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Fwd: Capitol Watch: Slow Start to Session: Teacher Shortage, Evaluations Highlight Bills Introduced So Far

1 message

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To: Bridgett Heinrich <bheinrich@panaschools.com>

Fri, Feb 11, 2022 at 4:26 PM

February meeting

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: IASA <iasa@iasaedu.org>
Date: February 11, 2022 at 4:02:31 PM CST
To: jbauer@panaschools.com
Subject: Capitol Watch: Slow Start to Session: Teacher Shortage, Evaluations Highlight Bills Introduced So Far
Reply-To: iasa@iasaedu.org



Slow Start to Session: Teacher Shortage, Evaluations Highlight Bills Introduced So Far

We doubt when the General Assembly developed a three-month session calendar, set to end on April 8th, it anticipated the entire first month being canceled amid a surge in coronavirus cases. We further doubt it could have envisioned the second month of session being hampered by “snowmageddon” in its first week.

With the session calendar still not extended, we are technically one-third of the way through this General Assembly calendar. While floor action has been slow in the House and Senate, committees are meeting weekly and hearing a flurry of legislation.

While it is always possible the House or Senate extend deadlines, the current deadline for substantive bills to be out of Senate Committees was Thursday (2/10/2022). However, the House deadline for substantive bills out of committee is next Friday.

Without the appearance of an extension in either chamber, we could be looking at fewer pieces of legislation making it through the committee process this session. That would be

welcome relief for our schools after last year's record-setting session. Of course, shell bills can emerge quickly, so IASA will remain diligent.

We are currently tracking approximately 250 pieces of legislation related to education. Only a few proposals have passed through committee, but we are excited to report that many of those bills are positive for our local school districts.

Positive News and Relief for School Districts

One of the themes of the session so far is that legislators are acutely aware that our schools need relief. Bills that aim to help with the substitute shortage, target the teacher shortage and attempt to provide some short-term relief to a number of administrative mandates have been proposed.

HB 4139, Rep. Sue Scherer (D-Decatur). This proposal would create a new grant program that would function as a reimbursement for higher education tuition for teachers who attended a public university in Illinois and are currently employed as full-time teachers in a public school in the state. It would reimburse teachers for up to eight semesters of tuition and fees. Although this proposal passed unanimously out of committee, it is subject to appropriation, so it is unclear how far it may move through the legislative process.

HB 4256, Rep. Tony McCombie (R-Sterling). This bill is one of two sponsored by Rep. McCombie that aims to provide relief to teachers and administrators dealing with the ongoing realities of the pandemic. HB 4256 would afford districts the choice to suspend evaluations for teachers, assistant principals and principals for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years. This flexibility would be available for those employees who had previously received a "proficient" or "excellent" on their most recent evaluation. Additionally, this bill would prohibit the use of student growth as part of an educator's evaluation for the two school years listed.

HB 4257, Rep. Tony McCombie (R-Sterling). Rep. McCombie's second bill reduces the number of professional development hours required for a license renewal from 120 to 100 for any educator with a professional educator license renewal cycle that includes the 2021-2022 school year and waives the requirement for an administrator's academy credit for the 2021-2022 school year.

HB 4246, Rep. Sue Scherer (D-Decatur). This legislation would decrease the license reinstatement fee to \$50 from \$500 for those whose licenses have lapsed.

SB 3201, Sen. Napoleon Harris, III (D-Dolton). In an effort to assist districts with the substitute shortages they are facing, this legislation would allow retirees to return to the classroom for up to 150 days (TRS Members), or 750 hours (IMRF Members), without jeopardizing their annuities. During committee, Sen. Harris indicated he would be willing to amend the bill to allow for 140 days and 700 hours following union opposition, but was adamant the provision extend through the 2023 school year to provide districts with some relief for next school year with this ongoing concern. This proposal passed unanimously out of committee with several Senators weighing in with concerns they are hearing from their districts related to the ongoing shortage. This is evidence that communicating with your local legislators truly does make a difference and can create positive change in Springfield!

HB 4292, Rep. Bob Morgan (D-Highwood). This bill authorizes an additional \$1 billion in Pension Obligation Acceleration Bonds and extends the option for members to receive an accelerated pension payment in lieu of their annuity through June 2026. The current statute was set to expire this acceleration option in June 2024.

SB 3663, Sen. Sue Rezin (R-Morris). The legislation would allow for a reduction to required reports by school districts. Specifically, it would require ISBE to combine Periodic and Expenditure Reports into one report that would only be due two times per year - at the end of the second and fourth quarters of the fiscal year. It would also eliminate the need of school districts with only one school site to participate in the Site Based Expenditure

Process. Finally, it would combine annual financial reporting into two documents: 1) Budget Report, and 2) Audit/Annual Financial Report. This bill would further provide a two year reprieve on the submission of the annual statement of affairs and the reduction in force list to ISBE. All professional development activities required for license renewal would also be waived for two years from the implementation date of this act.

Other Bills

Of course, it's not all "relief, relief, relief" for schools up in Springfield. There have been a few bills advanced through committee that would impact schools and employees in other ways. Two proposals that would make changes to the performance evaluation process that we are currently in negotiations on:

SB 3981, Sen. Elgie Sims, Jr. (D-Chicago). This legislation would require a written notice of dismissal reasoning to be provided to any probationary teacher who is non-renewed during their probationary period.

SB 3983, Rep. Elgie Sims, Jr (D-Chicago). This bill would shorten the length of time for which it would take a probationary teacher to earn tenure. For certified employees earning Proficient ratings, the probationary period would be reduced from four to three years. For those earning Excellent ratings, the probationary period would be reduced from three to two years.

HB 2778 Veto Status Update

The Governor's veto of HB 2778 sent lawmakers back to the beginning of the legislative process for providing unlimited paid leave to education employees for absences related to COVID-19. We are continuing to make the Governor's office aware of our concerns with the items listed in his veto message and have been informed that an amendment to HB 1167 will be filed to carry the new language. IASA will be sure to communicate with members when the final language is filed.

Advocacy in Action

There may be a time this session where you will want to file a witness slip or provide testimony. Below are a few resources to help with advocacy efforts.

Here is a step-by-step process on how to file a [witness slip](#).

The [House](#) and [Senate](#) have both posted directions on how you can provide testimony for committees virtually.

If you are interested in reviewing the 240-plus bills we are currently watching, take a look at a new feature on the [Government Relations page](#) of the IASA website. We have created a members-only tracking document with bills sorted by category so you can easily see what legislators are up to in Springfield. Also, be on the lookout for a Leadership Matters article featuring a new advocacy tool our Government Relations team is planning to roll out this session!

Sincerely,

Madeline McCune
Director of Governmental Relations
Illinois Association of School Administrators/Illinois Association of School Business Officials

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