



# Legislative Update

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## **CAPITOL ACTION DAYS - MEET IN THE BOARDROOM AT MNEA HEADQUARTERS AT 10 A.M. FOR THE BRIEFING!**

MNEA Capitol Action Days allow planned, face-to-face contact with legislators throughout the session. Capitol Action Days will generally be on Wednesdays starting on February 13 with Governance Districts 2 and 10 and continuing through the end of session in May.

## **PLEASE NOTE THE LOCATION CHANGE: MEET AT MNEA HEADQUARTERS AT 10 A.M. FOR THE BRIEFING!**

For details and contact information, please visit:

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

Your MNEA calendar includes the dates that MNEA Board of Directors members selected for your Governance District. If you are not able to attend on these designated days, feel free to contact Sandy Smith ([sandy.smith@mnea.org](mailto: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.

## **CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION**

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee heard HB 581 (Roeber) on February 5. 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 committee is likely to take HB 581 up for a vote next week. SB 292 (Eigel), a similar bill, will be 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 and SB 292 do not enact these reforms, and the Association strongly opposes both bills.

## **TAX CREDIT VOUCHERS**

The Senate Ways and Means Committee approved SCS/SB 160 (Koenig) on February 5. The bill is a tax credit voucher proposal similar to SB 612 (Koenig) from last session. HB 478 (Christofanelli), a similar bill, will be heard in the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee on February 12.

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.

## **HOUSE PASSES ETHICS BILL**

The House gave final passage (Third Reading vote) to HB 445 (Dogan) on February 7 by a vote of 103-47. The perfected bill limits lobbyist gifts to elected and appointed local officials, including lobbyist gifts to school board members and superintendents, incorporates revolving door policies and campaign contribution limits for local officials and changes the Sunshine law.

The House adopted an amendment that weakens the state's open records law, also known as the Sunshine Law. Missouri's Sunshine Law declares that it is the public policy of this state that meetings, records, votes, actions, and deliberations of public governmental bodies 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.

HA 3 (Schroer) would amend the Sunshine Law with a broad exemption to allow all governmental officials to close any records pertaining to "constituent" communications regarding any request for information or assistance. This provision is especially broad when applied to school board members. Since nearly all school board members are elected at-large, this amendment could allow school board members to close communications with any person in the district, since everyone in the district is a "constituent." HA 3 also allows an official to close any document received or prepared by or on behalf of the official and consisting of advice, opinions and recommendations in connection with decisions made by the public body. The Association opposes this amendment.

The Association's concerns are shared by news outlets around the state that have expressed opposition to this provision seeking to undermine the transparency reforms of CLEAN Missouri. For an example, see this recent article from the Joplin Globe:

[https://www.joplinglobe.com/opinion/columns/our-view-don-t-turn-out-the-light/article\\_d689bbeb-716b-5b91-a5ec-7a23799f87db.html](https://www.joplinglobe.com/opinion/columns/our-view-don-t-turn-out-the-light/article_d689bbeb-716b-5b91-a5ec-7a23799f87db.html)

## **SCHOOL START DATE BILL APPROVED BY HOUSE COMMITTEE**

The House Agriculture Policy Committee voted on February 6 to approve a House Committee Substitute (HCS) version combining two similar bills regarding school start date. HCS/HBs 161 and 401 (Knight) mandates that school districts start school no earlier than ten calendar days prior to the first Monday in September. The Association believes that school calendars should be locally determined and opposes the bill.

## **PRIMARY ELECTIONS**

The House Elections Committee heard HB 26 (Stacy) on February 6. The bill would require established political parties to create a closed primary system where only voters registered for that party would be able to vote in a primary election. For primary elections in 2021 and thereafter, the bill

would limit primary voters to those contained on lists created by the Secretary of State at least six months prior to a primary election. The Association opposes barriers that reduce access to voting and participation in the political process by all eligible citizens. HB 26 appears to prevent citizens from voting in primary elections if they move within six months prior to the election.

### **STUDENT NEWSPAPERS**

The House General Laws Committee heard two similar bills, HB 673 (Christofanelli) and HB 743 (Fishel) on February 6. Both bills grant greater freedom for student journalists. The bills include 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 bills.

### **WORKING AFTER RETIREMENT**

The Senate gave final approval (Third Reading vote) to SB 17 (Romine) on February 7 by a vote of 33-0. The bill will now move to the House for consideration. The House Pensions Committee approved HB 77 (Black), a similar bill, on February 5. The bills would restore the 550 hour working after retirement (WAR) limit for community college teachers who are PSRS retirees. The Association supports both bills to correct this unintended change from SB 892 in 2018.

### **PROFESSIONAL LICENSES**

The House Special Committee on Career Readiness heard HB 564 (Grier) on February 6. 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.

### **TEACHER EXTERNSHIPS**

The House Workforce Development Committee heard HB 462 (Shields) to 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 Association believes the bill would support and respect teacher participation in business externships that can have a beneficial impact for students.

### **COLLEGE COMPLETION SCHOLARSHIPS**

The House Workforce Development Committee voted to approve HCS/HB 225 (Swan) on February 4. The HCS version clarifies program eligibility for students. The bill creates a new scholarship program to encourage adults to go back and complete college, a certification or an industry-recognized credential. The bill refers to the new scholarship as the Fast-Track Workforce Incentive Grant. Recipients must be at least 25 years of age with income under \$80,000 per year. Scholarships last up to four semesters or until they complete the new degree or credential. The Association supports this effort to increase educational attainment for Missourians.

## **HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY**

The committee met on February 5 to hear two bills:

- 1) HB 169 (Gannon) to require public schools to teach students appropriate online behavior. The Association believes school districts should have policies in place to address this important subject.
- 2) HB 456 (Neely) to creates new provisions relating to a high school diploma endorsement in the subjects of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). MNEA supports flexible options and quality programs that help students meet their challenges and have academic success.

## **SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

The committee met on February 5 to hear presentations highlighting successful efforts in Missouri public schools. Presenters included school superintendents from Kearney, Leeton, Washington and St. Louis Special School District. The presenters highlighted a variety of innovative programs to provide students new opportunities to gain career and job skills, including the Northland CAPS program, the Pathways to Success teaching training program and student-run businesses.

## **REGISTER NOW TO ATTEND THE ST. LOUIS LEGISLATIVE FORUM!**

Missouri NEA's regional legislative events for 2019 conclude with the St. Louis Legislative Forum on March 7. These free events provide a chance for members to build relationships with area legislators and support their understanding of MNEA priorities and education issues. Plan to attend and invite fellow members, administrators and school board members who would enjoy and benefit from a discussion regarding support for public education!

**PLEASE REGISTER NOW** for the St. Louis Legislative Forum at

<https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/PoliticalAction/5.aspx>

Be sure to click through the "RSVP now" link for your event and then "Send RSVP" to register. For additional information contact Sandy Smith ([sandy.smith@mnea.org](mailto:sandy.smith@mnea.org)).

### **Legislative Update 2019**

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