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## **EPLC EDUCATION NOTEBOOK**

### **Friday, June 28, 2013**

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**The EPLC Education Notebook (current and past editions) also is available by visiting the EPLC website at <http://www.eplc.org/category/education-notebook/>.**

*There are many moving parts to the important activities occurring in Harrisburg this week. Legislative sessions and committee meetings are being scheduled, held or canceled, and re-scheduled almost continuously; which is nothing unusual for this time of year. It will culminate most likely this weekend with final action on a budget, School Code legislation, and much more. For purposes of this Notebook, our reporting is CURRENT THROUGH NOON ON FRIDAY, JUNE 28. Next week we will provide the results and more details.*

### **PENNSYLVANIA STATE BUDGET UPDATE**

Early next week, we will report a summary of what the Legislature and Governor include in the 2013-2014 state budget as it is finally approved. We still expect final approval to occur in time (barely) to meet the midnight on June 30 deadline.

The good news about this budget that is nearing passage is that the cutting of funding for education and education-related items has stopped. Lawmakers are getting the message that Pennsylvania voters are very dissatisfied with the way state lawmakers have treated education funding in recent years. But actions by the Governor and state legislators to date do not begin to restore the massive cuts made during the past several years, and the subsequent harm to learning opportunities for students of all ages in the Commonwealth.

School cuts are a top concern for Pennsylvania voters, especially women voters. The Pennsylvania Budget and Policy Center (PBPC) and Public Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY) released on June 24 the results of a [poll](#) of Pennsylvania voters conducted mid-June. Of those polled, 28 percent ranked education funding for public schools as their top priority for the Governor and Legislature to take action on. Economic development and jobs ranked second with 27 percent, and other issues such as

healthcare, taxes, and roads and bridges were identified as priorities by 15 percent or less of voters. There are more voters who favor restoring funding to public education than voters who favor maintaining no tax increase. Fifty-five percent of voters would support a proposal that would include a small sales tax increase of .25 percent and delay a planned corporate tax cut; voters are more supportive of increasing their own taxes to restore public school funding when corporations share in the investment.

To see PBPC and PCCY's joint press release, [click here](#).

## **PENNSYLVANIA POLICYMAKERS**

The Legislature is scheduled to be in session this weekend, probably right up to the June 30 deadline, and maybe beyond midnight. The unknown is whether the Legislature will choose to return for voting session during the first days of July to finish business, or whether the Governor will demand they return to session sometime in July if he does not get at least some of his legislative "wish list" that includes changes in the state's liquor laws, pension reforms, and increased transportation funding.

### **House of Representatives**

- The **House Rules Committee** on June 20 **reported as committed** the five nonpreferred appropriation bills (**Rep. William Adolph**, R-165) that **appropriate funds** to the **higher education institutions** of Lincoln University ([House Bill 1465](#)); Penn State University and Pennsylvania College of Technology ([House Bill 1466](#)); University of Pennsylvania ([House Bill 1467](#)); Temple University ([House Bill 1468](#)); and the University of Pittsburgh ([House Bill 1469](#)).

The House bills appropriate the same amount of funding to the higher education institutions that they received last year, as proposed by Governor Corbett and maintained by the budget plan introduced by House Republican leaders.

House Bills 1465-1469 are similar to Senate Bills 725-729 (**Sen. Jake Corman**, R-34), but four of the Senate bills received increases through amendments in the Senate Appropriations Committee on June 26. All of the Senate bills in the package were unanimously approved by the Senate on June 27.

*All nonpreferred appropriations are treated as separate pieces of legislation and require per the Pennsylvania Constitution the affirmative vote of two-thirds of members in the House and in the Senate.*

- During the week of June 24, the **House of Representatives** passed the following legislation:
  - [House Bill 91](#) (**Rep. Eli Evankovich**, R-54) would make eligible **career and technical schools** for **Education Improvement Tax Credits (EITC)**. The EITC program provides tax credits to eligible businesses that contribute to an Education Improvement Organization (EIO) associated with a public or private school. HB 91 would include career and technical schools under the definition of public schools that can be served by EIOs, and reserve 10 percent of the total statewide tax credits available for businesses that contribute to EIOs that provide donations to career and technical schools. HB 91 was **unanimously approved** in the House on June 24 by a vote of [198-0](#).
  - [House Bill 1278](#) (**Rep. William Adolph**, R-165) would **appropriate \$41.689 million** from the **Public School Employees' Retirement Fund to the Public School Employees' Retirement Board** for the payment of all salaries, wages, travel and other expenses of the Board. This

appropriation is for the administrative operations of the Board only, and is unrelated to issues of contributions and benefits. HB 1278 was **unanimously approved** on June 27 by a vote of [199-0](#).

- The **House State Government Committee** on June 25 **reported as amended**, along party-line votes with Democrats voting in the negative, the pension reform legislation [House Bill 1352](#) and [House bill 1353](#) (Rep. Warren Kampf, R-157). **HB 1352** addresses school employees in the **Public School Employees' Retirement System** (PSERS), while HB 1353 addresses state employees in the State Employees' Retirement System (SERS). HB 1352 provides for a **defined contribution program for all new employees** in 2015 with an **opt-in allowance for current employees**, and a **contribution rate of four percent**.

These **amendments** (Rep. Daryl Metcalfe, R-12) were **adopted** by the Committee before reporting the legislation:

- Relating to calculating salary for future service accrued by current defined benefit members, will **determine the benefit** over the highest compensation **over five fiscal years**. For any money put into the System before January 1, 2015, the three-year criteria would be used, with the five-year provisions affecting only money put in after the effective date in 2015.
- Relating to the calculation of the annuity for those taking the lump sum withdrawal option, will make the **annuity and lump sum withdrawal** for pre-Act 120 employees when taken together **actuarially neutral**.

- On June 27 the **House Education Committee** reported the following legislation:

- [House Bill 198](#) (Rep. Ed Neilson, D-169) would amend the Public School Code to establish the **Dyslexia Screening Pilot Program**. The Program would provide evidence-based early screening and evidence-based intervention services for children with risk factors for dyslexia. The Department of Education shall determine three school districts that meet the criteria outlined in the legislation to participate in the pilot. The Program would operate in those three districts for three full school years to evaluate the effectiveness of evidence-based early reading assistance programs for children with risk factors for dyslexia, and whether those programs can reduce future special education costs. The Secretary of Education must submit an evaluation of the Program to the General Assembly no later than December 31 of the third year of the pilot, and recommend whether to continue, expand, or make changes to the pilot. HB 198 was **unanimously reported as committed**.
- [House Bill 974](#) (Rep. Rosemary Brown, R-189) would amend the Public School Code to require local school boards to convene a public hearing to consider placing an **Automatic Electronic Defibrillator** (AED) – a portable medical device used to treat sudden cardiac arrest -- in the district's public schools. The hearings shall take place within 90 days of the bill's effective date, and the school boards must within 90 days of their hearing approve or disapprove a resolution to acquire an AED for each school building. An approval would require the majority vote of the local school board. HB 974 was **unanimously reported as amended**.

The **amendment** which was **adopted** by the Committee:

- (Rep. Paul Clymer, R-145) Requires the governing body of each school entity to hold a public hearing on acquiring an AED for each school building, in addition to within 90 days of the bill's effective date, **every five years thereafter**. A school entity that already has an AED for each school building shall not be required to convene a public hearing.
- [House Bill 1559](#) (Rep. Frank Farina, D-115) would amend the Public School Code to require each school entity's **professional development** plan include four hours of training in **youth suicide awareness and prevention** every five years for educators in buildings serving students in grades 6-12. The Department of Education in consultation with the Department of Health shall

develop recommended training guidelines and materials. HB 1559 was **unanimously reported as committed**.

## Senate

- The **Senate Appropriations Committee** on June 25 **unanimously reported as amended** [Senate Bill 360](#) (**Sen. Bob Mensch**, R-24) which would establish the **Pennsylvania Community College Affordability Advisory Council** within the Department of Education. The Council would be charged with examining the viability and sustainability of the current community college funding model, accessibility of community college services, and long-term affordability of a community college education. It shall also consider the community college mission, including open access and workforce development. The Council **must issue a report of its findings and recommendations within 180 days after its first meeting**. SB 360 was **unanimously reported as amended**.

The adopted **amendment**, proposed by Senator Mensch, provides for an **advisory council rather than a task force** as it was previously drafted. The amendment is a change in name only; the composition and duties remain the same.

- On June 25 the **Senate Finance Committee** met to consider a series of bills, among them [Senate Bill 944](#) (**Sen. Anthony Williams**, D-8) which would establish the **Local Cigarette Tax Act**. The bill would allow school districts of the first class coterminous with cities of the first class to enact local cigarette taxes. This Act would apply only to Philadelphia and allow Philadelphia to enact a \$2 per pack tax on cigarettes to help fund the Philadelphia School District. Despite questions and concerns from some members of the Committee, SB 944 was **reported as committed** in efforts to move the bill to the Appropriations Committee and the Floor for additional consideration and a more clear revenue impact picture.
- The **Senate** on June 27 **unanimously approved** (50-0) the five nonpreferred appropriation bills (**Sen. Jake Corman**, R-34) for the **state-related universities** and the University of Pennsylvania for Fiscal Year 2013-2014. The bills in their original forms proposed the same amount of funding that the higher education institutions received last year, as proposed by Governor Corbett and maintained by similar legislation introduced by House Republican leaders. Earlier in the week the Senate Appropriations Committee provided increases and **reported as amended** the following bills, which were then approved by the Senate with the following appropriations:
  - [Senate Bill 725](#) would appropriate to **Pennsylvania State University** \$272.431 million. The adopted amendment by Senator Corman increases the appropriation for Penn College of Technology by \$2 million, which raises the total appropriation to **\$229.694 million**.
  - [Senate Bill 726](#) would appropriate to the **University of Pittsburgh** \$136.076 million. The adopted amendment by Senator Corman increases the appropriation for Rural Education Outreach by \$217,000, which raises the total appropriation to **\$136.293 million**.
  - [Senate Bill 728](#) would appropriate to **Lincoln University** \$11.163 million. The adopted amendment by Senator Pileggi (R-9) increases the appropriation by \$2 million, which raises the total appropriation to **\$13.163 million**.
  - [Senate Bill 729](#) would appropriate to the **University of Pennsylvania** \$28.137 million. The adopted amendment by Senator Corman increases the appropriation for veterinary activities by \$111,000, and the appropriation for the Center for Infectious Disease by \$13,000, which raises the total appropriation to **\$28.261 million**.

One bill did not receive an increase amendment in Committee, therefore was **reported as committed** and approved by the Senate for the following appropriation:

- [Senate Bill 727](#) would appropriate to **Temple University \$139.917 million**.

## **EPLC NEWS**

**EPLC continues to accept applications for the 2013-2014 Education Policy Fellowship Program (EPFP).** The 10-month professional development program begins in September and continues until next June. To read about the Education Policy Fellowship Program, including the 2013-2014 schedule, [click here](#). If you would like to discuss any aspect of the Fellowship Program and its requirements, please contact Program coordinators Mattie Robinson at 717-260-9900 or [robinson@eplc.org](mailto:robinson@eplc.org), or Ron Cowell at 412-298-4796 or [cowell@eplc.org](mailto:cowell@eplc.org).

## **DATEBOOK**

- The **National Alliance for Public Charter Schools Conference** will be held **June 30 – July 3** in Washington, DC. To see the schedule and to register, [click here](#).
- The **International Center for Leadership in Education** will hold its **21<sup>st</sup> Annual Model Schools Conference** from **June 30 – July 3** in National Harbor, MD. For more information, [click here](#).
- The **State Board of Education** will meet **July 10 – 11** in Harrisburg.
- The **House Select Committee for School Safety** will conduct a hearing pursuant to [HR 53](#) on **Monday, July 15** in Harrisburg.
- The **Special Education Leadership Summer Academy** sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Education will be held **July 22 – 25** in Bedford Springs. New and aspiring special education teachers, veteran special education leaders, and anyone responsible for providing leadership to those who work with students with disabilities are encouraged to attend. The registration deadline is July 10. For more information and to register, [click here](#).
- The **National Autism Conference** will be held **July 29 – August 1** in State College. The conference will provide evidence-based information to assist educators, providers, and families in developing effective educational and therapeutic programming for all students with autism spectrum disorders. To see the agenda and to register, [click here](#).

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