from K-12 to our community colleges and universities. About 60% of the additional \$146 million in withholds was taken from funding for K-12 and higher education.

Higher education was especially hard hit, with over \$70 million in cuts to institutions and scholarships for students. Over \$56 million was cut from funding for our four-year institutions and \$12 million from community college funding. A+ scholarship funding was also reduced by \$3 million. Over \$8 million was cut from funding for K-12 pupil transportation.

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.

BUDGET

The House Subcommittee on Appropriations - Education met for the first time this session on January 17. Committee staff gave an update on how the process is likely to proceed this session.

Budget staff don't have an official date to get the Governor's budget recommendations. Per the Missouri Constitution, the Governor has 30 days to submit a budget, so it is expected to be released in early February.

The committee started by hearing public testimony regarding the DESE budgets and heard testimony regarding several specific appropriation items in that budget.

The committee continued its hearing on January 18 with a presentation from the Missouri Lottery. Lottery operating costs have declined from 14% to 4.5% since 1986. The Missouri Lottery currently provides 62% of A+ scholarship funding and would like to be the sole sponsor of that program. The Lottery is working to become more accurate at projecting funds and is using a 5 year average plus 1%.

The committee expects to have budget books by the week of Feb 6, so joint hearings with the Budget Committee will likely begin on Feb 7. The subcommittees will then draft and consider amendments and present their proposals to the Budget Committee.

The Budget Committee will likely begin its work around the first week of March, and the budget bills will go to the House floor sometime around legislative Spring Break in mid-March.

STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

Governor Eric Greitens delivered the State of the State Address to a joint session of the House and Senate in the House Chamber on January 17.

Normally, the State of the State address gives the Governor a chance to present his vision for the state and his budget priorities. However, the Governor did not cover budget priorities in his address, and he has not indicated when his budget proposal will be available to the legislature.

Greitens did speak to several educational priorities in his address. He encouraged the legislature to expand course access programs. Greitens also urged enactment of an Education Savings Account (ESA) for special education students. Missouri NEA opposes ESAs and similar vehicles for diverting public funds to private schools not subject to the standards of public accountability and transparency applicable to public schools.

The Association urges the Governor and legislature to work together to fulfill the promise of a quality public education for all Missouri students, regardless of where they live.

BANNING LOBBYIST GIFTS

The House gave final approval (Third Reading vote) to HB 60 (Alferman) on January 17. The bill bans most gifts from lobbyists to legislators and other elected officials. Certain gift exceptions are added, including customary gifts, flowers and plants, returned items, speaking fees, and items customarily received.

PREVAILING WAGE

The Senate General Laws Committee heard several bills on January 18, including SB 20 (Brown). The bill would repeal the state's prevailing wage law. The Association supports the original purpose of the prevailing wage law to ensure that public infrastructure investment supports local employment and local wage rates.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

The Committee met on January 17 to hear a presentation from the Department of Higher Education (DHE) on the Missouri Higher Education System Review Task Force Interim Report.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY RETIREMENT PLAN (CURP)

The Senate Health and Pensions Committee heard SB 62 (Hegeman) on January 18. 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.

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