

A Leg Up

The Weekly Legislative Update for the Clark County School District

March 23, 2013

We extend a huge thank you to those of you who attended this morning's hearing on the Distributive School Account (DSA), either in Carson City or via videoconferencing at the Sawyer Building in Las Vegas. It was standing room only in the hearing room at the Sawyer Building, with an overflow room filled to capacity, as well. Senator Debbie Smith (D-Washoe) chairs the Joint K-12 Subcommittee, and took public input throughout the hearing. My personal favorite was the teacher who attended with his two young children, all three wearing t-shirts with the phrase, "*Cuts in education never heal*" on the front. Many convincing and heartfelt comments were shared by multiple speakers, and we applaud all who were willing to give up a Saturday morning at the front end of Spring Break. THANK YOU!

Monday (March 18) was the deadline for individual legislators to have their bills introduced and both houses met into the evening hours to provide a first reading for the bills. By the end of the day, we added 48 additional bills to our tracking list. Another deadline will take place on Monday (March 25): bills sponsored by committees must be introduced by midnight. We anticipate getting a few more bills added to our list, but don't expect the floor sessions to go into the evening hours.

Now that plenty of bills are ready for committee hearings, the afternoon committees on the Senate side have run into a snag. Two members of Senate Education also sit on Senate Commerce, which meets on the same days as Senate Education (Monday and Wednesday) but starts at 1:30 p.m. Senate Commerce has a large number of bills on its docket, so we've been informed that the start time of Senate Education will be 15 minutes after the adjournment of Senate Commerce. On Wednesday, the education groupies convened in the hearing room at 3:30, as usual, and waited over an hour for Senate Commerce to conclude so Senate Education could begin. There has been some discussion about changing the start time of Senate Education to 5:00 p.m. so the meeting would have a definite start time and participants and observers wouldn't have to spend so much time waiting for the meeting to begin. So far that is just talk, but if the change is made, we'll be sure to let you know.

This Week

MONDAY, MARCH 18

Following the deadline for legislator bill introductions, we added a few dozen bills to our tracking list. Here are a few of the more interesting bills – we'll provide more details as these bills come up for hearings:

- AB261, 265 and AB377 Three separate bills dealing with the offense of sexual conduct between school district employees or volunteers at a school and a pupil
- AB272 ELL programs (English Mastery Council to create plan for ELL literacy)
- SB291 ELL pre-kindergarten program
- AB288 Changes to the Nevada High School Proficiency Exam
- AB357 Regional Professional Development Center

- AB376 and SB240 Reimbursement to teachers for classroom expenses
- SB311 Parent Trigger bill
- SB392 Reporting of gifts to school boards
- SB407 Teacher evaluations

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20:

Assembly Education heard testimony on AB210, a bill which would require an IEP team to consider additional factors when developing an IEP for hearing impaired students.

Once Senate Education finally began, two bills were heard: SB 164, a bill that further strengthens the legacy of anti-bullying bills sponsored by Senator David Parks. This version provides for additional training and reporting requirements, and CCSD offered an amendment to further clarify the definition of bullying. The committee also heard SB 207 –a bill calling for the elimination of outdated, unnecessary and/or duplicative reports. We were enthusiastically in support of that bill!

SATURDAY, MARCH 23:

As mentioned in the opening paragraph, the Joint K-12 Committee held a rare Saturday hearing on the DSA to ensure committee members had the opportunity to hear from education leaders regarding education programs, as well as provide time for public input. Much of the focus today centered on class size. With class sizes in Clark County well above recommended levels (38 students per class for grades 6-12; 34 students for grades 4 and 5; grades 1-3 requiring waivers from the class size requirements for primary grades), we appreciated the questions and requests for information from the committee on this important topic. CCSD's newly-designated Interim Superintendent Pat Skorkowsky was one of the individuals called to the table by legislators and he did an excellent job talking about the needs of Clark County students. For coverage in the Las Vegas Sun, visit: <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2013/mar/23/skorkowsky-other-educators-press-more-money-reduce/>

Coming Up

Be sure to check out the attached hearing schedule for a list of bills that are – as of Friday – scheduled to be heard this week. Be sure to check the website frequently as things change often. Now that bills have finally been introduced, we expect the hearing schedule to become much more hectic. Stay tuned and put on your seat belts!

Here's a Tidbit

Since Tuesday is Nevada Youth Legislature Day, take a minute to review the NYL website. This robust program was the pet project of term-limited Senator Valerie Wiener (D-Clark), who continues to provide service to this excellent group of youth. Senator Wiener envisioned a program that would train outstanding students to participate in the legislative process and hopefully entice a new generation of citizens to continue providing service to the State of Nevada as they get older. Visit <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/Senate/NVYouthLegislature/> to learn more.