



Legislative Update

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HOUSE PASSES TAX CREDIT VOUCHERS

The House took up and narrowly approved HCS/HB 349 (Christofanelli) on February 25 by a vote of 82-71. The bill was given first round approval on February 24 after adopting several amendments. The Association opposes the bill.

The bill creates a tax credit voucher program that would allow donations to divert state funds to pay expenses for home school, private school or charter schools for certain students. Amendments adopted by the House: 1) revise the overall program cap to start at \$50M and allow growth to \$75M, 2) limit eligibility to students in the more populous (charter) counties and in cities over 30,000 population, 3) delay the implementation until pupil transportation funding reaches 40% of allowable cost, and 4) provide five years of phantom student state aid payments for students who leave school districts to participate in the program. The revised version has significantly greater state cost.

SENATE DEBATES SB 55 ON VOUCHERS, CHARTERS AND VIRTUAL SCHOOLS

The Senate debated SCS/SBs 55, 23 and 25 (O'Laughlin) on February 23. The Association opposes the bill.

The Senate adopted a floor substitute offered by Sen. Rowden by voice vote, but the bill was then laid over and not taken up for Perfection vote. The bill was not taken back up this week. Proponents for the bill do not appear to have the votes to pass the bill in the current form, so an effort to reconsider adoption of the substitute may be attempted. This motion must occur within three legislative days, which means the motion must be made no later than March 1.

The floor substitute (Senate Substitute #2) removed the provisions relating to full-time virtual schools but added several other provisions, including the "back door" charter expansion language of HB 942 (Haffner).

PAYCHECK DECEPTION HEARING

The Senate General Laws Committee heard SB 244 (Onder) on February 23. SB 244 would enact onerous and intrusive restrictions on certain public employees regarding payroll deductions for dues and deductions for political action. The Association strongly opposes SB 244.

HB 1413 from 2018, the anti-bargaining bill, was blocked by permanent court injunction resulting from a lawsuit filed by the Association and other public labor organizations. This permanent injunction strongly affirms public employees' constitutional right to bargain and their right to join the

association of their choosing. An appeal of the court ruling is currently pending before the Missouri Supreme Court and a final decision is expected during this year's court term.

RESTRICTING ADVOCACY OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES

The House Downsizing State Government Committee approved HCS/HB 512 (Lovasco) and HCS/HB 515 (Baker) on February 24. HCS/HB 512 would limit the ability of schools and other local governments to provide any printed matter regarding a ballot measure or any matter before the legislature, including even information for the purpose of educating the public. HCS/HB 515 would attempt to limit the ability of local public officials and school employees and other public employees to testify for or against or even provide education on any matter pending before the legislature. The Association opposes both bills.

APPROVAL OF SCHOOL CONTRACTS

The House Downsizing State Government Committee also approved HCS/HB 323 (Hill) on February 24. The bill prevents renewal of superintendent contracts more than three months prior to the end of the contract. The Association is concerned that the bill may also interfere with the current law regarding the renewal of probationary teacher contracts and will work to have this conflict removed.

HOUSE EMERGING ISSUES COMMITTEE

The committee heard several bills on February 23, including:

HB 439 (Davidson) to allow school districts to issue school district-specific teaching permits for persons without a certificate of license to teach granted by the state board of education. The Association believes this additional certification path is not needed. The Association is also concerned that the bill would lower the basic standards for teachers and would adversely affect the funding status of the PSRS system and opposed the bill as filed.

HB 727 (Smith) to phase in an exemption for teacher and paraprofessional pay from state income tax over a five year period. The Association appreciates this novel approach to increase net teacher pay for all teachers in the state. If enacted, however, the state will have to contend with a significant reduction in state revenues.

HOUSE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard five bills on February 23:

HB 164 (Veit) to allow school districts to change from at-large to subdistrict school board elections.

HB 229 (Basye) to establish a process for school board member recall elections. The bill lists many possible grounds for seeking a recall. Some of the listed grounds reflect a form of official misconduct while others appear to reflect a disagreement on policy or process.

HB 253 (Fishel) to change school board elections for Springfield school district from seven at-large board members to two at-large members and five subdistrict members.

HB 1133 (Rusty Black) to change the Career Ladder law by adding plan recognition for certain additional responsibilities and volunteer activities, such as coaching and mentoring. This program is not currently being funded by the state.

HJR 47 (Bailey) to propose a constitutional amendment changing the membership of the State Board of Education to a nine-member board with eight members elected from each of Missouri's Congressional districts and one at-large member elected statewide.

The committee also voted to approve two bills:

HB 151 (Shields) to school districts that share superintendents to receive additional state aid.

HCS/HB 306 (Griesheimer) regarding services and programs for gifted children. The bill would require a district to establish a gifted education program if three percent or more are identified as gifted. The Association believes that gifted and talented students need a challenging curriculum and a program that identifies and supports their unique needs. The Association supports the bill.

STATEWIDE MISSIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The House Higher Education committee heard two bills regarding institutional missions on February 22:

HB 908 (Andrews) to allow Northwest Missouri State University to develop a statewide mission in educator preparation, emergency and disaster management, and profession-based learning.

HCR 29 (Riggs) to approve the statewide mission designation in STEM for Harris-Stowe State University.

The committee also voted to approve HB 297 (Wallingford) to allow Southeast Missouri State University to develop a statewide mission in visual and performing arts, computer science, and cybersecurity.

A+ SCHOLARSHIPS

The House General Laws Committee heard several bills on February 22, including HB 1067 (Shaul) and HB 1141 (Buchheit-Courtway). Both bills would protect students from being disqualified from A+ Schools scholarships based upon grade point averages being adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard SB 204 (Cierpiot) on February 23. The bill revises provisions regarding computer science courses in elementary and secondary schools.

PHOTO ID MANDATE

The House gave final approval to HCS/HB 334 (Simmons) regarding photo ID requirements on February 24. The bill will require voters, including those voting absentee at the office of the election authority, to provide a government-issued photo identification or vote a provisional ballot that will only count if the voter returns later the same day with a government-issued photo ID or the election authority verifies the signature of the voter against the signature on file. Missouri NEA opposes barriers that keep eligible citizens from voting and being politically active and opposes the bill.

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