



Legislative Update

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

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CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION BILL ADVANCES - STAY TUNED FOR ACTION ALERT!

The House Rules - Administrative Oversight Committee voted to approve HCS/HB 581 (Roeber) on February 14. The bill would allow charter schools to be sponsored by outside entities (other than the local school board) and operate in districts around the state. The bill will be placed on the House calendar for floor debate, and debate could occur as soon as next week. The Association opposes the bill.

STAY TUNED FOR AN UPCOMING ACTION ALERT to contact your State Representative and ask them to oppose HCS/HB 581!

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee voted 8-5 to approve HCS/HB 581 on February 12. Reps. Paula Brown, Karla Eslinger, Judy Morgan, Raychel Proudie and Kathryn Swan voted in opposition. Rep. Gretchen Bangert is also on the committee and strongly opposes the bill. SB 292 (Eigel), a similar bill, was heard on February 12 in the Senate General Laws Committee.

Guided by the MNEA Position Paper on charter schools, the Association 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. Existing charter schools should move to district sponsorship when their charters come up for renewal. 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. HB 581 does not enact these reforms, and the Association strongly opposes the bill.

CAPITOL ACTION DAYS BEGIN!

MNEA Capitol Action Days began for 2019 on February 13 when members from Governance Districts 2 and 10 came to the Capitol. Capitol Action Day allow planned, face-to-face contact with legislators throughout the session. Capitol Action Days will generally be on Wednesdays starting.

For details on scheduled dates for your Governance District and contact information, please visit:

<http://www.mnea.org/Missouri/CapitolActionDays.aspx>

If you are not able to attend on these designated days, feel free to contact Sandy Smith (sandy.smith@mnea.org) to arrange to attend a different Capitol Action Day. Each Capitol Action Day will start with a briefing to provide you with the most up-to-date information.

TAX CREDIT VOUCHERS

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee heard HB 478 (Christofanelli) on February 12. The bill is a tax credit voucher proposal similar to SCS/SB 160 (Koenig). SCS/SB 160 was approved by the Senate Ways and Means Committee last week and is now on the Senate calendar awaiting floor debate.

The bills would each create a tax credit for contributions to largely unaccountable third party "scholarship organizations" that would hand out scholarships that allow a student to attend a private or home school or pay tuition to a different school district or a charter school. The SCS/SB 160 reduces the total cap from \$50 million to \$25 million per year. The Association continues to vigorously oppose diversion of public funds to unaccountable third-party bureaucracies or to private and home schools that are not subject to public school standards.

SUNSHINE LAW

The Senate Government Reform Committee heard SB 132 (Emery) on February 12. The bill allows closure of certain constituent and legislative records of members of the General Assembly. The Association is concerned that the language is overbroad and opposes the bill. Missouri's Sunshine Law requires that governmental meetings, records, votes, actions, and deliberations shall be open to the public unless otherwise provided by law. Further, the Sunshine Law shall be liberally construed and its exceptions strictly construed to promote this public policy. To respect this policy, any changes must be carefully worded and narrowly drawn to serve a specific purpose.

REDISTRICTING

The Senate Rules, Joint Rules, Resolutions & Ethics Committee heard SB 213 (Hegeman) on February 12. The bill requires the nonpartisan state demographer to establish the Redistricting Public Comment Portal for the purpose of publicly accepting any comments, records, documents, maps, data files, communication, or information of any kind relating to the redistricting process. Any such submissions shall be accompanied by a disclosure that indicates whether the person making the submission was responsible in whole or in part for the submission or another person contributed money that was intended to fund preparation of the submission and, if so, the disclosure shall additionally identify each such contributor. The Association believes the bill creates additional openness in the redistricting process and supports the bill.

INITIATIVE PETITION REQUIREMENTS

The Senate Local Government and Elections Committee met on February 13 and heard three SJRs pertaining to signature requirements for initiative petitions. Under current law, initiative petitions proposing constitutional amendments must be signed by 8% of the legal voters in each of six of the eight Congressional districts and initiative petitions to amend statute must be signed by 5 percent of those voters. Each of the three measures increases the signature requirements, and two of the measures would also require a supermajority vote for approval of an initiative petition. The Association opposes these measures that would make it harder and more costly for citizens to bring forward relevant policies through the initiative process.

SJR 1 (Sater) requires petitions to amend the Constitution to be signed by 15% of the legal voters in each of all eight Congressional districts. SJR 7 (Cierpiot) requires initiative petitions to amend the Constitution be signed by 5.8 percent of the legal voters in each of all eight Congressional districts and

initiative petitions to amend statute must be signed by 3.6 percent of such voters. SJR 11 (Burlison) requires petitions amending the Constitution to be signed by 8% of the legal voters in each of all eight Congressional districts. SJR 11 also requires petitions to receive a two-thirds majority vote to be adopted. SJR 1 requires a two-thirds majority to be adopted except for petitions to repeal an amendment adopted through the initiative petition process prior to December 2020.

NONPARTISAN COURT PLAN

The Senate Government Reform Committee heard SJR 3 (Hegeman) on February 12. This proposed constitutional amendment, if approved by the qualified voters of this state, provides that when a judicial vacancy occurs in a court under the Nonpartisan Court Plan, the Governor shall appoint the new judge from a list of names of all qualified applicants, submitted by a nonpartisan judicial commission, rather than from a list of only three names. The number of nominees on the list is not limited, but shall include at least three names. The Association urges the General Assembly to refrain from any changes in the Missouri Nonpartisan Court Plan.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee met on February 12 to hear SB 73 (O'Laughlin). SB 73 would substantially revise existing laws regarding reading intervention programs and establish a new reading intervention program for students in kindergarten to fourth grade. The bill removes the requirement that would make grade level promotion for certain students contingent on passing a reading examination. The Association concerned that the bill is overly prescriptive regarding the interventions required to be in an intervention plan and opposes the bill. The Association believes that key decisions about assessment, placement, additional instruction and advancement should remain at the local level with district, employee, parent and student input.

The committee also approved SCS/SB 16 (Romine) on February 12. The bill creates a new scholarship program to encourage adults to go back and complete college or other work-related certification. The bill refers to the new scholarship as the Fast-Track Workforce Incentive Grant. Under the SCS version, recipients must be at least 25 years of age with income under \$80,000 per year for a couple or \$40,000 for a single adult. Scholarships last up to four semesters or until they get a bachelors degree. The Association supports this effort to increase educational attainment for Missourians.

SENATE WAYS AND MEANS

The committee met on February 12 and heard two bills:

1) SB 52 (Eigel) regarding several state taxes. The bill lowers the top state income tax rate by an additional 1.1% (eventually creating a top rate of 4%), creates a state earned income tax credit, raises the state sales tax by two cents (from 4.225% to 6.225%) and caps the total of state and local sales taxes at 8.775%, though existing local taxes that exceed the total may continue. The Association is concerned that the combination of many large tax changes, coupled with the unknown impact of recent federal and state tax changes, will make it difficult to assess the likely fiscal impact of the bill. The bill may ultimately reduce state revenues that are needed to fund public education and other vital services.

2) SB 108 (Koenig) to modify provisions relating to tax increment financing (TIF). The bill would require an independent impact study that is not conducted by the redevelopment proponent, redefines

the terms for eligible areas and conditions, limits retail TIFs to retail infrastructure unless the project is in a blighted area or conservation area and prevents a new TIF in a vacant, unimproved or agricultural property, also known as a "greenfield" area. The Association believes the changes will increase public accountability of the local TIF process that can affect local school revenues. The Association supports the bill.

HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY

The committee met on February 12 and heard two bills:

HB 507 (Sommer) to create the Advisory Council on Safe and Strong Schools. The bill requires the Governor to appoint seven members to the advisory council. The council shall focus on safe school design and operation, gun violence prevention, mental health and wellness, school climate and discipline, physical security and emergency preparedness and substance abuse and gang intervention.

HB 631 (Rone) to revise the process for providing special education services. The bill appears to conflict with procedures provided under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

HOUSE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee met for the first time this session on February 11 and heard several bills:

1) HB 105 (Justus) to allow private institutions of higher education to appoint persons to be members of a campus police department.

2) HB 498 (Windham) and HB 732 (Mayhew) are identical bills to specify that A+ schools grants shall be distributed to colleges prior to any other financial aid sources.

STUDENT DATA PRIVACY

The House Special Committee on Career Readiness heard HB 592 (Trent) on February 13. The bill creates additional requirements for protection of student data. The protections apply to schools, contractors that are given access to student data and school website operators. The bill also requires notice to the school and affected students and parents of unauthorized data disclosure. The bill also establishes a task force to study issues relating to student data privacy. The Association supports the bill.

STUDENT NEWSPAPERS

The House General Laws Committee approved HCS/HB 743 (Fishel) on February 13. The bill grants greater freedom for student journalists. The bill includes anti-retaliation provisions to protect student communications sponsors and other staff from possible retaliation by boards or administration for granting students greater editorial latitude as provided by the bill. The Association supports the bill.

TEACHER EXTERNSHIPS

The House Workforce Development Committee approved HCS/HB 462 (Shields) on February 11. The bill would increase opportunities for teacher externships. The bill creates a 50% tax credit for business costs incurred for supporting teacher externships and gives teachers credit for externships on

teacher salary schedules. The HCS requires the teacher to still be employed with a school district in December of the first year the tax credit is claimed and sunsets the program after five years. The Association believes the bill would support and respect teacher participation in business externships that can have a beneficial impact for students.

PROFESSIONAL LICENSES

The House Special Committee on Career Readiness approved HCS/HB 564 (Grier) on February 13. The bill provides that state licensing authorities may only disqualify a person from a professional license for a prior conviction of a crime if the crime for which the person was convicted directly relates to the duties and responsibilities for the licensed occupation. Licensing boards could no longer use vague and general terms such as "moral turpitude" for disqualification, and disqualification for an offense shall not last longer than five years, except for violent or sexual offenses. The bill appears to pertain primarily to occupations and professions regulated by the Division of Professional Registration. The Association believes this policy could also benefit teacher recruitment and retention.

WORKING AFTER RETIREMENT

The House Rules - Administrative Oversight Committee approved HB 77 (Black) on February 11. The bill will now be placed on the House calendar for floor debate. The bill would restore the 550 hours working after retirement (WAR) limit for community college teachers who are PSRS retirees. The Association supports this bill to correct this unintended change from SB 892 in 2018.

DIVORCE POPUP

The House Pensions Committee heard HB 723 (Pike) on February 12. The bill expands the options for survivor option popup of retired members in the case of divorce. Existing law provides options for those members who divorce on or after September 1, 2017 when the current law became effective. HB 723 creates similar options for survivor option popup for divorces that occurred prior to September 1, 2017.

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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

Charles E. Smith, President
DeeAnn Aull, Executive Director
Otto Fajen, Legislative Director
Sandy Smith, Administrative Assistant