



PEI

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS OF IOWA

Legislative Update



THIS WEEK AT THE CAPITOL

The Iowa General Assembly finished its 7th week of the 2012 legislative session. The hot topics of discussion are very focused on education this year. It is keeping us very busy tracking the various bills, amendments, and subcommittee meetings. There has been testimony on specific points and philosophical arguments at the heart of most of the discussions.

This week was funnel week - which indicates the deadline for bills to be voted on and approved in committee before being put on the calendar for consideration by the House or the Senate. Legislators are now beginning full debate on these bills. Most legislation that didn't clear this first hurdle will have to wait until next year before being looked at again.

The big news is the passage out of committee this week of two different education reform bills. PEI was represented in the committee rooms during both votes. As a note, there seems to be less strict party affiliation in philosophy on some of the issues than there is on others that come forward for consideration.

Using Governor Branstad's education reform bill as a foundation, the House Education Committee passed House Study Bill 517 with amendments by a very close 12 - 11 vote on Tuesday night. Notable deletions from the bill were the Parental Advocacy Network, the Educator Identifier System and Education Placement Clearinghouse, and the proposal to move licensure into the Department of Education.

On Monday, the Democrat-controlled Senate committee on education proposed its own shorter version of a reform bill, which was discussed, amended and voted out of committee on Wednesday in an 8 - 5 party line vote. The Senate version raised concern on the part of Department of Education staff that Iowa would not meet the requirements to receive a waiver from No Child Left Behind, without student assessment being addressed in the legislation.

The House and the Senate reform bills as they stand now have some similarities but also have significant differences. They will both undoubtedly see amendments introduced as they come up for debate, so the final versions will most likely look different that they do now. If each bill is passed in the respective chambers, they will eventually move to the other chamber for approval. These multipart bills will generate a great deal of debate and public interest. PEI will update you with more details as they become available.

On February 22nd, Senator Brad Zaun introduced a contrasting bill (Senate File 2241) calling for the abolition of the Department of Education and the Board of Education and creating a program which would allow parents to direct money allocated for their child's education to the school of their choice. This puts an emphasis on parental rights and local control, but the general talk is that the bill is not likely to go anywhere during this session. To read the text of the bill click [here](#). We know that Senator Zaun has been getting quite a bit of publicity on his proposed legislation, so this could be very interesting before it is over.

A question on PEI's annual survey had asked members if they agree or disagree that Iowa should expand the choices to teachers in their retirement plans. More than 93% of respondents indicated agreement that the options in these plans should be expanded. Representative Dawn Pettengill has introduced a bill (House File 2347) which would

provide additional choices for educators. Click [here](#) to read the bill.

House File 2211 failed to pass out of committee this week. The proposal would have required employers to provide up to 200 hours of unpaid school activity leave each year for family or community members to participate in school activities.

PEI will continue to provide information on legislative activities of interest to our members. We strongly encourage you to contact your legislators directly with your opinions on these issues which will impact nearly every professional educator and student in Iowa. Click [here](#) to find contact information for your senator and representative.

Rob Gray
Member Services Director



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