



Legislative Update: Session Summary

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REGULAR SESSION ENDS

The 2019 legislative session is over, and Missouri NEA was able to achieve some legislative progress while also protecting the reforms of CLEAN Missouri and defeating extreme attacks.

The Association was able to stop charter school expansion in HB 581 (Roerber) and SB 292 (Eigel) and the tax-credit style voucher provision in SB 160 (Koenig) while working with legislators to pass a focused solution to the pupil transfer law for students in unaccredited districts in the omnibus education bill, HB 604 (Henderson). However, HB 604 also imposes new restrictions on school term start date as of the 2020-21 school year.

The legislature debated many issues this session and some provisions were enacted into law. For more detailed information on other legislation, visit <https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/LegislativeActionCenter.aspx> to view legislative updates and other related information.

BILLS THAT PASSED

BUDGET

MNEA believes adequate and equitable school funding is a fundamental right for every student. The state must invest in classroom priorities that build the foundation for student learning: early childhood education, smaller class sizes and a well-rounded education that will prepare students to compete in the worldwide economy.

This year's budget provides an increase of \$61 million in formula funding for next year. The formula now allows all districts to count eligible, at-risk 3 and 4-year-olds attending district pre-K programs for funding under the school formula.

However, the state faces significant challenges on appropriations in coming years. Additional tax cuts from SB 509 (2014) will continue to reduce revenues as those cuts are triggered in coming years and will make it harder for the state to invest in public education. The legislature must commit to do more to meet the needs of all Missouri students.

OMNIBUS EDUCATION BILL - HB 604

The legislature approved SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 (Henderson). The original HB 604 authorizes appropriations to fund consultants that would help support instructional improvements in a set of schools identified by DESE for improvement. The SS#2 includes many other provisions listed in the following portions of this summary. The Association supported many of the provisions in the SS#2,

including SB 25, SB 205, SB 475, SB 478, HB 281 and HB 462. The Association opposed HB 161 regarding school start date.

SCHOOL START DATE

SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 includes HB 161 (Knight) and imposes new restrictions on school start date. This provision prevents local school districts from setting an opening date for the school term that is more than 14 calendar days prior to the first Monday in September (Labor Day). The new restrictions will not apply to the 2019-20 school year and will take effect in the 2020-21 school year. MNEA believes that school starting date, length of term and school calendar should be selected by the local school board in the manner determined to provide the most educational benefit for the students of the district. The Association opposed HB 161.

SCHOOL MAKEUP DAYS

SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 includes HCS/HBs 281 & 570 (Kelley) to allow school districts to implement alternative methods of instruction to avoid up to six make-up days, with DESE approval of the implementation plan. HB 604 also includes the provisions of SB 478 (Holsman) regarding forgiveness for excess inclement weather days during this school year, but the emergency clause was not adopted, so the provision will not take effect until August 28, 2019, and may not impact current school calendars. The Association supported both HB 281 and SB 478.

STUDENT TRANSFERS

SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 includes a revised version of SB 25 (Sifton) regarding pupil transfers from unaccredited school districts. The bill caps sending district tuition, allows receiving districts to specify capacity to receive students, clarifies transportation and allows in-district transfers. The Association supports addressing the transfer issue with reasonable caps on tuition payments by sending districts and allowing reasonable control of class size for receiving districts.

TEACHER EXTERNSHIPS

SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 includes HCS#2/HB 462 (Shields) to increase opportunities for teacher externships. The bill 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.

A+ FOR HIGH SCHOOL DUAL CREDIT AND DUAL ENROLLMENT COURSES

SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 includes SB 205 (Arthur) to allow A+ Schools scholarship to cover dual credit or dual enrollment for qualifying high schoolers. Funding for current A+ scholarships to postsecondary institutions must be funded fully before A+ scholarships will be provided for high school students. 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 bill adds a requirement that participating high schools demonstrate a commitment to ensure that all students earn credits towards any type of college degree while in high school. The Association supported SB 205.

SCHOOL FUNDING AND FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS TAX

SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 includes SB 475 (Cunningham) to require DESE to make a school funding formula adjustment to compensate for loss of school revenues due to the 2018 legislation reducing the financial institutions tax (FIT). The Association supported SB 475.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CONTRACTING

SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 includes SB 407 (Wallingford) to include at-risk students who attend early childhood education programs that are under contracts with districts or charter schools to be included for school formula aid. To qualify for state aid, contracted programs must meet certain program quality standards specified in the bill and to be established by DESE.

PREVENTING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN SCHOOLS

SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 includes HB 739 (Miller) regarding preventing sexual misconduct with students by school staff and volunteers. The bill requires school districts and charter schools to contact former public school employers before offering employment to new employees. The bill revises requirements for school districts and charter schools to provide information about former employees to prospective employers concerning sexual misconduct with students, requires certain school volunteers to have background checks, requires school board members to have additional training on identifying sexual abuse, requires students in grades six and higher to have age-appropriate training regarding sexual harassment and specifies that child abuse definitions apply to school staff and volunteers when outside of regular school hours or off school grounds.

DUE PROCESS HEARINGS IN ST. LOUIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 includes authority for the Board of the St. Louis Public Schools to have a hearing officer to conduct teacher termination hearings. The current Special Administrative Board (SAB) has this authority under law. The State Board of Education will remove the SAB and restore control of St. Louis Public Schools to the elected school board as of next school year.

RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 includes an expansion of the existing prohibition on religious discrimination in schools to apply to all persons, not just students and parents.

The legislature also approved SCR 13 (Emery). This non-binding resolution encourages school districts to offer elective social studies courses on the Bible. Regardless of any provision of a state law or resolution, public school instruction about religion must adhere to U.S. Supreme Court case law regarding the separation of church and state under the First Amendment. The Association believes that schools should teach the rights and responsibilities associated with the freedom of religion, the religious heritage and diversity of the United States, respect for the beliefs of others and the historical and cultural influences of various world religions.

SCHOOL BIDDING REQUIREMENTS

SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 includes SB 206 (Arthur) regarding school district bid requirements. The bill raises the threshold for existing construction bidding requirements to apply to projects costing more than \$50,000.

TRANSPORTATION HARDSHIP

SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 includes an amendment proposed by Sen. Schatz to include an addition to the districts for which the Commissioner is required to authorize pupil transportation hardship, if listed criteria are met. The additional area is an unincorporated area in Maries County that also meets existing distance criteria for school proximity.

CHARTER SCHOOL ENROLLMENT LOTTERY

SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 includes authority for charter schools to add an enrollment preference for students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch.

DESE PILOT PROGRAMS

SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 includes SB 218 (Hoskins). The bill establishes a pilot program for agricultural education programs in elementary schools. The bill also establishes a pilot program for social and emotional education in elementary schools.

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

SS#2/SCS/HCS/HB 604 includes SB 373 (Schupp) to make technical changes to details in the law creating the Holocaust Education and Awareness Commission.

SCHOOL RETIREMENT

The legislature approved HB 77 (Black) to restore the 550 hour limit for PSRS retirees employed as community college teachers. HB 77 was enacted with an emergency clause and became effective on April 16, 2019.

The legislature also approved the conference committee version of SB 17 (Romine). SB 17 is similar to HB 77 (Black) and restores the 550 hour limit for PSRS retirees employed as community college teachers. SB 17 also includes the provisions of HB 723 (Pike) regarding PSRS pension pop-up after divorce. The Association supported both SB 17 and HB 77.

MINING ROYALTY FUNDS FOR SCHOOLS

The legislature approved SB 202 (Romine). The bill provides that fifty percent of mining royalties from federal lands in the state shall be distributed to the public schools of the county. The county shall distribute half of the school funds based on attendance and half based on the amount of federal lands in the district.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The legislature approved SB 514 (Sater). The bill includes SB 358 (Sater) to revise the Health Professional Student Loan Repayment Program to include psychiatrists. The Association believes the bill will help create additional capacity of mental health service providers in areas of critical need around the state and supports the bill.

EDUCATION FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

The legislature approved SS/SB 306 (White). The bill allows remote registration of a public school student if one or both of the child's parents are being relocated to Missouri under military orders. Proof of residency shall not be required at the time of registration, but shall be required within 10 days of the student's attendance. The bill also establishes that the determination of eligibility for in-state tuition rates at public colleges and universities for military dependents stationed in Missouri shall be made at the time the dependent is accepted for admission.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

The legislature approved SS/HB 694 (Anderson). The bill revises employer access to the federal and state background check resources known as the RAP Back program for many private employers.

TERM LIMITS FOR STATEWIDE OFFICES

The legislature approved SCS/SJR 14 & 9 (Luetkemeyer). If approved by voters, the SJR would establish a two-term limit for the statewide offices not currently subject to term limits. The offices of Governor and State Treasurer already have a two-term limit.

STATE DEMOGRAPHER

In the midst of the debate on reversing the broader redistricting reforms of Amendment 1, the legislature approved SS/SB 213 (Hegeman). This bill adds to the reforms of CLEAN by creating a public portal for redistricting plan submissions to the nonpartisan state demographer.

WORKFORCE SCHOLARSHIPS AND MANUFACTURING INCENTIVES

The legislature approved SB 68 (Hough). SB 68 includes HCS/HB 225 (Swan) to create a new scholarship program to encourage adults to go back and complete college. The Association supported HB 225.

SB 68 also includes a state tax incentive for a large manufacturing entity. This language authorizes tax credits of up to \$50M designed to encourage General Motors to invest at least \$750M to create a new manufacturing plant in the state.

BILLS THAT DID NOT PASS

CHARTER SCHOOLS

The Association vigorously opposed charter school expansion bills this session. House majority party leaders worked to urge caucus members to support HB 581 (Roeber), but the bill lacked enough support to pass and was not taken up by the House. The Senate debated SB 292 (Eigel), a similar bill, but did not bring the bill to a vote. The bills would have allowed charter schools to be sponsored by outside entities (other than the local school board) and operate in many districts around the state. SB 271 (Emery) would have moved state authority to oversee charter school sponsors from the State Board of Education to the Charter School Commission, but the bill did not pass.

Guided by the revised MNEA Position Paper on charter schools, the Association opposed these bills and put forward alternative language to realize the goals of the Position Paper. Missouri NEA 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. School board sponsorship ensures that the board can plan the use of all school funds and implement the services and programs that meet the needs of all students in the community.

The Association also believes that all 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.

ATTACKS ON THE REFORMS OF CLEAN MISSOURI

Missourians voted overwhelmingly to support the reforms in Amendment 1. Missouri NEA made the passage of Amendment 1 a top priority in the November 2018 election. The Association also made defending the reforms of CLEAN Missouri a top priority of its legislative advocacy in the 2019 session.

HCS/HJR 48 (Plocher) would have undone the redistricting reforms of Amendment 1, but the measure did not pass due to a procedural mistake in the Senate committee during the last week of session. The Association opposed HJR 48. Majority party legislators appear likely to try to force a similar provision through the legislature next session.

Another key reform of Amendment 1 was to establish that legislative records are public records and subject to Missouri's Sunshine Law. HB 445 (Dogon) would have created local government ethics

reforms while crippling the Sunshine Law for all levels of government. SB 132 (Emery) would have exempted many legislative records. However, neither of these bills passed.

The initiative petition process itself was also under attack. SCS/SJR 1 (Sater) would have made it harder for citizens to use the initiative petition process in the future. SJR 1 would require more signatures in more parts of the state and then require a 2/3rds supermajority vote to pass a Constitutional amendment brought forward by initiative. However, SJR 1 did not pass.

The Association will continue to lead the fight to protect the reforms of CLEAN Missouri, the integrity of Missouri's Sunshine Law and the initiative petition process.

TAX CREDIT VOUCHERS AND EDUCATION SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

The Senate debated SS/SB 160 (Koenig), but the bill was not brought to a vote. SB 160 creates a new 100% state tax credit capped at \$25 million per year for taxpayer contributions to third-party organizations that will use some of the proceeds to fund accounts that parents can use to pay private school tuition and other expenses for students.

The Association opposes this and similar proposals to divert public funds to private schools not subject to the same standards of accountability, transparency and respect for the rights of students, staff and parents as apply to public schools.

ATTACKS ON SCHOOL RETIREMENT

HB 864 (Taylor) would have created a defined contribution option for PSRS active members, but made no legislative progress whatsoever. This bill would undermine the long-term financial stability of the PSRS defined benefit system. The Association strongly opposed HB 864.

WORKING AFTER RETIREMENT FUNDING

The Senate approved HB 563 (Wiemann) on May 17, but the House did not pass the bill. The original bill clarified that two state agencies (MHDC and EI ERA) would continue to be able to participate in the MOSERS state retirement system. The Senate adopted an amendment that would have refunded community college payments to the system due to the requirements of HB 892 from 2018 regarding WAR requirements for PSRS retirees working as community college teachers. The bill was not brought up by the House due to concerns that this type of refund provision is not permissible for the PSRS system under federal tax requirements of the IRS. The amendment may have put the current tax status of the PSRS system at risk, but the provision did not pass this session.

SCHOOL ELECTIONS

HB 361 (Roeber) would have changed school board terms to four years and moved school board elections to the November general elections in even numbered years, but the bill did not pass. HJR 19 (Christofanelli) would have moved all school bond and levy elections to the November general elections, but the resolution also did not pass. HB 363 (Roeber) would have placed additional limitations on school board member and employee advocacy with the legislature and further restricted their involvement concerning local school ballot issues, but the bill did not pass.

READING INTERVENTIONS

SB 349 (O'Laughlin) would have substantially revised existing laws regarding reading intervention programs and establish a new reading intervention program for students in kindergarten to fourth grade, but the bill did not pass. The bill removes the requirement that would make grade level promotion for certain students contingent on passing a reading examination. However, the Association is concerned that the bill is overly prescriptive regarding the interventions required to be in

an intervention plan and opposed SB 349. 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. HB 464 (Kelley) included many similar provisions, but also did not pass.

The Senate considered reading intervention language in SS/HB 169 (Gannon), but the bill was not brought to a vote. SS/HB 169 contained significantly revised language regarding state requirements for intervention for students with reading deficiencies. This language is similar in some ways to SB 349 (O'Laughlin), but addresses reading instruction and reading interventions broadly and does not contain as many specific mandates on instruction provided by schools.

SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA AND TRANSFERS

HB 465 (Wood) would have made several changes to the parameters of the school funding formula, but the bill did not pass. The bill would begin to move the local revenue deduction forward in time from the current 2004 base year. The bill would have a delayed effect on funding changes. The bill also enacts a broad transfer option applicable to all districts, including a tuition cap for sending districts and the ability for receiving districts to determine available capacity to receive transfer students. Similar pupil transfer provisions were enacted into law in HB 604.

EDUCATION TASK FORCE

HCS/HB 744 (Riggs) would have created the 21st Century Missouri Education Task Force, but the bill did not pass. The mission of the task force is to study Missouri's public education system, standardized testing, effective teaching strategies, workforce development efforts, and the sufficiency of current funding for K-12 and higher education and plan for sufficient future funding. The Task Force will make recommendations to the legislature. The Association supported the bill.

STATE TAX CUTS

Several bills, including SB 46 (Koenig), SB 50 (Eigel), SB 52 (Eigel) and SB 188 (Eigel), would have significantly reduced state revenues. The Association opposes legislation that would further reduce the state's capacity to invest in public education and other vital services.

TABOR

HJR 36 (Pogue) is a constitutional spending limit similar to the Colorado provision known as "TABOR", or the so-called "Taxpayer Bill of Rights." The joint resolution did not pass. Missouri NEA strongly opposes this unneeded restriction. The HJR would impose a permanent, constitutional spending limit on state government and would limit annual growth in state appropriations to a cost of living adjustment factor plus a population growth factor. The HJR also mandates automatic, **permanent income tax reductions based upon yearly revenue growth conditions.**

LOCAL PROPERTY TAX CUTS

HJR 23 (Lovasco) would have eliminated all property taxes on personal property. The fiscal note estimates that 2,800 local governments, including all school districts, would lose a total of up to \$1.5 billion in revenue, with up to \$1 billion of this loss affecting school districts. The Association opposed this resolution that would significantly reduce local school funding.

TAX DEDUCTION FOR EDUCATORS

HB 299 (Neely) and HB 364 (Kelley) would have given a full deduction for up to \$500 of unreimbursed expenses of a full-time teacher toward professional development or classroom supplies and equipment. However, neither bill passed. The Association supported both bills.

PROTECTION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

HB 350 (Hannegan) and HB 208 (Razer) would revise the Missouri Human Rights Act regarding employment, disability and housing to make discrimination based upon a person's sexual orientation or gender identity an unlawful discriminatory practice. The Association supported both bills. However, the bills did not pass.

HIGHER EDUCATION FREE SPEECH ISSUES

HCS/HB 576 (Dohrman) would have required higher education institutions to adopt policies on free expression. HB 837 (Kelly) would have prohibited public higher education institutions from discriminating against a religious student association or denying a religious student association any benefit available to any other student association. Neither bill was passed.

WORKPLACE ARBITRATION AGREEMENTS

SB 154 (Luetkemeyer) would have revised arbitration agreements between employers and at-will employees, but the bill did not pass. Missouri NEA believes the bill may allow employers to pressure employees to accept unfavorable arbitration terms that reduce the ability to hold employers accountable for discriminatory acts. The Association opposed the bill.

TITLE IX DUE PROCESS

SB 259 (Romine) would have revised Title IX procedures at higher education institutions, but the bill did not pass. The bill created 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. The Association is already 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. Additionally, differences between the new federal requirements and the process in SB 259 would have forced institutions to either be out of compliance with federal rules or state law, had the bill been enacted.

CAMPUS CARRY

HB 258 (Taylor) and SB 121 (Burlison) would have largely removed the ability of governing boards to ban the carrying of concealed firearms on public college and university campuses. However, neither bill passed. The Association believes that colleges and universities should have local control over the policies that control the presence of concealed weapons on campus and opposes this provision.

PRIVATE COLLEGE POLICE FORCE

HB 105 (Justus) would have allowed private institutions of higher education to appoint persons to be members of a campus police department, but the bill did not pass.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND MINIMUM WAGE

HB 763 (Remole) would have exempted private schools from certain state minimum wage law requirements, but the bill did not pass. Public employers, including public schools, are already exempted from some minimum wage requirements.

HOME SCHOOLS

HB 1139 (Baker) would have revised home schooling law, but the bill did not pass. The bill requires a local prosecuting attorney to have reasonable suspicion of a violation of law to investigate home school records. The bill also requires public schools to keep information about home school parents and students confidential.

HB 857 (Deaton) would have allowed home school students to participate in activities sponsored by a statewide activities association for the public school district in they reside. The Association believes that decisions regarding student participation in activities should continue to be made by the member schools that make up and operate these voluntary associations.

SCHOOL BUS CONTRACTING

HB 606 (Basye) would have allowed school districts to contract with municipal bus programs to transport pupils, but the bill did not pass.

SUPERINTENDENT CONTRACTS

HCS/HCB 7 (Roeber) would have enacted several restrictions on school superintendent contracts, but the bill did not pass. The bill limits superintendent contract terms in the case of termination for cause.

STUDENT NEWSPAPERS

The House passed HCS/HBs 743 & 673 (Fishel), but the bill did not pass in the Senate. The bill would limit a school's ability to regulate student work in school newspapers. This year's version 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 supported the bill.

INTERNET SAFETY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The House approved HCS/HB 169 (Gannon), but the Senate did not bring the bill to a vote. The bill would have required each school district to maintain a policy addressing appropriate education regarding Internet safety and social media awareness for students. The Association supported the bill.

STUDENT RESTRAINT

HB 1023 (Mackey) would have modified provisions relating to seclusion and restraint policies in public schools, but the bill did not pass. The bill requires each school board to have a policy on seclusion and restraint. The bill also creates requirements for reporting, notice to parents, and appeals to the school board with review by DESE.

SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAMS

HB 132 (Carter) and HB 309 (Walker) would require certain high poverty public schools to offer "breakfast after the bell." Neither bill was passed. The Association supports this effort to ensure that all students are in school and ready to learn.

GIFTED AND TALENTED STUDENTS

HB 112 (Sommer) would have required a district to establish a gifted education program if three percent or more are identified as gifted, but the bill did not pass. The Association believes that gifted and talented students need a challenging curriculum and a program that identifies and supports their unique needs. The Association supported the bill.

HUNTER SAFETY INSTRUCTION

HB 572 (Dinkins) would have required school districts to include ten hours of hunter safety instruction as a required part of middle school physical education courses and required high schools to offer at least one elective physical education course that includes hunter safety instruction. However, the bill did not pass.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

HB 1024 (Dogan) would have created a work group to do academic performance standards on workforce development and workplace skills, but the bill did not pass.

STEM DIPLOMA ENDORSEMENT

HB 456 (Neely) would have authorized a STEM endorsement for high school diplomas, but the bill did not pass. MNEA supports flexible options and quality programs that help students meet their challenges and have academic success.

SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT ACCREDITATION

HB 485 (Dogan) would have required the State Board of Education to modify accreditation standards for special school districts, but the bill did not pass. The bill attempts to ensure that accreditation standards applied to special school districts are those that are applicable to a student population consisting entirely of students with an identified disability. The Association supported the bill.

SPECIAL EDUCATION EXTRA COST FUNDING

SB 272 (Emery) would have revised the per pupil cost calculation for special education extra cost funding. The bill would exclude special education high needs funds from the district average per pupil spending that determines the threshold for those funds. The bill would increase high needs funding eligibility for all districts receiving the funds, especially for small districts with students with very high needs.

SPECIAL EDUCATION FUNDING FOR PRIVATE SCHOOLS

HB 476 (Bailey) would have authorized state appropriations of state general revenue to fund special education scholarships to non-public schools for K-12 students, but the bill did not pass. The Association continues to oppose diversion of public funds to third-party bureaucracies or to private and home schools that are not subject to public school standards.

STUDENT DATA PRIVACY

HB 592 (Trent) would have created additional requirements for protection of student data, but the bill did not pass. 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 supported the bill.

NOTICE OF CHANGE IN CUSTODY

HB 745 (Ruth) would have required courts to promptly notify school administrators of any change in a child's custody, but the bill did not pass. If the specific process can be worked out, this provision would help ensure timely notice to schools of any change in who is allowed to pick up a student from school.

PROFESSIONAL LICENSES

SB 318 (Koenig) and HB 564 (Grier) would have revised laws pertaining to state licensing authorities, but neither bill passed. The bills would allow licensing authorities to disqualify a person from a professional license for a prior conviction of a crime only 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.

VISITING SCHOLAR CERTIFICATE

HB 976 (Swan) would have added an additional category to the visiting scholars certificate, but the bill did not pass. HB 976 would allow for certification in a specialized area for teachers with a Master's or Doctoral degree in that area. The certificate remains a one-year certificate that may be renewed up to two additional years with satisfactory evaluation from an employing district.

PRIMARY ELECTIONS

B 26 (Stacy) and HB 922 (Taylor) would require established political parties to create a closed primary system, but neither bill passed. Only voters registered for that party would be able to vote in a closed 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.

ABSENTEE VOTING

HB 368 (McGaugh) would have allowed voters to vote by absentee ballot without giving a reason, but the bill did not pass. The Association supported this "no-fault" approach to absentee voting that would help encourage and support voter participation.