



# Legislative Update

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## LEGISLATIVE FORUMS BEGIN THIS WEEK WITH KANSAS CITY FORUM

Missouri NEA's regional legislative events get underway this week with the Kansas City Legislative Forum on January 25. 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](mailto:sandy.smith@mnea.org)).

## SENATE COMMITTEE APPROVES PAYCHECK AND ANTI-CB BILL

The Senate General Laws Committee approved an SCS version of SB 602 (Onder) on January 24. The SCS version makes only minor wording changes and is substantially the same as the original bill. The bill was reported to the floor from the committee on January 25 and could be taken up by the Senate as early as next week.

SB 602 applies to public unions and requires 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.

## HOUSE COMMITTEE APPROVES PAYCHECK BILL

The House Economic Development Committee approved HB 1413 (Taylor) on January 23. The bill applies to all public labor organizations and requires annual authorization for payroll deduction of member dues and annual authorization for member contributions of dues or fees for political action.

The bill also imposes federal-style financial reporting mandates on both statewide public unions and all affiliated local organizations, regardless of size. The Association opposes HB 1413.

## **BUDGET**

The Governor released his budget proposal on January 22, and DESE and DHE are now working to complete the budget books the committee will need to review and act on the Governor's recommendations and the House budget bills, once they are filed.

## **K-12 FUNDING**

The House Subcommittee on Appropriations - Education met on January 23 to hear an overview of DESE and a general discussion of the DESE budget for next fiscal year. DESE projected that the school funding formula would require an increase of about \$98 million to maintain full funding of the formula. The cost increase is primarily based on two factors: updating the base per pupil amount (known as the State Adequacy Target) and the newly triggered formula eligibility for at-risk 3 and 4 years old in district early learning programs.

However, the Governor's budget proposes an increase of about \$51 million, which would not meet DESE's projected cost estimate and would underfund the formula next year. The Governor's budget also reduces the funding level for pupil transportation from the \$105 million appropriated in last year's budget bill to about \$92 million. The Governor withheld \$15 million in the current year, leaving \$90 million for districts, which represents state funding for about 15% of district cost, far short of the 75% state reimbursement allowed for in current law. The Association encourages the subcommittee to work to restore full formula funding and increase funding for pupil transportation and other education programs.

## **HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING**

The House Subcommittee on Appropriations - Education met on January 24 to hear an overview of the Department of Higher Education (DHE) and a general discussion of the DHE budget for next fiscal year. The Governor's budget includes significant cuts to funding for public colleges and universities, including a 10% across the board cut to community colleges, four-year institutions and the state technical college. The Association encourages the subcommittee to reverse the Governor's recommended cuts and increase funding for our public colleges and universities.

## **ANOTHER BIG TAX CUT BILL**

The Senate Ways and Means Committee will hear SB 667 (Onder) on January 23. The bill would double the state income tax cuts already approved by SB 509 from 2014 but not yet implemented. SB 509 will cut the top state income tax rate from 6.0% to 5.5% in five 0.1% annual steps, eventually reducing state revenues by about \$700 million. Each step will be triggered by a calculation on growth of state general revenue. The first such reduction is scheduled to occur this tax year. SB 667 would double the SB 509 tax cuts and cause the top rate to be reduced from 6.0% to 5.0% in five 0.2% annual steps. The bill would reduce state revenues and further reduce the state's capacity to invest in public education and other vital services. The Association opposes the bill.

## **HOUSE PASSES HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAM APPROVAL BILL**

The House gave final approval (Third Reading vote) to HB 1465 (Cookson) on January 25 by a vote of 133-8. The bill relates 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.

Rep. Brattin offered and then withdrew his House Amendment 2 to the bill. The bill made several changes, including prohibiting all public colleges and universities from granting tenure to new faculty hired on or after January 1, 2019. The amendment was withdrawn before a vote and is not a part of the perfected bill.

## **HOUSE PERFECTS VIRTUAL COURSE BILL**

The House gave first round approval (Perfection vote) to HB 1408 (Spencer) on January 24. 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.

## **SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

The Senate Education Committee heard SB 577 (Romine) and SB 807 (Wasson) on January 23 and then voted to approve an SCS version combining the two bills. Both bills relate to approval of various higher education degree programs. The bills reflect an agreement on the process for approval of programs among the Coordinating Board for Higher Education (CBHE) and the 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.

## **HOUSE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

The committee met on January 22 to hear two bills and one concurrent resolution and then voted on January 24 to approve all three measures:

HB 1420 (Pfautsch) to extend the sunset on the early learning quality assurance report program. The Association supports the bill.

HCS/HB 1663 (Swan) to recognize district efforts to establish comprehensive guidance and counseling programs for students attending school in the district. The Association supports the bill.

HCS/HCR 57 (Burnett) to designate February 5-9, 2018, as Missouri School Counseling Week.

The committee also voted to approve the following bills on January 24:

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.

HCS/HB 1940 (Corlew) to 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.

## **HOUSE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

The committee heard several bills on January 24, including:

HB 1680 (Chipman) to prohibit public colleges and universities from requiring students to live on campus, except for first-year freshmen who may be required to live in campus housing for their first year.

HB 2076 (Chipman) to prohibit public colleges and universities from requiring their students to pay fees related to health care if they show proof of health insurance coverage.

In addition to hearing bills, the committee voted to approve HB 1267 (Lichtenegger) to change the law by adding virtual institutions to the "Access Missouri Financial Assistance Program".

## **HOUSE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

The committee heard several bills on January 24, including:

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

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.

## **SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS**

The House Elections Committee heard HB 1424 (Roerber) on January 24. The bill would change school board terms to four years and change the school board election date to November general elections in even numbered years. While the change would likely increase the voter turnout on school board elections, the bill would likely diminish voters' ability to focus on school board elections in the midst of the high profile and high budget general election contests. The Association is also concerned

that the bill will increase the proportion of the board being replaced at each election and require a majority of each school board to be elected at the same time at every other election date.

### **STUDENT AND STAFF INFORMATION PRIVACY**

The House Special Committee on Innovation and Technology heard HB 1358 (Davis) on January 24. This bill adds protections for students in elementary and secondary public and private schools, and prospective students, regarding the privacy of their passwords and social media accounts. The bill also adds protections for employees regarding the privacy of their personal, online accounts. The Association supports policies to protect the privacy of students and staff and supports the bill.

### **PREVAILING WAGE**

The House Economic Development Committee heard several bills relating to prevailing wage for public construction projects on January 23. The Senate General Laws Committee heard four bills relating to prevailing wage on January 24, including SB 555 (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.

### **WORKPLACE ARBITRATION AGREEMENTS**

The House Special Committee on Litigation Reform approved HB 1512 (Corlew) on January 22. The Senate Small Business Committee heard SB 578 (Romine), a similar bill, on January 23. The bills change the Uniform Arbitration Act regarding agreements between employers and at-will employees. Missouri NEA believes the bills may allow employers to pressure employees to accept unfavorable arbitration terms that reduce the ability to hold employers accountable for discriminatory acts.

#### **Legislative Update 2018**

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