



Legislative Update

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CAPITOL ACTION DAYS

Capitol Action Days continued March 2, when members from Governance Districts 1, 7 & 8 are scheduled to come to the Capitol.

Capitol Action Days are part of the Association's plan to promote positive policy for public education and take place on most Wednesdays during session, beginning in February. Members unable to attend on the Capitol Action Day for their Governance District can sign up to attend another Capitol Action Day.

For more information and to register for your Capitol Action Day, please visit <https://www.mnea.org/CAD>

SENATE PERFECTS READING BILL

The Senate gave first round approval to SS/SCS/SBs 681 & 662 (O'Laughlin) on March 2. The bill revises several provisions related to literacy and reading instruction and creates school innovation waivers. The perfected bill contains many provisions from SB 1076 (Arthur), a similar bill, and the Association supports the bill. The bill repeals retention in grade requirements for struggling readers. The bill requires schools to provide reading instruction, with appropriate evidence-based reading intervention, in the elementary grades, and requires assessment and intervention beginning in kindergarten. The bill requires systematic and explicit interventions for students with characteristics of dyslexia. An amendment offered by Sen. Arthur delays implementation of the assessment and intervention provisions until January 1, 2023.

The bill includes specific requirements on DESE to support literacy and help train teachers. The bill also requires schools to provide in-service teachers with professional development opportunities in literacy and reading instruction. The bill requires teacher preparation programs to adequately prepare teaching students to provide effective literacy and reading instruction and revises the educator preparation advisory board to involve more classroom teachers in designing this training.

GIFTED EDUCATION

The House gave first round approval to HB 2366 (Shields) on March 2. The bill requires districts and charter schools to identify and provide services and programs for gifted children. The bill requires a district to establish a gifted education program if three percent or more are identified as gifted. The Association believes that gifted and talented students need a challenging curriculum and a program that identifies and supports their unique needs. The Association supports the bill.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHINGS/WORKING AFTER RETIREMENT

The House gave first round approval to HCS/HB 2304 (Lewis) on March 1. The bill would create a state law establishing qualifications for substitute teachers that is similar to the State Board rule. The HCS also includes a provision for DESE to establish an anonymous, online survey tool for substitute teachers that will help collect relevant data regarding the pay, support, and experiences of substitute teachers across the state. The House adopted an amendment to revise language that provides a three-year waiver of the 550 hour/50% earnings limit for working after retirement to substitute teach on a part-time or temporary basis. The HCS also includes an emergency clause.

HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

The House gave first round approval to HB 1724 (Hudson) on March 1. The bill revises policies of public higher education institutions in recognizing student associations. The bill would prevent a public college from limiting recognition to belief-based student associations that require leaders to adhere to its beliefs, practice requirements or standards of conduct. The Association believes that organizations are strengthened by offering memberships on a nondiscriminatory basis. The Association opposes the bill as filed.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The House perfected HB 2325 (Patterson) on February 28. The bill would establish the "Workforce Diploma Program" that would create a new adult high school and industry credential program through DESE. The House also approved an amendment to add the provisions of HB 1856 (Baker). The amendment would create a policy that would allow students to receive credit for participation in out-of-classroom learning experiences as approved by the State Board of Education, a school board, or a charter school.

The House Workforce Development committee voted to approve HB 2190 (Henderson) on February 28. The bill pertains to liability claims in work-based educational settings and would exempt participating businesses from claims regarding negligent acts of students. The bill provides that schools may provide insurance to cover claims relating to work-based programs. The Association will work to make sure the bill addresses liability concerns and supports expanded opportunities for safe, work-based learning programs for students.

PROPERTY TAXES

The Senate gave first round approval to SS#2/SCS/SB 649 (Eigel) on March 2. The Association opposes the bill. The bill would gradually eliminate the tax on personal property in certain counties by lowering the assessment percentage, based on offsetting increases in revenues from taxes on property in other classes. The SCS included only St. Charles County, but an amendment offered by Sen. Brattin also includes the counties in his district: Barton, Bates, Cass, Henry, and Vernon Counties.

The Association is concerned that the bill would block school revenue growth and shift tax burden onto real estate owners. This shift would also create increasing disparities between personal property tax assessments across the state as various counties will see differences in the rate of assessment growth. The SS#2 also includes language to cap residential property liability for homeowners over 65 years of age and to cap the growth of individual real property assessments to 10% during a two-year reassessment cycle.

RESTRICTING MEDICAID FUNDING

The House Budget Committee heard HJR 92 (Eggleston) on March 1. The joint resolution, if approved by voters, would allow the legislature to restrict Medicaid eligibility requirements, effectively allowing the legislature to not implement Medicaid expansion as recently approved by voters. The Association opposes the measure.

PHOTO ID MANDATE

The Senate Local Government and Elections Committee heard two bills on March 2 that would require registered voters to provide a government-issued photo identification, including SB 670 (White) and SB 679 (Luetkemeyer). The Association opposes barriers that keep eligible citizens from voting and being politically active and opposes both measures.

INITIATIVE PETITION

The House Elections and Elected Officials Committee heard HJR 132 (Kidd) on March 2. The Association opposes HJR 132. The measure would increase the approval requirement for constitutional amendments, including those brought by initiative petition by requiring both a statewide majority vote and a majority vote in a majority of state House districts in order to pass. The Association is concerned that this measure replaces the simple majority requirement with a more complex and difficult threshold. This change could make it significantly more difficult to gain approval of a measure brought by the initiative petition process.

SENATE-EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee met on March 1 to hear two bills:

SB 769 (O'Laughlin) to allow creation of recovery high schools for students in recovery from substance use issues. The bill allows school districts or groups of districts to apply to DESE for authority to create recovery high schools in regions around the state. The Association supports the bill.

SB 781 (Moon) to prohibit transgender athletes from participating in competitive girl's or women's events in middle school, high schools, and colleges. The bill would override MSHSAA and higher education institution policies on transgender participation that generally align with NCAA and IOC policy. 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.

HOUSE-ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard three more bills relating to curriculum and instruction on March 1. These bills resemble many of the other bills on this topic already heard in the committee this session. The Association believes that curriculum decisions are best made at the local level and opposes all three bills:

HB 1484 (Ann Kelley) regarding prohibitions on instruction relating to race and history. The bill seeks to prohibit certain "concepts" about individuals based upon race or gender from being included in courses.

HB 1835 (Wiemann) to mandate that a detailed list of topics be included in social studies academic performance standards and include prohibitions on instruction relating to race and history.

HB 2189 (Mary Elizabeth Coleman) to place various restrictions on school curricula, place numerous restrictions on staff professional development and impose additional requirements for disclosure of curricula and instructional materials.

The committee also voted to approve two bills:

HCS/HB 1998 (Davidson) would allow school districts to issue school district-specific teaching permits for persons without a certificate of license to teach granted by the state board of education. The Association believes this additional certification path is not needed. The Association is also concerned that the bill would lower the basic standards for teachers and opposes the bill as filed. The HCS includes an amendment requiring additional public reporting regarding the use of ESSER III funds.

HB 2132 (Haley) to prohibit certain "concepts" about individuals based upon race or gender from being included in state mandated tests. The Association is concerned that the wording may create uncertainty regarding whether key events and topics in history could be covered in state assessments and opposes the bill.

HOUSE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee met on February 28 to hear HB 2602 (Henderson). The bill would revise funding allocations for institutions of higher education by making a part of the allocation based on various student characteristics including annual earnings after graduation. As drafted, the bill would create incentives for institutions to emphasize programs leading to high-paying careers. This change could adversely affect programs leading to lower-paying careers, including teaching, social work, and law enforcement. The Association opposes the bill.

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