



Legislative Update

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

Number 7
February 21, 2019
www.mnea.org

ACTION ALERT - ASK YOUR LEGISLATORS TO OPPOSE CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION BILLS IN HOUSE AND SENATE

SCS/SB 292 (Eigel) was voted out of the Senate General Laws Committee on February 19. The bill will be placed on the Senate calendar and could be taken up soon by the Senate. HCS/HB 581 (Roeber) could also soon be on the House calendar for floor debate. The two bills are substantially the same and would allow charter schools to be sponsored by outside entities (other than the local school board) and operate in districts around the state. The Association strongly opposes both SCS/SB 292 and HCS/HB 581.

ACTION NEEDED: PLEASE CALL, WRITE OR USE THE LINK BELOW to send an e-mail to urge your State Senator and State Representative to oppose the charter school expansion bills.

The message can be edited, and your message will have GREATER IMPACT if you add your own comments. This message is hosted on Action Network, which the Association now uses for Legislative Forum registration and other advocacy actions.

https://actionnetwork.org/letters/hcshb-581-charter-school-campaign-feb-2019?source=direct_link&

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. SCS/SB 292 and HCS/HB 581 do not enact these reforms, and the Association strongly opposes both bills.

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).

CAPITOL ACTION DAYS

MNEA Capitol Action Days allow planned, face-to-face contact with legislators throughout the session. Capitol Action Days continued February 20 with Governance District 1 and will continue 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>

HOUSE BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE MARKUP

The House Subcommittee on Appropriations - Education held and completed markup on February 20. Predictably, the proposed \$22 million increase to fund the new Fast Track scholarship grant program contained in pending legislation was targeted for reducing amendments to move funds to many other programs. Slightly more than \$4 million was taken from the Fast Track line and moved to programs including: \$150K for K-3 reading assessment, \$418K for DESE finance payment computers, \$400K for the early learning quality assurance report, \$701K for Centers for Independent Living, \$500K for the K-12 education costs of public placement, over \$400K for the Marguerite Ross Barnett scholarship program and \$1.5M for deferred maintenance funding for community colleges. The committee also moved \$150K from computer science education funding to the Missouri Scholars Academy. The next step will be for the subcommittee recommendations to be presented to the House Budget Committee.

TAX CREDIT VOUCHERS

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee approved HCS/HB 478 (Christofanelli) on February 19 by a vote of 8-6. Reps. Gretchen Bangert, Paula Brown, Karla Eslinger, Judy Morgan, Raychel Proudie and Kathryn Swan voted against HB 478. The bill is a tax credit voucher proposal. The HCS version requires annual audits of the third-party funding organizations and requires participating students to take annual testing in math and communications arts from a nationally-accredited test, but does not require participating students to take the state MAP tests.

The bill would create a tax credit for contributions to largely unaccountable third-party funding 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 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 approved SCS/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.

INITIATIVE PETITION REQUIREMENTS

The Senate Local Government and Elections Committee approved SJR 1 (Sater) on February 20. The joint resolution pertains 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.

SJR 1 requires petitions to amend the Constitution to be signed by 15% of the legal voters in each of all eight Congressional districts and also 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. The Association opposes this measure that would make it harder and more costly for citizens to bring forward relevant policies through the initiative process.

COLLEGE COMPLETION SCHOLARSHIPS

The Senate debated SS/SCS/SB 16 (Romine) on February 19, but did not bring the bill to a vote. The bill creates a new scholarship program to encourage adults to go back and complete college. The bills refer 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 for a couple or \$40,000 for an individual. Scholarships last up to four semesters or until they get a bachelor's degree. The Association supports this effort to increase educational attainment for Missourians. The SS also contains revisions to the Missouri Works Training Program.

Sen. Eigel offered SA 3, an amendment to slash the top rate of the state income tax by an additional 1.1%. This harmful amendment would reduce state general revenues by an additional \$1.05 billion in addition to the tax reductions already approved in SB 509 (2014), but not yet phased in. The Association opposes SA 3. SB 16 was laid over on the Informal Calendar with SA 3 and a point of order pending.

A+ FOR DUAL CREDIT/DUAL ENROLLMENT IN HIGH SCHOOL

The House Special Committee on Career Readiness heard HB 221 (Ann Kelley) on February 20. The bill expands the A+ program to dual enrollment students earning college credit in high school. Eligible A+ students may receive reimbursement for the cost of tuition, books, and fees for any dual-credit or dual-enrollment course offered in association with a public community college or vocational or technical school. The Association supports the bill.

STUDENT DATA PRIVACY

The House Special Committee on Career Readiness voted to approve HB 592 (Trent) on February 20. 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.

RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Senate Rules, Joint Rules, Resolutions and Ethics Committee heard SCR 13 (Emery) on February 19. The SCR would encourage schools to include courses on the Bible in education curriculum. The House Special Committee on Student Accountability heard HCR 13 (Trent), a similar resolution, and HB 267 (Baker), a bill that would allow school districts to offer elective social studies courses on the Bible. After the hearing, the House committee voted to approve both HCR 13 (Trent) and HB 267.

PRIMARY ELECTIONS

The House Elections Committee heard HB 922 (Taylor) on February 20. The committee voted to approve an HCS version of the bill on February 21. 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. The Association is concerned that this change may create barriers that reduce access to voting and participation in the political process by all eligible citizens.

WORKING AFTER RETIREMENT

The House Pensions Committee heard SB 17 (Romine) on February 19. The House finally approved (Third Read) HB 77 (Rusty Black), a similar bill, on February 18 by a vote of 151-4. Both bills would restore the 550 hour working after retirement (WAR) limit for community college teachers who are PSRS retirees. The Association supports these bills to correct this unintended change from SB 892 in 2018.

DIVORCE POPUP

The House Pensions Committee voted to approve HB 723 (Pike) on February 19. 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.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

The committee met on February 18 for an organizational meeting. The committee also heard a presentation from committee staff on the computer science instruction in Missouri and the potential for creating more computer science employment opportunities in the state. The report also considered the value of liberal arts education and the need to maintain a balanced approach to support all areas of academic study.

HOUSE ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee heard several bills on February 19:

HB 604 (Henderson) to authorize appropriations to fund consultants that would help support instructional improvements in a set of schools identified for improvement. This program will overlap to some degree with DESE identification of schools in need of comprehensive or targeted intervention as required under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The Association will work to ensure that any such program involves meaningful input from teachers and other stakeholders and focuses on the instructional goals of staff and leaders in the identified buildings.

HB 739 (Miller) to modifies provisions relating to preventing sexual misconduct in schools. The bill requires school districts to check with prior school employers regarding employee conduct. The Association will work to correct vague language in the bill that might violate the due process rights of school personnel.

HB 763 (Remole) to exempt private religious schools from certain state minimum wage law requirements.

SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Committee heard SB 259 (Romine) on February 19. The bill implements a new procedure for due process proceedings in higher education institutions for complaints made under Title IX of the Federal Education Amendments, which protects people from discrimination based on sex in education programs. SB 259 revises Title IX procedures at higher education institutions. The Association is concerned about the potential impact that related regulations put forward by Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos from the U.S. Dept. of Education would have on schools and the learning environment for all students.

HOUSE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The committee met on February 18 to hear HB 435 (Chipman) to prohibit public institutions of higher education from requiring students to live on campus, except for first-year freshmen who may be required to live in campus housing for their first year.

HOUSE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY

The committee heard HB 572 (Dinkins) on February 19. The bill would require schools to include ten hours of hunter safety instruction as a required part of middle school physical education courses and require high schools to offer at least one elective physical education course that includes hunter safety instruction.

The committee voted on two other bills on February 19:

1) HB 507 (Sommer) was defeated by a vote of 3-7. The bill would 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.

2) HCS/HB 169 (Gannon) was approved. The bill requires public schools to teach students appropriate online behavior. The Association believes school districts should have policies in place to address this important subject.

Legislative Update 2019

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