

New Hampshire School Boards Association Legislative Bulletin March 2, 2007



A Quick Summary of NH Legislative Happenings

The legislature took a break this week and had no scheduled activity. There were no hearings and no legislative sessions, and the State House was pretty quiet! But all that is about to change: the House will be in session Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday while the Senate meets Thursday afternoon. Legislative hearings commence on Monday and the next few weeks will certainly be busy as deadlines loom and we approach crossover next month.

The House sessions will be voting on recommendations for the following bills:

HB 37, notification requirements for criminal offenders: Ought to Pass as Amended (OTP/A). The amended version of the bill requires school districts to adopt a policy designating certain categories of volunteers who may be required to undergo a criminal history records check. Immunity from civil or criminal liability is provided when the district has followed adopted policy procedures. The bill also *allows* local law enforcement agencies to notify the superintendent of an SAU, and any principal, of criminal offenders expected to reside within the district.

HB 661, establishing an executive planning commission on special education: Ought to Pass (OTP). This bill creates a planning commission consisting of the governor, commissioners of education, health and human services, and regional technical colleges, and the chancellor of the university system, to develop a plan for an improved comprehensive, systemic, and sustained approach to providing special education services. Specific areas of focus for the commission include technical assistance, pre-service and in-service professional development and improved coordination among personnel, strategies to address personnel shortages, dissemination of best practices and methods to assist schools.

HB 669, providing grants of \$1,200 per kindergarten pupil and removing the repeal date on the kindergarten construction aid program: Ought to Pass as Amended (OTP/A). This bill puts into statute the provision for per pupil kindergarten grants for new kindergarten programs until such time as the pupils are counted in the ADM of the district for adequate education grants. The bill also extends the kindergarten construction aid program by removing the repeal date currently set for June 2008. A separate bill to extend kindergarten construction aid, **HB 651**, was recommended Inexpedient to Legislate (ITL) since it is no longer necessary.

HB 752, increasing per pupil charter school grants: Ought to Pass as Amended (OTP/A). This bill provides a modest increase in adequacy/equity grants to those charter schools that bypass local voter approval and receive authorization instead directly from the state. Beginning next year, the per pupil aid is set at \$4,000, with annual increases thereafter based on the northeast region consumer price index.

HB 422, allowing local communities to grant property tax abatements to homeowners whose children are enrolled in schools other than the local public schools: Inexpedient to Legislate (ITL).

HB 693, establishing a school choice certificate program: Inexpedient to Legislate (ITL).

Upcoming Activity in the New Hampshire Legislature

Special Education: The House Education Committee has scheduled several special education bills for hearings this week, including:

HB 678, revising the special education program approval and monitoring process.

HB 677, relative to special education procedural safeguards and the dispute resolution process.

HB 679, relative to delivery of special education services.

HB 766, making changes to certain laws relating to special education.

Adequate Education: The House Education Committee retained several bills relating to defining an adequate education so that all education adequacy bills may be reviewed together by a sub-committee. The sub-committee will make recommendations to the full education committee. Members on the sub-committee are: James Dunn (D, Keene), James O'Neil (D, Merrimack), Scott Merrick (D, Lancaster), Kim Casey (D, E. Kingston), Charles Yeaton (D, Epsom), David Hess (R, Hooksett), Sharon Carson (R, Londonderry), and Nancy Stiles (R, Hampton). The sub-committee has meetings scheduled for Tuesday, March 6 at 3 pm, Monday, March 12 at 10 am, and Wednesday, March 14 at 2:30 pm.

The Joint Legislative Task Force on Defining "Adequacy" in Education continues to hold forums to gather public input on the definition of educational adequacy.

Remaining forums are scheduled for 6:30 – 8:00 pm on:

Monday, March 5, Dover City Hall Auditorium

Monday, March 12, Claremont Maple Avenue Elementary School

NH Public Television videotapes each forum and makes them available on its website via streaming video (<http://www.nhptv.org/outlook/edforums.asp>). Written public comment can also be submitted through the taskforce's e-mail address: adequacy@leg.state.nh.us .

Budget: Deliberations continue on the state budget. The Department of Education is scheduled to appear before the Finance Committee on Thursday, March 8: Division II of Finance has scheduled a work session on the education budget for Wednesday, March 14 at 11:00 am.

For the complete text of any bill, go to <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/ns/billstatus/quickbill.html> and enter the bill number, e.g. HB678, or SB78 (no spaces!), and make sure the Session Year is 2007.

*Make sure your local representatives know where their school board stands on important legislative proposals. Keep your legislators informed and aware. **Remember that you, through NHSBA, are the only locally elected officials that "speak" exclusively***

for public education in NH. Need some help? Learn how you can be involved in NHSBA'S Legislative Advocacy Network and make your board's voice heard.

Call NHSBA (800-272-0653) or (603-228-2061) today and be part of the team. For more information or details, or for information on specific legislation, please call Dean Michener at 603-228-2061.

-- Dean Michener, Associate Director
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