

**New Hampshire School Boards Association
Legislative Bulletin
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A Quick Update from the State House

SPECIAL SESSION

Both the House and Senate met in Special Session on Tuesday. The stated reason was to address the format of ballots for the upcoming session. Several attempts were made to allow for consideration of a possible constitutional amendment to address school funding issues as a result of the recent Londonderry decision; all attempts failed. The House and Senate both passed different versions of a bill (SB 1) regarding the format of ballots, thus providing no closure on a proposed legislative remedy. The court has also ruled against the Secretary of State's proposed solution, so...? Sound familiar?

Remember Interim Study Bills?

At the close of session last spring, most committees had some remaining bills assigned for Interim Study. The House Education Committee has two such bills: HB 1532, reviewing the special education statutes, and SB 268, the dropout bill raising the age of required attendance of children in school from 16 to 18, and establishing a 2-year pilot program for increasing vocational education opportunities in Manchester and Nashua. The House Finance Committee has several bills, including two education bills: HB 1384, relative to standardizing the format for special education budgets, and HB 1601, making changes to the Catastrophic Aid funding formula. The following is a quick "status report" on these bills:

HB 1532 - This bill was introduced to make several "technical" changes to the special education statutes, including language to bring state law into compliance with federal changes in IDEA. Meanwhile, a separate caucus, chaired by House Education Committee member Rep. Nancy Stiles, met extensively during the summer and fall to consider major revisions to the entire special education statutes. Rep. Stiles gave a report on the caucus's work to the committee studying HB 1532 (chaired by House Education Committee Chair Rep. Steve L'Heureux). In her report, Rep. Stiles indicated that the caucus addressed the substance of HB 1532 and that the intent of legislators on the caucus is to submit several bills for the next session. The bills will address current language and IDEA compliance, definitions and the role of NH Dept. of Education, delivery of services, payment and liability, dispute resolutions and impacts on charter schools. Any proposal will need to be filed as a bill for consideration by the next legislature when it convenes in January. Chairman L'Heureux noted that the full House Education Committee will meet October 17. At that time, the committee can vote to recommend, or not recommend, HB 1532 for future legislation: if recommended, a committee member would file an LSR, i.e. intent to submit legislation for next session.

SB 268 - This bill was a direct result of the Governor's initiative on raising the age of compulsory school attendance from 16 to 18. Governor Lynch appeared and spoke on behalf of the legislation and how we cannot afford to "give-up" on those children seeking to dropout at an early age. The interim study committee took no formal action, but Chairman L'Heureux indicated his hope that the full House Education Committee will recommend the bill for future legislation when it meets in October. HB 1384 - Division II of Finance met to consider this interim study bill requiring school districts to prepare a separate special education budget to be provided to the school district legislative body. The budget would provide line item cost details including salaries and benefits as well as overhead cost allocations based on percentage of space used. Division II failed to arrive at a consensus on the bill, with two tie votes on separate recommendations. The

bill will now go to the full House Finance Committee with no recommendation.

HB 1601-D Division II also considered this bill revising the Catastrophic Aid formula. The bill seeks to lower the threshold for aid eligibility from 3.5 to 3.0 times the district cost/pupil, and cap the local maximum expenditure at 8.0, instead of 10.0, times the district cost/pupil. A majority of committee members believed that more information, and thus further study, was needed before this bill could go forward. Division II voted to recommend further study to the full House Finance Committee. If this recommendation is adopted, a committee member will need to file legislative intent (LSR) to keep the bill alive next session.

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.