



Legislative Update

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LOCAL CONTROL OF SCHOOLS

The Senate-Education and Workforce Development Committee heard SB 85 (Carter) on January 31. The bill would designate local control school districts based on 75% or more local school funding. The bill allows qualifying districts to be exempt from accreditation and from all requirements of MSIP, APRs and school improvement plans. The Association supports greater local control on assessment and accreditation and supports the bill.

HONESTY IN EDUCATION/PARENT INFORMATION ACCESS

The Senate debated SS/SCS/SBs 4, 42 and 89 (Koenig) on February 1, but did not bring the bill to a vote. The bill was laid over with SA 1 (Beck) pending. The amendment would require all school districts to use a five-day school week.

The floor substitute makes some changes regarding parent information access and school data access through the state and district websites. The Association remains concerned that the bill would adversely affect the freedom of teachers to provide the honest education our students deserve and opposes the bill.

CIVICS EDUCATION TRAINING

The Senate-Education and Workforce Development Committee also heard SB 137 (Eslinger) on January 31. The bill requires DESE to develop a patriotic and civics training program for teachers. Teachers who complete the training will receive a \$3000 stipend. The Association supports giving teachers this option for additional training.

OPEN ENROLLMENT

The Senate-Education and Workforce Development Committee approved SCS/SB 5 (Koenig) on January 31. The bill primarily allows students to transfer between school districts under certain conditions. The SCS version makes minor wording changes but is substantially similar to the original bill. The Missouri NEA believes that public school choice plans with state funding may harm students and our public schools unless essential criteria are in place for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating their effectiveness.

SB 5 also allows students to open enroll into charter schools from other districts. The Association opposes the bill. The Association believes that the charter law should be revised to ensure that charter schools are only sponsored by school boards following an impact study on the proposal. Further, all charter schools should be subject to the same standards of transparency, accountability and respect for the rights of students, parents and staff as are applicable to district schools.

The House-Elementary and Secondary Education Committee approved HCS/HB 253 (Pollitt) on February 1. This bill allows students to transfer between school districts but does not allow students to open enroll into charter schools from other districts.

The HCS adds language requiring participating component districts to coordinate with the Special School District of St. Louis County regarding capacity for special education services. The HCS also adds clarifying language regarding the participation of students in K-8 districts in open enrollment. The Association will oppose any effort to include charter expansion in the bill.

STATE FUNDING FOR HOME SCHOOL AND PRIVATE SCHOOL EXPENSES

The Senate-Education and Workforce Development Committee also approved SCS/SB 81 (Mary Elizabeth Coleman) on January 31. The original bill creates state-funded open enrollment to private schools and provides state tax credit funding up to the state adequacy target (SAT) amount for expenses for each home school student. The SCS removes the tax credit provision for home school students. The Association believes that federally or state-mandated parental option plans compromise free, equitable, universal and quality public education for every student and opposes the bill.

RETIREMENT

The Senate-Veterans, Military Affairs, and Pensions Committee heard SB 75 (Rusty Black) on February 1. The bill restores the 2.55% benefit factor for 31 or more years of PSRS service credit. The bill also increases the earnings limit for PSRS retirees working part time in PEERS positions from \$15,000 per year to the Social Security earnings limit for persons under full retirement age (currently \$21,240). The bill also extends the critical shortage employment option from two years to four years. The Association supports the bill.

The House-Pensions Committee will hear HB 769 (Owen) on January 31. The bill would enact additional provisions regarding the investments of all Missouri public pension systems, including PSRS and PEERS, regarding proxy voting and their fiduciary investment priority.

The PSRS Board of Trustees has a fiduciary duty to invest for the benefit of the members of the system. The bill would require that pension systems shall not consider environmental, social or governance factors in a manner that would override their fiduciary duties. The provisions of the bill as filed are consistent with the current practices of PSRS and PEERS and are not expected to interfere with the operation of the Systems.

TRANSGENDER ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

The Senate-Emerging Issues Committee heard six bills affecting transgender athletic participation on January 31: SB 2 (Hoskins), SB 29 (Luetkemeyer), SB 39 (Thompson Rehder), SB 48 (Moon), SB 87 (Brown), SB 165 (Carter). SB 2 and SB 48 would prohibit transgender athletes from participating in competitive girl's or women's events in middle schools, high schools, and colleges. SB 29, SB 39, SB 87, and SB 165 are similar but would only affect K-12 schools.

These bills would override MSHSAA and higher education institution policies on transgender participation that generally align with NCAA and IOC policy and seek to balance fairness and inclusion for athletes. The Association believes that educators should continue to establish the policies

and procedures that govern the activities of Missouri students who participate in school activities and opposes all three bills.

DIFFERENTIAL PAY

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee heard HB 190 (Ed Lewis) on February 1. The bill would allow school districts to adopt a policy on differential placement of teachers in designated "hard-to-staff" schools and subject areas, based on vacancies of properly qualified teachers. The Association believes that salary schedules, extra duty compensation and placement on professional pay plans are matters for collective bargaining and should apply to all teachers. The Association is concerned that the bill removes the current provision ensuring that salary schedules apply to all teachers.

SCHOOL PROTECTION OFFICERS

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee also heard HB 70 (Dinkins). The bill allows school districts to designate other school personnel (besides administrators and teachers) as a school protection officer.

RESTRICTIONS ON THE INITIATIVE PETITION PROCESS

The House perfected HCS/HJR 43 (Henderson) on February 1 and gave the measure final approval (Third Read) on February 2 by a party-line vote of 108-50. This measure would change the initiative petition process. The resolution raises the approval requirements for constitutional amendments. The House Elections Committee voted to approve HCS/HJR 18 (Ed Lewis) on February 2. This measure also increases the approval requirements for constitutional amendments. The Association is concerned that these measures 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 these joint resolutions.

CORPORATE TAX REPEAL

The Senate-Economic Development and Tax Policy met on January 30 to hear SB 135 (Moon). The House-Special Committee on Tax Reform heard HB 660 (Travis Smith) on January 31. Both bills would phase out the corporate income tax. Fully implemented, these bills would reduce state revenues by about \$700 million per year. The Association is concerned that this change will leave the state even less able to meet the funding needs of public education and other vital services in future years and opposes the bills as filed.

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