



Legislative Update

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LEGISLATIVE WORK LIMITED DUE TO WEATHER

Legislative sessions were shortened due to inclement weather this week. The House met in technical sessions on February 5 and February 6. The Senate met on February 5 and then adjourned for the week. The Senate Gubernatorial Appointments committee also met on February 5 to consider appointments made by the Governor to state boards and commissions. Appointments made during the interim must be approved by the Senate within 30 days following the start of session.

SENATE ADVANCES ATTACKS ON THE REFORMS OF CLEAN MISSOURI

The Senate gave first round approval (Perfection vote) to SS#3/SJR 38 (Hegeman) on February 4 and is expected to take a final vote early next week. SJR 38 is similar to HJR 76 and HJR 101 and would undermine the redistricting reforms of Amendment 1, also known as CLEAN Missouri. The SS#3 still removes the nonpartisan demographer created under Amendment 1 and opens the possibility for the population count to be skewed to exclude non-citizen or non-voting-age residents from the data used for drawing districts. The SJR also makes it harder to file suit against a faulty map and limits the remedies available to a judge in such a case. The Association strongly opposes SJR 38.

CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION

Two charter school expansion bills have been approved by Senate committees and could be taken up soon for Senate debate, perhaps as early as next week. The Senate Government Reform Committee approved SCS/SB 603 (O'Laughlin) on February 3 and the Senate General Laws Committee approved SB 649 (Eigel) on January 28. The bills have roughly similar provisions regarding expansion of charter schools. Both bills would allow charter schools to be sponsored by outside entities (other than the local school board) and operate in districts around the state.

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. SB 603 and SB 649 do not enact these reforms, and the Association opposes both bills.

FUNDING FOR CHARTER SCHOOLS

The House Budget Committee approved HCS/HB 1664 (Richey) on February 4. The bill revises the law specifying payments to charter schools. The Association remains concerned regarding the wording of the bill and also urges the legislature to provide an allowance in the calculation for

maintaining district capacity to serve all students. The Association also urges the legislature to fix the broken charter school law. 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. 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.

PUPIL TRANSPORTATION FUNDING

The Senate gave final approval (Third Reading vote) to SS/SB 528 (Cunningham) on February 4. The bill now goes to the House for its consideration. The bill requires DESE to transfer any excess foundation formula funding to fund pupil transportation. The SS changes the distribution of funds to be based on upon transportation costs, rather than the number of students transported. Currently, excess formula funding reverts to general revenue and does not benefit public schools. The Association supports this as a step to improve funding for public schools. Pupil transportation is only funded by the state at about 15% of districts' allowed costs, while the law calls for up to 75% state funding of allowed cost, leaving schools about \$200 million short in state reimbursement.

INITIATIVE PETITION PROCESS

The House Elections and Elected Officials Committee heard HB 1811 (Simmons) on February 5. The bill would modify laws pertaining to the initiative and referendum process. The bill imposes a \$500 filing fee on every filed proposal, along with a surcharge of \$25 per page over two pages. The fee is refunded if the measure is certified for distribution. The bill also provides that all previously collected signatures are invalidated if a court orders a change to the ballot title. The Association is concerned that the bill will create barriers that make it harder for citizens to bring forward policies via petition and opposes the bill.

The committee also voted to approve two measures regarding approval of initiative petitions:

HJR 60 (Billington) to require signature collection for initiative petitions to meet signature thresholds in all eight Congressional Districts of the state, rather than the current requirement of at least six of eight Congressional Districts. This requirement would make an already difficult task much harder to complete. The Association opposes HJR 60 and believes the measure would make it harder and more costly for citizens to bring forward relevant policies through the initiative process.

HCS/HJR 97 (Eggleston) to require the sponsor of any initiative petition proposing Constitutional amendments to collect signatures in every Congressional district and then to submit any approved petition to the General Assembly for consideration in a manner similar to a bill. The legislature would be allowed to interfere with the process by passing, amending or blocking the petition. Only a petition approved by the legislature could be approved by a simple majority. Any version not approved by the legislature would have to be approved by a two-thirds supermajority. Again, the Association believes that this makes it harder for citizens to bring forward and enact relevant policies and opposes the resolution.

PROFESSIONAL LICENSES

The House-Workforce Development Committee heard HB 1688 (Grier) on February 3. The Senate General Laws Committee was scheduled to hear SB 647 (Koenig), a similar bill, on February 4, but the hearing was delayed until February 11. The bills would revise laws pertaining to state licensing

authorities. The bills allow licensing authorities to disqualify a person from a professional license for a prior conviction of a crime only if the crime for which the person was convicted directly relates to the duties and responsibilities for the licensed occupation. Licensing boards could no longer use vague and general terms such as "moral turpitude" for disqualification, and disqualification for an offense shall not last longer than five years, except for violent or sexual offenses. The bill appears to pertain primarily to occupations and professions regulated by the Division of Professional Registration. The Association believes this policy could also benefit teacher recruitment and retention.

SCHOOL RETIREMENT SYSTEM INFORMATION

The House gave first round approval to HB 1934 (Wiemann) on February 4. The bill would revise law pertaining to PSRS/PEERS by allowing the salaries and benefits of the PSRS/PEERS System Executive Director and staff to become public information.

HOUSE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard HB 2151 (Swan) on February 3. The bill would allow Southeast Missouri State University to develop a statewide mission in visual and performing arts, computer science and cybersecurity.

HOUSE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard four bills on February 4:

HB 1682 (Wood) to prohibit vapor product usage in indoor areas of public schools or on school buses. This law already applies to the use of any tobacco or tobacco products in those areas. The Association believes that all educational facilities must be smoke-free and safe from all environmental and chemical hazards. The Association supports the bill.

HB 1808 (Wood) to requires DESE to revise health or physical education standards to include instruction on the use and effects of vapor products along with instruction on the use and effects of tobacco products. The Missouri NEA believes that substance abuse negatively impacts all children and supports improved educational programs about tobacco and other similar products.

HB 1817 (Dinkins) to exclude certain administrative penalties from the calculation of local effort in Iron County.

HB 1818 (Dinkins) to removes increases in the amount received from fines for school purposes from the calculation of local effort for all school districts.

The committee voted to approve two bills that were heard on January 28:

1) HCS/HB 1347 (Baker) to change the restrictions on expenditure of public funds to support or oppose candidates and certain measures. The bill also attempts to restrict the ability of school employees and other public employees to testify for or against a bill pending before the legislature. Rep. Dogan offered an amendment to remove the restrictions regarding testimony before the legislature, but the amendment was defeated by a vote of 6-7. The Association believes this bill violates the free speech rights of school employees and other public employees and opposes the bill.

2) HB 1903 (Shields) to provide additional state aid for school districts that share superintendents.

REGISTER NOW TO ATTEND YOUR REGIONAL LEGISLATIVE FORUM!

Missouri NEA’s regional legislative events will continue in 2020 with the St. Louis Legislative Forum on February 13. These free events will 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!

LEGISLATIVE FORUM SCHEDULE:

St. Louis Legislative Forum	February 13
Jefferson County/Southeast Legislative Forum	February 27
Mid-Missouri Legislative Forum	March 5

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).

USEFUL LINKS

MNEA Issues and Action: <http://www.mnea.org/Missouri/Issues-Action.aspx>

MNEA Legislative Action Center: <http://www.mnea.org/Missouri/LegislativeActionCenter.aspx>

MNEA Education Advocates Program (includes signup):
<https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/PoliticalActionProgram.aspx>

MNEA Legislative Forums (includes signup):
<https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/PoliticalAction/5.aspx>

MNEA Capitol Action Days (includes signup):
<http://www.mnea.org/Missouri/CapitolActionDays.aspx>

MNEA Legislative Updates (includes signup):
<https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/StateLegislativeUpdates.aspx>

MNEA Legislative Platform and Priorities: <https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/PlatformPriorities.aspx>

MNEA App: <http://www.mnea.org/Missouri/News/Download-the-Missouri-NEA-Mobile-App-Today-413.aspx>

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