



Legislative Session Nearing the Home Stretch

Work still awaits lawmakers but exactly when session will end appears uncertain

The Legislature has begun a two-week floorperiod that runs through Nov. 9. This will be the last floor activity during calendar year 2017. If all goes according to schedule, lawmakers will meet in three more, two-week floorperiods (one in January, February and March).

The 2017-18 legislative session is scheduled to adjourn on March 22, 2018. Although if the 2015-16 session is any guide, legislative leaders may call it to an end before that date. Throughout the state budget debate, tensions between the two houses were evident and unusually strong, given that both houses are controlled by the same party. Then, as we noted last month, came the actions of three state senators who sought and received veto promises from the governor in order to secure their votes in support of budget passage. This further inflamed those tensions, as several of those vetoed items were dear to Assembly leadership.

Typically, there is a mad scramble to pass bills during these last floorperiods as every incumbent lawmaker wants to have an accomplishment to tout as the campaign season approaches. Here are a few bills school leaders may want to keep an eye on as the session winds down.

■ Assembly Bill 307 and Senate Bill 236

Mandating School Construction Projects Be Competitively Bid:

These bills would subject school districts to statutory requirements to advertise for bids and to award “public works” contracts on the basis of competitive, sealed bids for projects that exceed \$50,000 in anticipated costs.

Not only would these bills increase costs, paperwork and delays for school district projects subject to the bidding mandate, they would deprive schools of the use of Design-Build project delivery methods as well as the ability to negotiate with trusted local contractors for these projects.

Often, local contractors have strong ties to their public schools and donate materials and labor for school projects in their communities. They also partner with their public schools to provide real-world career and technical educational experiences for students. **(WASB opposes)**

■ Assembly Bill 247 and Senate Bill 169

Allowing Permit-less Carry of Firearms/Possession of Concealed Weapons on School Grounds:

These bills would eliminate the general prohibition against going armed with a concealed weapon. Individuals could still obtain an optional concealed carry weapon (CCW) license under the bill to affect the applicability of the federal gun free school zones law to them or for purposes of reciprocity with other states.

As under current law, school boards could still post school buildings or grounds for trespass purposes; however, under the bill, such postings would not apply to a CCW licensee who possesses a firearm either in or within five feet of a motor vehicle they drove or parked on school grounds or in which they were a passenger. CCW licensees could also possess firearms on posted school grounds when there are no classes or school activities occurring at the school under the bill. **(WASB opposes)**

■ Anticipated Legislation

Sparsity Aid Expanded

(Sen. Marklein/Rep. Mursau): This anticipated legislation, which was not yet introduced at the time of this writing, would increase Sparsity Aid payments by \$100 in 2018-19 from \$300 per pupil to \$400 per pupil for the roughly 140-plus districts that currently qualify for Sparsity Aid. It would also add a new second tier of Sparsity Aid by providing \$100 per pupil in 2018-19 for roughly 35 or so “sparse” districts with between 746 and 1000 pupils and fewer than 10 pupils per square mile.

The proposal mirrors provisions the governor had included in the budget bill he recommended to the Legislature. (During debate, lawmakers scrapped those provisions, in part to provide low-revenue districts with flexibility to raise additional revenues locally by raising the low-revenue ceiling. In the end, the governor vetoed those provisions and neither the sparsity aid increase nor the low-revenue ceiling adjustment was enacted as part of the state budget.) **(WASB supports)**

■ Upcoming Advocacy Events

We look forward to seeing many of you at the WASB Legislative Advocacy Conference in Stevens Point on Nov. 4. As you plan your State Education Convention schedule, make sure to circle the WASB Legislative Update session on Friday morning, Jan. 19. ■

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