



Legislative Update

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REMINDERS:

LEGISLATIVE FORUMS: <https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/PoliticalAction/5.aspx>

CAPITOL ACTION DAYS: <http://www.mnea.org/Missouri/CapitolActionDays.aspx>

TAX CREDIT-STYLE VOUCHERS DEBATED IN SENATE

The Senate took up SB 612 (Koenig) on February 20. Sen. Koenig offered a Senate Substitute (SS) version of the bill, but the bill was not brought to a vote. The bill creates a new 100% state tax credit capped at \$50 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 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.

“INNOVATION” SCHOOLS

The notable addition in the SS version of SB 612 (Koenig) was new language put forward by Sen. Holsman to authorize “innovation schools” in urban and metropolitan school districts. The language would allow those school districts to work with a “leadership committee” of business and civic leaders in the district to create a public “innovation school” that is exempted from many existing regulations. Sen. Chappelle-Nadal amended the language to also apply to all school districts in St. Louis County.

This new language is subject to many of the same concerns that apply to HB 2200 (Rhoads), namely weakening the normal public school standards for teacher certification, tenure rights, school retirement and salary schedules. The new language in SB 612 is not even clear as to what type of entity the “leadership committee” would be, but still provides that the committee would be allowed to operate a public school, employ teachers and other staff and accept both public school funds and private donations. The Association opposes both innovation schools proposals based on these significant concerns. Any such proposal must remain subject to the same standards of accountability and transparency and respect for the rights of students, parents and staff as apply to other public schools.

HOUSE COMMITTEE APPROVES ANTI-BARGAINING BILL

The House Economic Development Committee voted to approve an HCS version of HB 1577 (Wiemann) on February 22. The bill applies to public unions and require annual authorization for payroll deduction for dues and any deduction of fees for political action.

The bill also imposes a number of onerous and problematic provisions relating to public union representation and collective bargaining. The bill mandates automatic recertification elections for every public sector bargaining unit, imposes numerous restrictions on bargained agreements, 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 Association opposes the bill.

BUDGET

The House Subcommittee on Appropriations - Education completed markup and recommendations on February 21. The committee does not have access to funding from other budgets and thus is not able to make a major funding shift to increase K-12 formula funding or aid to higher education institutions.

The committee did approve several changes. Over \$5M in broadband funding was shifted to several other programs, including early grades reading assessment, early childhood quality assurance, independent living centers, Scholars and Fine Arts Academies and reimbursements to districts for the costs of serving publicly placed students. The committee also transferred \$500K from the Charter School Commission to increase public placement funding.

In higher education funding, the committee transferred the performance funding amounts into the corresponding core budgets for each institution.

TABOR

The Senate Ways and Means Committee heard SJR 31 (Eigel) on February 20. SJR 31 is a constitutional spending limit similar to the Colorado provision known as "TABOR", or the so-called "Taxpayer Bill of Rights." Missouri NEA strongly opposes this unneeded restriction. The SJR would impose a permanent, constitutional spending limit on state government and would limit annual growth in state appropriations to a cost of living adjustment factor plus a population growth factor. The SJR also mandates automatic, permanent income tax reductions based upon yearly revenue growth conditions.

SENATE DEBATES COLLEGE TUITION BILL

The Senate took up SB 912 (Rowden) on February 21 but did not bring the bill to a vote. 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 PASSES GIFTED EDUCATION BILLS

The House gave final approval (Third Reading vote) to two bills concerning gifted education on February 19:

HB 1371 (Sommer) to require any district with a state-approved gifted education program to have a process that allows parents or guardians to appeal a determination that their child does not qualify for gifted services. The Association supports the bill.

HB 1421 (Pfautsch) to require each school district to establish a policy on acceleration and districts with gifted education programs to establish appeal procedures. The Association supports the bill.

HOUSE PASSES CAREER EDUCATION BILLS

The House gave final approval (Third Reading vote) to two bills concerning career education on February 19:

HB 1455 (Lauer) to allow high schools and public institutions of higher education to provide information related to careers and salaries to students. The Association supports the bill.

HCS/HB 1606 (Gannon) to provide financial aid for first time test takers of the HISET high school equivalency exam. The HCS removes the language from another bill regarding acceleration of students that the sponsor did not intend to be included in the original bill. The Association supports the bill.

HOUSE PASSES STUDENT JOURNALISM BILL

The House gave final approval (Third Reading vote) to HCS/HB 1940 (Corlew) on February 19. The bill would grant greater freedom for student journalists. The bill includes anti-retaliation provisions to protect student communications sponsors and other staff from possible retaliation by boards or administration for granting students greater editorial latitude as provided by the bill. The HCS revises the language protecting districts and staff from liability for student publishing decisions authorized by the bill. The Association supports the bill.

GENDER PAY EQUITY

The Senate Small Business and Industry Committee heard SB 700 (Sifton) on February 20. The bill modifies provisions relating to employee wages to ensure that employers pay equal wages for women and men for equal work. The Association supports the bill.

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

The Senate Rules Committee heard SCR 41 (Schupp) on February 20. The SCR would ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, establishing that equality under law shall not be

abridged on the basis of gender. The Association believes this national statement of equality is long overdue and supports the resolution.

KANSAS CITY SCHOOL RETIREMENT SYSTEM

The Senate Health and Pensions Committee heard SB 856 (Curls) on February 21. The bill revises employee and employer contributions for the Kansas City Public School Retirement System. Employee contributions will not exceed nine percent of pay. The employer contribution will be increased by the bill for the next several years, to ensure the funded status of the system is increased, and will then continue to be set in the manner specified by the bill, with the employer paying the required rate to keep the system properly funded. If the combined rate is less than eighteen percent, both employer and employee will pay half.

WORKING AFTER RETIREMENT

The House Pensions Committee heard HB 2335 (Black) on February 19. The bill allows a retired PSRS teacher who earns less than half the minimum teacher's salary (\$12,500 per year) to work more than 550 hours in such a position without losing eligibility to receive their PSRS pension, provided that the income threshold is not exceeded. The Association supports the bill.

HOUSE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard several bills on February 19:

HB 1385 (Spencer) to give students with above-average scores on certain national and state assessments a notation on their high school diploma.

HB 1435 (Sommer) to require districts with a sufficient number of children determined to be gifted to establish special programs for the gifted children. The Association supports the bill.

HB 1569 (Christofanelli) to allow excused absences for students whose parents were deployed to a combat zone.

HB 1664 (Swan) to allow children who attend early childhood education programs that are under contracts with districts or charter schools to be included in the average daily attendance of the district or charter school.

HB 1899 (Swan) to allow local educational agencies to create school-community partnerships. The Association supports the bill.

HB 2137 (Matthiesen) to create a program to reimburse public school teachers for expenditures to support creative classroom environments. The Association supports the bill.

The committee also voted to approve two bills:

HCS/HB 2200 (Rhoads) relating to elementary and secondary education. The bill contains many provisions, including changes to charter school sponsorship, A+ Schools scholarships, virtual course

access, proficiency-based high school credit and new programs on school innovation. The Association has concerns regarding the effect of the new language on school innovation on bargained agreements, the teacher tenure law, salary schedules and school funding equity. The HCS removes the changes to charter school law from the bill.

HB 1573 (Lyle Rowland) school district to use a calendar based on hours of attendance rather than hours and days of attendance, if the minimum number of hours is at least 1,044 hours of actual pupil attendance. The Association supports the bill. The bill was approved as a Consent Bill.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard several bills on February 20:

SB 682 (Munzlinger) to allow students enrolled in virtual institutions to participate in the Access Missouri Financial Assistance Program

SB 788 (Nasheed) to require course materials and instruction relating to human sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases to contain information about sexual harassment, sexual violence, and consent. The Association supports the bill.

SB 949 (Emery) to repeal existing programs and establish a new reading intervention program for students in kindergarten to third grade. Like the existing law, the new program would make grade level promotion for certain students contingent on passing a reading examination. The Association believes that a single test event is not fully reflective of student learning and opposes any policy to make either grade level promotion or graduation contingent on a single test event.

SB 990 (Hegeman) to revise the process by which a school district is added to the territory of a community college district.

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