



Legislative Update

By Otto Fajen
MNEA Legislative Director
Otto.fajen@mnea.org

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SENATE PASSES BUDGET

The Senate gave final approval to the Senate versions of state operating budget bills during an extended floor session that began on April 25 and extended into the following early morning.

The House refused to concur in the Senate versions of the budget bills on April 26 and approved motions to request conference. The conference versions of the bills must be agreed to by budget conferees and approved by both chambers by 6 p.m. on May 5.

The House adopted language amendments to restrict any use of HB 2 (K-12) or HB 3 (higher education) funds for diversity, equity or inclusion programs. The Senate committee version of both those budget bills removed this problematic language.

The Senate voted 14-18 to defeat SA 2 (Denny Hoskins) to HB 2. The amendment would have prohibited all school districts and charter schools from using any state formula funds for diversity, equity, inclusion or belonging programs. The Association opposed this unneeded provision and appreciates the Senators who voted to oppose the amendment.

The SS version of HB 2 was eventually approved by the Senate by a vote of 24-9. The Senate approved the SCS version of HB 3 by a vote of 26-6.

RESTRICTIONS ON THE INITIATIVE PETITION PROCESS

The Senate adopted SS#3/HCS/HJR 43 (Henderson) on April 27. The SS version creates a new version of a higher approval majority for constitutional amendments. The joint resolution now returns to the House for further consideration. The Association is concerned that the measure will make it more difficult for Missouri citizens to bring forward and gain approval on measures of interest brought by the initiative petition process and opposes the joint resolution.

ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee voted to approve HCS/HB 49 (Paula Brown) on April 26. The bill would remove accreditation under MSIP 6 and require the State Board of Education to recognize at least two national school accreditation organizations and allow districts to gain accreditation by approval of such a group.

The bill also directs the State Board to replace the current MAP assessment with a new assessment selected to minimize lost instructional time. The bill requires that the assessment system should be student-centered and use assessments across the school year that support teaching, learning, and program improvement, so that a summative profile is developed of student learning.

The new test will be used for identifying schools in need of improvement per the federal ESSA Act. DESE will fund support for improving those schools using the provisions of the school turnaround act in HB 604 from 2018. The Association supports the bill.

PUBLIC EMPLOYER HIRING REQUIREMENTS

The committee voted to approve SCS/SB 476 (Curtis Trent) on April 25. The bill would prohibit public employers from requiring an undergraduate degree as a baseline employment requirement. The bill does not appear to affect employment of public school teachers, since a requirement for advanced certification such as a teaching certificate is not affected by the bill.

HOME SCHOOL ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

The House General Laws Committee heard SS/SCS/SB 411 & 230 (Ben Brown) on April 24. The original bill will allow home school students to participate in public school activities. The bill creates a new subcategory of "FLEX" home school students and provides that districts may not prohibit FLEX students from participating in an activity, and the bill also prohibits a district from being part of an association that prohibits FLEX student participation in activities. The Association believes that educators should continue to establish the policies and procedures that govern school activities.

The Senate added several amendments, including:

- 1) a requirement that starts with the 2024-25 school and provides that school districts in charter counties or cities with a population over 30,000 must have a five-day school week unless district voters approve a four-day school week,
- 2) a provision that the St. Louis City school board shall fill any school board vacancy that occurs outside of the normal election cycle,
- 3) the language of SB 34 (Karla May) providing that public schools may offer elective courses in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, and
- 4) the language of SB 122 (Karla May) to provide that a child may be excused from attendance at school if the child is unable to attend school due to mental or behavioral health concerns, provided that the school receives documentation from a mental health professional.

REQUIREMENTS FOR FINGERPRINT BACKGROUND CHECKS

The House gave final approval to HCS/HB 669 (Ron Copeland) on April 24. The bill eliminates the current law that schools and other employers using the Rap Back program for notifications of law violations must require all employees to undergo an additional fingerprint background check every six years. The Association appreciates this helpful change to remove a costly and unneeded burden on school employees and supports the bill.

BULLET RESISTANT DOORS AND WINDOWS IN SCHOOLS

The Senate Judiciary Committee heard HS/HCS/HB 1108 (Justin Hicks) on April 24. The original bill pertained to the sexual offender registry, but the House Legislative Review Committee ballooned the bill into an omnibus safety related bill and included an expensive mandate requiring school districts to install bullet-resistant doors and windows on all first-floor entryways and bullet-resistant glass for each exterior window large enough for an intruder to enter through. The Association is concerned that neither the legislature nor DESE can even begin to estimate the current status of such doors and windows in the roughly 2200 Missouri school buildings nor the cost of implementing this huge mandate.

HOUSE-ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard SB 122 (Karla May) on April 26. The bill would excuse students from attendance at elementary and secondary schools if the students are unable to attend due to mental or behavioral health concerns.

SENATE EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The committee heard several bills on April 25:

SB 535 (Travis Fitzwater) to create a fund for the purpose of establishing a STEM activity program for grades nine through twelve.

HB 471 (John Black) regarding public employee compensation. The original bill allows state agencies to offer financial incentives for employee retention and to reward "exemplary achievement". The House approved an amendment to allow similar incentives for teachers. The House also included HB 190 (Ed Lewis) to allow school districts to identify hard-to-staff schools and hard-to-staff subject areas and designate a higher placement on the salary schedule when hiring such teachers. The Association believes decisions regarding extra compensation and salary schedule placement should be a matter for collective bargaining at the local level.

HB 497 (Ed Lewis) to enact many new education provisions. The original bill renames and revises the existing "Urban Flight and Rural Needs Scholarship Program" for students who commit to teach in hard to staff schools or hard to staff subject areas. The final version passed by the House includes many other provisions. The Association supports the provisions for teacher recruitment scholarships (HB 497), school retirement (HB 496), background checks (HB 669), state school aid (HB 529) and teacher program entry exams (amendment offered by Rep Kathy Steinhoff). The Association believes the provision regarding salary schedule placement (HB 190) should be a matter for collective bargaining at the local level.

HCS/HB 715 (Hannah Kelly) to establish provisions relating to educational funding for students being treated at a residential treatment facility.

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Missouri National Education Association
1810 East Elm Street
Jefferson City, MO 65101-4174
(573) 634-3202 or (800) 392-0236
www.mnea.org

Phil Murray, President
Rebeka McIntosh, Vice President
DeeAnn Aull, Executive Director
Otto Fajen, Legislative Director
Sandy Smith, Information Specialist/Exec. Adm. Asst.