



Legislative Update

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SUPER BOWL PARADE LIMITS SESSION WEEK

Both chambers had limited floor activity on February 15, while many members attend Super Bowl celebrations in Kansas City on that date. The Senate adjourned for the week and will reconvene on Presidents' Day, February 20. The House held most scheduled committee meetings on February 15 and convened briefly in session on February 16 before adjourning for the week. The House will observe the Presidents' Day Holiday on February 20 and reconvene on February 21.

HONESTY IN EDUCATION/PARENT INFORMATION ACCESS

The Senate finally approved SS/SCS/SBs 4, 42 and 89 (Koenig) on February 14 by a mostly party-line vote of 21-12. Senators Moon and Carter joined with the entire minority party caucus in voting in opposition. The Association remains concerned that the bill will adversely affect the freedom of teachers to provide the honest education our students deserve and opposes the bill.

The perfected version of the bill includes many provisions, including some that were not contained in the original bill. The bill requires schools to adopt curricula at least two months prior to the school term, revises and updates the school report card provisions, creates a state transparency portal for all school curricula, textbooks, source materials, and syllabi, and adds regulations regarding school-issued devices.

The perfected bill also increases the school formula per pupil weight factor for poverty from 25% to 30% and exempts magnet schools from desegregation programs from inefficiency penalties for transportation aid. The bill also includes a revised version of SB 137 (Eslinger) regarding civics education training.

ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee will hear two very different bills relating to assessment and accreditation when it meets on February 22:

HB 49 (Paula Brown) would require the State Board of Education to recognize at least two national school accreditation organizations and allow districts to choose to gain accreditation by approval of such a group. The bill also directs the State Board to revise the MAP assessment based on improvements being implemented in other states under ESSA assessment waivers. 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 the students learning. The Association supports the bill.

HB 558 (Haffner) requires DESE to use standardized test scores to give every school district and charter school a single letter grade based on a method dictated by the bill and creates NCLB style punishments for districts with low letter grades. This bill hearkens back to the failed "test, blame and punish" mindset of the former, federal NCLB Act. The Association opposes the bill.

DON'T SAY GAY BILL

The Senate-Education and Workforce Development Committee approved SCS/SB 134 (Moon) on February 14. This bill has been dubbed the "Don't Say Gay" bill by opponents. The new SCS version of the bill says that no public school or charter school staff member shall encourage a student to adopt a gender identity or sexual orientation. The bill also includes new mandates on school staff concerning student name and pronoun preferences, clothing, and discussion of medical procedures. This new language includes various penalty provisions including Attorney General intervention, civil lawsuits against the district and requiring the district to seek revocation of a teacher's certificate. The Association strongly opposes this bill.

TRANSGENDER ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

The House General Laws Committee approved HCS/HB 183 (Burger) on February 16. The bill prohibits transgender athletes from participating in competitive girl's or women's events in public or private middle schools, high schools or institutions of higher education.

The bill 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 the bill.

RETIREMENT

The Senate gave first round approval to SS/SB 75 (Rusty Black) on February 14. The Association supports the bill. The bill restores the 2.55% benefit factor for 32 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 Senate approved Sen. Razer's SA 1 to add his SB 339. The amendment provides a same-sex domestic partner pop-up provision for retirees. The amendment has similar documentation requirements to the divorce pop-up provision in current law. The Senate also approved Sen. Arthur's SA 2 to increase 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.

HIGHER EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIPS

The House Higher Education Committee heard two bills on February 15:

HB 515 (Mayhew) would create a new, merit-based scholarship program for students attending qualifying institutions and studying in a science, technology, engineering or math (STEM) field.

HB 76 (Ann Kelley) would expand the A+ Schools scholarships to include attendance in industry credential programs lasting less than one standard school semester.

SENATE EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The committee heard the following bills on February 14:

SB 40 (Holly Thompson Rehder) to require school districts to conduct criminal background checks on adult students enrolling in courses taught at public schools.

SB 122 (Karla May) to excuse students from attendance at elementary and secondary schools if the students are unable to attend due to mental or behavioral health concerns.

SB 175 (Andrew Koenig) to revise youth employment law relating to work certificates and the entertainment industry.

The scheduled hearing for SB 136 (Karla Eslinger) was postponed. The bill would modify provisions relating to workforce development in elementary and secondary education. The bill requires students to do career plans in high school and to fill out the FAFSA application for federal student aid.

RESTRICTIONS ON THE INITIATIVE PETITION PROCESS

House and Senate committees heard a number of measures this week that would change the initiative petition process and make it more difficult. The Association opposes all of those measures.

The Senate Local Government heard HCS/HJR 43 (Henderson) and numerous SJRs on this topic on February 13, including SJR 2 (Koenig), SJR 5 (Rowden), SJR 10 (Crawford), SJR 17 (Brattin) and SJR 28 (Carter). The House Elections Committee will hear two related measures, HJR 28 and HJR 29 (Falkner), on February 14. HJR 43 seems likely to be the primary vehicle for further debate this session, since it has already been approved by the House. 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.

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