



Legislative Update

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www.mnea.org

SIGN UP NOW FOR YOUR MNEA LEGISLATIVE FORUM!

Missouri NEA's regional legislative events continue with the St. Louis Legislative Forum on February 15 and the Southeast Legislative Forum on February 22.

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 HEARS ANOTHER PAYCHECK BILL

The Senate General Laws Committee heard SB 771 (Hoskins) on January 31. The bill applies to most public labor organizations and requires annual written authorization for payroll deduction of member dues and contributions of dues or fees for political action. The bill exempts first responders. Public labor unions are required to keep records of all authorizations for political contributions and submit them to the Labor and Industrial Relations Commission. The Association opposes SB 771.

CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee heard HB 2247 (Roeber) on January 31. The bill would allow charter schools to be sponsored by outside entities (other than the local school board) and operate in many districts around the state. The committee is expected to vote on a revised version of the bill at its regular meeting next week.

Guided by the revised MNEA Position Paper on charter schools, the Association believes that charter schools should be sponsored by and accountable to the local community through the elected school board and approved only after an impact study is conducted by the district to consider the proposal. Existing charter schools should move to district sponsorship when their charters come up for renewal. Charter schools should be subject to the same standards of accountability, transparency and respect for the rights of students, parents and staff as are applicable to traditional public schools. HB 2247 does not enact these reforms, and the Association opposes the bill.

HOUSE PASSES VIRTUAL COURSE BILL

The House gave final approval (Third Reading vote) to HB 1408 (Spencer) on February 1. The House adopted amendments to clarify the process by which student course requests are considered and approved. The bill would establish a new course access program by revising the current MoVIP. The Association believes that virtual courses can play an important role for schools and students, and supports the bill.

HOUSE PASSES VISITING SCHOLAR BILL

The House gave final approval (Third Reading vote) to HB 1665 (Swan) on February 1. The bill would establish a visiting scholars certificate of license to teach. The temporary certificate is targeted to staffing in business-education partnerships such as Northland CAPS in the Kansas City area and GOCAPS in the Springfield area. The Association believes the bill may help recruit teachers into these emerging, specialized programs.

HOUSE PERFECTS A+ SCHOOLS BILL

The House gave first round approval (Perfection vote) to HB 1744 (Hansen) on January 30. The bill would 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.

DISCRIMINATION LAW

The Senate Small Business and Industry Committee heard several bills on January 30, including two bills regarding unlawful discrimination in employment, housing and disability. SB 620 (Hummel) and SB 585 (Nasheed) would each repeal key provisions from SB 43 (2017). The Association believes these bills will restore essential provisions needed 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 supports both bills.

WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

The Senate Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence Committee heard many bills on January 29, including SB 786 (Schupp). The bill would expand whistle-blower protections to all public employees and expand the scope of the protections. The Association believes these changes will increase the willingness and ability of our front line public employees, such as school employees, to point out issues of concern regarding the proper and effective operations of our public institutions. The Association supports the bill.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee met on January 30 to hear several bills including:

SB 576 (Romine) to establish a new course access program by revising the current MoVIP. The Association believes that virtual courses can play an important role for schools and students, and supports the bill. The committee will also hear SB 603 (Onder) and SB 898 (Hoskins). Those bills are also related to virtual course access.

SB 582 (Walsh) to require school districts to report breaches of data containing personal information of students to parents, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the State Auditor. The Association supports the bill.

SB 695 (Wallingford) to require the Governor to appoint a teacher representative to the State Board of Education. The Association supports having the concerns of educators presented in State Board discussions.

SB 743 (Sater) to authorize the treasurer of a seven-director school district to use one or more sureties when entering into a bond to the state.

BUDGET

The House Subcommittee on Appropriations - Education met on January 30 to hear testimony from higher education institution presidents and fiscal officers.

HIGHER EDUCATION TUITION CAPS

The Senate Appropriations Committee heard SB 912 (Rowden) on January 31. The bill states that for public institutions whose tuition is greater than the average tuition, the percentage change in tuition shall not exceed the CPI plus 10%. For institutions whose tuition is less than the average tuition, the dollar increase in tuition shall not exceed the CPI plus 10%. The bill would give institutions more flexibility to adjust tuition to maintain program quality and opportunities for students in an era of declining state funding. The Association supports the bill.

HOUSE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee met on January 31 to hear two bills:

HB 1876 (Lichtenegger) relating to approval of various higher education degree programs. The bill reflects an agreement on the process for approval of programs among the CBHE and two-year and four-year public institutions in the state. Due to budget constraints, the process will emphasize collaboration among existing institutions and programs rather than the creation of entirely new programs.

HB 1273 (Kendrick) to give the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority (MOHELA) the authority to issue specified bonds, including bonds that are eligible for federal tax credits, exemptions, or payments and to refinance certain public or private loans when the borrower is eligible.

HOUSE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The committee voted to approve two bills on January 31:

HCS/HB 1457 (Lauer) to require school districts to offer a course on computer programming to high school students.

HCS/HB 1623 (Fitzwater) to establish a statewide STEM career awareness program and enact several new provisions of law related to computer science. The bill requires creation of a work group to create standards for computer science instruction, adds student flexibility to count one computer science

credit as either a science, math or practical art graduation credit and creates a fund to support grants for teacher professional development for computer science instruction.

PUPIL HARDSHIP TRANSFER

The House Government Efficiency Committee met on January 30 to hear HB 2032 (Curtman) to modify the process by which travel hardships are granted to public school pupils.

FIRST AID KITS IN SCHOOLS

The House Special Committee on Government Oversight met on January 30 to hear HB 1263 (Schroer) to require state officials to research and receive public comment on whether state building standards should be established to require mandatory placement of first aid trauma kits in new or renovated public buildings, including public schools.

USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS FOR LOBBYING

The House Elections Committee heard HB 1423 (Roeber) on January 31. The bill would extend the current restrictions on the use of public funds for political advocacy (currently applicable to ballot issues and candidates) to testifying in an official public capacity on legislation pending before the General Assembly. The bill would not currently affect political advocacy in a personal capacity or as a part of the Association.

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