

School Counselor Legislative Report

Prepared for the Kansas Counseling Association and its members

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Activity slow on education issues

With about one-third of the Kansas Legislature new, lawmakers are spending time acclimating themselves with the issues. That includes education. The number of bills having to do with K-12 public education and higher public education is surprisingly low.

I would guess that the budget situation of the state is so severe, that issue is getting most of the focus.

“State checks will start bouncing in March”

State legislators wanting to carefully craft a solution to the state’s structural budget imbalance are faced with a timing dilemma. They don’t want to rush the process too much, but “State checks will start bouncing in March,” according to one lawmaker who understands the situation. An expert in the field tells me March or April. That includes payments to school districts unless the legislature deals with the problem.

Governor Brownback has proposed a plan to fill a \$1.1 billion budget hole over the next three years with mostly temporary solutions that have received a cold reception from legislators.

Tax increases would help fill the hole, but any income tax changes would not result in substantial revenue until 2018. That leaves a current year (FY 2017) budget hold of about \$350 million to handle.

So far, the most palatable of the unpopular choices offered by Brownback is liquidating the long-term investment fund of the state. That would bring in about \$317 million. Even veteran legislators seem to be struggling to understand how that option would work. In addition, it would likely result in a further reduction in the state’s credit rating.

Committee says, “Don’t mess with KPERS”

A new committee of the legislature is sending a message to Governor Brownback to leave KPERS alone. The House K-12 Education Budget Committee Thursday passed a resolution opposing Governor Sam Brownback’s proposal to delay payments to the Kansas Public Employees Retirement Fund. Brownback wants to save about \$85 million by delaying its transfer from the state general fund to KPERS.

The committee was created to get ready for whatever the Kansas Supreme Court decides on K-12 adequacy spending.

The recommendation will go to the Appropriations Committee, which could decide whether to include it into a formal House resolution to be sent to the Governor.

Regents update lawmakers

The President and CEO of the Kansas Board of Regents told legislative committees this week Kansas has the highest rate of students in the country that started at two-year public institutions and then finished their degrees at a four-year institution. Only five states had more than 20 percent completion rate. Kansas was the highest with 25 percent.

Dr. Blake Flanders warned lawmakers that reduced state support for higher education was causing tuition increases. **Those increases are driving up student debt.** Flanders said 63 percent of students graduate with student debt. Of that 63 percent, the average debt is about \$25,000.

Find your legislator

Want to contact your legislator to let them know what you think of any issue?

Here's a quick and easy way to do it. Just go to:

http://openstates.org/find_your_legislator/

Enter your full address, click on the magnifying glass icon. A map of your legislative district and the names and pictures of your state senator and representative will appear.

Click on their name to get contact information.

Bill tracker

Below is a listing of the bills we are tracking for the educator members of the Kansas Counseling Association. You can click on the bill number for more information. It will take you to the Kansas Legislature's web site, where you can read information on the bill.

Many bills will have a Supplemental Note or Fiscal Note. Click on SN or FN to get information in layman's terms.

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Bill Number and Sponsor	Bill Subject	Current Status	Last Action
HB 2048 House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee	School district plan addressing child sexual abuse; establishing Erin's law	In House Corrections and Juvenile Justice	01/13/2017 - House Referred to Corrections and Juvenile Justice

HB 2078 House Education Committee	Authorizing the reduction or elimination of property tax exemption by a school district	In House Education	01/19/2017 - House Referred to Education
HB 2113 House Appropriations Committee	Permanently exempting postsecondary educational institutions from the public buildings law under the personal and family protection act	In House Appropriations	01/20/2017 - House Referred to Appropriations

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