



Legislative Update

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CAPITOL ACTION DAYS BEGIN!

Capitol Action Days are part of the Association's plan to promote positive policy for public education. MNEA's Capitol Action Days began on February 9th, when members from Governance Districts 2 & 10 came to the Capitol to visit with their legislators.

MNEA Board of Directors members, working with Government Relation Teams and local presidents, have organized Capitol Action Days for their governance districts. Our efforts will make more of an impact if members from throughout the governance district attend.

Plan now to make the trip to Jefferson City to attend your Capitol Action Days. Talk to other members about attending, too.

For more information and to register for your Capitol Action Day, please visit www.mnea.org/CAD.

BUDGET

The House gave final approval to HCS/HB 3014 (Smith), the supplemental budget bill, on February 10 by a bipartisan vote of 114-11. HB 3014 would appropriate the federal ESSER III funding to school districts along with several provisions needed to fund Medicaid expansion this year as approved by voters. The Association urges the legislature to quickly approve this appropriation measure. The \$1.9 billion in federal ESSER III grant funding was approved by Congress last year and should be appropriated as soon as possible to allow the funds to be used according to district plans to provide a safe return to school, address learning loss, and help students recover from the impact of the pandemic.

The HCS would direct up to \$75 million of the ESSER III funds to a proposed tutoring grant program. This change does not appear to comply with the federal requirements that the funds be distributed under approved district plans. The Association urges the legislature to restore the language as recommended by the Governor. Rep. Burnett offered HA 4 to restore the language as recommended by the Governor, but the amendment was defeated on a party-line vote of 42-99.

INITIATIVE PETITIONS

The House gave final approval to HCS/HJR 79 (Henderson) on February 10. HJR 79 would require a higher fraction of signatures (10% of voters rather than 8 % per district) in more parts of the state (all eight Congressional districts rather than six) for an initiative that amends the Constitutions. The HJR also would require a two-thirds supermajority vote (rather than the simple majority vote required since Missouri became a state) to pass a Constitutional amendment brought forward by either the legislature or by initiative. The Association opposes this measure and will continue to fight to protect the citizens' initiative petition process.

CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING DEBATE CONTINUES IN THE SENATE

The Senate continued discussion on HCS/HB 2117 (Shaul) on February 9, though the discussion was not actually on the order of business for passing the bill. The discussion lasted several hours, but the Senate has still not brought the bill to a vote. The Senate has adjourned until Friday, February 11, and is expected to continue debate on HB 2117.

The bill would update Missouri's eight Congressional districts, based upon the 2020 U.S. Census data that was released last year. The legislature revises Congressional districts every ten years by enacting a bill that specifies those new districts. With candidate filing beginning in late February and ending in late March, candidates will want to know what the district boundaries are before that filing window closes.

HCS/HB 2117 is regarded as a "6-2" map, meaning that, like the current map, historical voting performance would maintain a 6-2 split in the Republican and Democratic Party makeup of Missouri's delegation to Congress.

SENATE EDUCATION VOTES OUT BILLS ON READING, CHARTER SCHOOLS, VIRTUAL SCHOOLS, AND BOARD RECALL

The committee voted out all bills heard thus far this session on February 10, including:

SCS/SBs 681 & 662 (O'Laughlin) to modify provisions related to literacy and reading instruction and create school innovation waivers. The committee substitute bill contains many provisions from SB 1076 (Arthur), a similar bill, and the Association supports the bill. The bill repeals retention in grade requirements for struggling readers. The bill requires schools to provide reading instruction, with appropriate evidence-based reading intervention, in the elementary grades and requires assessment and intervention beginning in kindergarten. The bill requires systematic and explicit interventions for students with characteristics of dyslexia. The bill includes specific requirements on DESE to support literacy and help train teachers. The bill also requires schools to provide in-

service teachers with professional development opportunities in literacy and reading instruction. The bill requires teacher preparation programs to adequately prepare teaching students to provide effective literacy and reading instruction and revises the educator preparation advisory board to involve more classroom teachers in designing this training.

SB 869 (Koenig) to revise the law specifying payments to charter schools and shift more local school funds to charter schools. The Association opposes the bill. Missouri NEA 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. The Association also believes that all 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 650 (Eigel) to 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 Association opposes the bill. Sen. Eigel also offered a proposed SCS version that would add several other provisions, including moving school board elections to the November election, adding restrictions on approval of debt service levies, preventing schools from requiring face masks, and preventing school districts from requiring students or staff to have COVID vaccinations.

SB 648 (Rowden) to modify provisions related to the virtual school program. This bill is the same as HB 1903 (Christofanelli) and presents the same concerns with the language as filed. The Association opposes the bill. The bill removes important safeguards for students, including the role of the resident district in the decision to enroll and in monitoring student progress.

SB 657 (Cierpiot) to establish procedures for recall elections for school board members. Unlike HB 1747 (Bayse), this bill contains no new provisions to authorize lawsuits against school staff and school officials.

EDUCATOR TAX DEDUCTION

The House Ways and Means Committee heard HB 1981 (Ann Kelley) on February 9. The bill would create a 100% state income tax deduction for K-12 educator expenses up to \$500 per year for professional development or classroom supplies and equipment. The Association believes this is a helpful support to teachers who invest their own resources to advance their skills or support their students' needs in the classroom. The Association supports the bill.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The House Emerging Issues Committee heard two bills pertaining to early childhood education on February 8:

HB 2365 (Shields) to make the early learning quality assurance reporting program permanent and authorizes the program to provide continuous improvement and ongoing updated consumer education. The Association supports the bill.

HB 2341 (Shields) to increase the fraction of pre-K pupils eligible for free or reduced price lunch (FRPL) that may be counted by a district or charter school for state aid under the school funding formula. Currently the fraction of FRPL eligible pupils may not exceed 4% of the total FRPL eligible pupils in grades K-12 in the district. The bill raises the allowed percentage to 10%. The Association supports the bill.

GIFTED EDUCATION

The House Emerging Issues Committee also voted to approve HB 2366 (Shields) on February 8. The bill requires districts and charter schools to identify and provide services and programs for gifted children. The bill requires 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.

HOUSE-ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee met on February 8 to hear six bills:

HB 1973 (Kurtis Gregory) to limit the definition of school bus to include vehicles designed to carry more than ten people. Schools would still be able to use other motor vehicles for pupil transportation.

HB 2010 (Travis Smith) to place the burden of proof and production on school districts in due process hearings for children with a disability.

HB 2011 (Travis Smith) to require parental consent for changes to individualized education programs (IEPs).

HB 2095 (Hannah Kelly) to modify provisions relating to child abuse investigations in schools. The bill requires the Children's Division to conduct investigations of all allegations of suspected child abuse or neglect, including those involved with corporal punishment in public schools. The Association supports the bill.

HB 2359 (Basye) to modify who is required to report and what information is reported to the Missouri Accountability Portal.

HB 2428 (Dogan) to impose restrictions on instruction relating to race and history. The bill authorizes lawsuits against school employees for violations of the new requirements in the bill. The Association is concerned that this new language could subject school employees to frivolous lawsuits and opposes the bill.

The committee was scheduled to vote eight bills on February 8, but only voted on the following two bills:

HB 1721 (Shields) to allow school districts that share superintendents to receive additional state aid.

HB 1804 (Viet) to allow school districts to change from at-large to subdistrict school board elections, including the local option for any district to vote to approve a change to elect some or all board members from subdistricts.

SCHOOL RETIREMENT

The House Pensions Committee voted to approve HB 2114 (Rusty Black) on February 9. The bill would revise PSRS working after retirement provisions. The bill extends time a retiree may use the critical shortage provision from two years to four years. The bill also increases the amount a PSRS retiree may earn working in a PEERS position from \$15,000 per year to the Social Security earnings limit, currently \$19,560. The Association supports the bill and believes the critical shortage position can be improved to better allow PSRS retirees to help when needed. Improvements could include increasing the allowed number of shortage positions as a percentage in larger districts, allowing immediate employment on a temporary basis when needed and allowing positions to be advertised on a public website created to post available positions.

PHOTO ID MANDATE

The House Elections and Elected Officials Committee heard several bills this week that would require registered voters to provide a government-issued photo identification. The committee heard HB 2113 (McGaugh) on February 9 and will hear HB 1878 (Simmons) and HJR 94 (Simmons). The Association opposes barriers that keep eligible citizens from voting and being politically active and opposes all three measures.

HOUSE-WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The committee heard HB 2493 (Rusty Black) on February 7. The bill makes several changes relating to teacher career plans. The state is not currently funding this program.

The committee also voted to approve HB 2202 (Fitzwater). The bill would require district high schools and charter high schools to offer computer science courses or embedded instruction. The bill allows high schools the option to comply by informing students and parents of virtual course offerings in computer science.

HOUSE-HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee voted to approve HCS/HB 1723 (Shields) regarding the A+ Schools scholarships. The bill would allow A+ students who earn an associate degree or the equivalent to apply A+ scholarship funds toward earning a bachelor's degree if the student has used less than \$10,000 in A+ funds for the associate degree or the equivalent up to a total of \$15,000.

HOUSE GENERAL LAWS COMMITTEE

The committee voted to approve HB 1856 (Baker) on February 7. The bill would create a policy that would allow students to receive credit for participation in out-of-classroom learning experiences as approved by the State Board of Education, a school board, or a charter school. The Association is concerned that the wording of the bill is not clear regarding the process by which extended learning opportunities are approved by various entities and whether the amount of course and graduation credit will reflect the proportion of a required course that is demonstrated by the student.

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