



# Legislative Update

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## CAPITOL ACTION DAYS

MNEA's Capitol Action Days are part of the Association's plan to promote positive policy for public education. Capitol Action Days concluded for the session this week on May 3. For more information and to register for your Capitol Action Day, please visit <https://www.mnea.org/CAD>

## BUDGET APPROVED

The conference committee reports for the state operating budget bills, HBs 2-13, were finally approved by both chambers on May 5 prior to the 6 p.m. deadline. The Association appreciates the effort and leadership from Senate budget leaders and the conference committees in working to create a better state budget that supports public education and other vital services.

The Senate committee restored many cuts made to the Governor's budget by the House and also added numerous additional funding items. This process was made much easier by the fact that the state currently has an unusually high general revenue fund balance of more than \$5 billion. Conferees adopted the Senate position for many of those funding items, including restoring state aid for public libraries. The budget also includes increases for early childhood education, full funding of the school formula and pupil transportation and funding increases for four-year institutions and community colleges.

## SENATE DEBATE EXPECTED NEXT WEEK ON EDUCATION PROVISIONS

Expected Senate debate on education topics was blocked on May 4 by a filibuster of all Senate action. The Senate is now expected to debate this substitute next week on May 8. Sen. Koenig distributed a lengthy, 180-page Senate Substitute for HB 827 (Phil Christofanelli). The original bill pertains to full-time virtual programs. The substitute adds dozens of new provisions, including a version of open enrollment provisions from HB 253 (Brad Pollitt), changes to the existing tax credit voucher program as contained in SB 360 (Andrew Koenig) and numerous other education provisions. The Association opposes both the House-approved version of HB 253 and the provisions of SB 360.

## **RETIREMENT**

The House approved similar sets of school retirement provisions in two Senate bills this week: HCS/SS/SB 75 (Rusty Black) and SB 20 (Bernskoetter). The Association supports both bills. The House version of both bills includes several school retirement provisions:

- 1) restores the 2.55% benefit factor for 32 or more years of PSRS service credit;
- 2) increases the earnings limit for PSRS retirees working part time in PEERS positions;
- 3) extends the critical shortage employment option from two years to four years and increases the allowed number of critical shortage teaching positions in a district to the greater of five or one percent of the number of teaching positions in the district; and
- 4) language to preserve the PSRS-eligible status for speech implementers employed before August 1, 2022, who are employed on or after August 28, 2023, as a speech-language pathology assistant.

SB 75 also includes the provisions of SB 339 (Greg Razer) to provide a same-sex domestic partner pop-up provision for retirees with similar documentation requirements to the divorce pop-up provision in current law.

## **RESTRICTIONS ON THE INITIATIVE PETITION PROCESS**

The House refused to concur in the Senate version of SS#3/HCS/HJR 43 (Henderson) and the joint resolution is now in conference. House conferees are Representatives Mike Henderson, Rick Francis, Bill Falkner, Robert Sauls and Steve Butz. Senate conferees are Senators Sandy Crawford, Mike Cierpiot, Andrew Koenig, Doug Beck and Lauren Arthur.

The SS version creates a different version of a higher approval majority for constitutional amendments. The House version would require statewide supermajority of 60% while the Senate version requires either: 1) 57% statewide or 2) a simple majority statewide plus a concurrent majority in at least five of Missouri's eight Congressional districts. 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.

## **HOUSE COMMITTEE EXPANDS HOME SCHOOL ACTIVITY BILL**

The House General Laws Committee approved an expanded HCS version of SS/SCS/SB 411 & 230 (Ben Brown) on May 4. The original bill will allow home school students to participate in public school activities. The Senate version also requires a district-wide vote to allow a four-day school week in districts in charter counties or cities with a population over 30,000. This

requirement would begin with the 2024-25 school year. The HCS version adds additional provisions regarding academic standards for finance courses and for health and family education courses, STEM career awareness, adult high schools, and school bullying policies.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR FINGERPRINT BACKGROUND CHECKS**

The House approved an amendment to SB 28 (Justin Brown) to add the provisions of HCS/HB 669 (Ron Copeland) on May 1. SB 28 pertains to public records of the Missouri highway patrol. The amendment 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 amendment.

## **ADULT HIGH SCHOOLS**

The Senate approved SS/HB 447 (Bishop Davidson) on May 3. The bill allows siting a fifth adult high school in the Kansas City area. The bill also moves the administration of adult high schools from DESE to the Department of Social Services. The state currently has four adult high schools created under state contract by MERS Goodwill. Adult high schools allow adults to obtain industry certifications and complete high school work to obtain a State Board approved high school diploma. Adult high schools also offer job placement services.

The amended Senate Substitute includes several other provisions, including:

- 1) HCS/HB 715 (Hannah Kelly) to establish provisions relating to educational funding for students in state custody and students being treated at a residential treatment facility;
- 2) SB 381 (Holly Thompson Rehder) to require DESE to convene a work group to develop academic performance standards for health and family education and change the require one-half credit in health education to health and family education; and
- 3) SB 340 (Greg Razer) to require DESE to establish language developmental milestones for children who are deaf and hard of hearing.

### **Legislative Update 2023**

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