



Pennsylvania School Boards Association

legislative report

June 16, 2016

Please disregard the Legislative Report that you received earlier today. Here is the corrected version. Please accept our apologies.

The General Assembly was in session this week. The House will reconvene on Monday, June 20, and the Senate will reconvene on Wednesday, June 22. Both chambers are scheduled to remain in session through June 30.

Pension Reform **Amended pension plan passes the House, returns to Senate for concurrence**
This week the House of Representatives passed pension reform under [Senate Bill 1071](#) (Sen. Browne, R-Lehigh) after gutting the language and inserting an amendment offered by Rep. Mike Tobash (R-Schuylkill). The amendment was adopted with a vote of [150-41](#), and included 46 Democrats voting in favor of the plan. Final passage in the House occurred with a vote of [136-59](#); the bill will now return to the Senate for concurrence on the House amendments.

This bill creates a stacked hybrid plan for future state and school employees first hired after Jan. 1, 2018, with no changes to benefits for current employees. The plan contains a traditional defined benefit (DB) component and a defined contribution (DC) component similar to a 401 (k)-style plan.

Under the DB component, the benefit formula would be equivalent to the 2% benefit accrual rates multiplied by the worker's years of service (up to 25 years), multiplied by the final average salary (highest five years), with an annual pay limit equal to the threshold. The salary limit would start at \$50,000 and be indexed by 3% annually. Salary above the limit is invested in the DC plan; after 25 years of service, all employee earnings are subject to the DC component.

Under the DC component, workers would contribute 1.5% of salary under the threshold and 7.5% of salary for earnings above the threshold. Employers would contribute 0.5% of salary under the threshold and 4% of salary on earnings above the threshold.

The bill's future in the Senate is uncertain amid criticism that the reform plan doesn't do enough to produce significant short-term or long-term savings for employers or taxpayers.

Two weeks remaining to submit proposals for PSBA's 2017 Legislative Platform, survey issued this week for select priority issues



School boards have two weeks remaining to become involved in the development of PSBA's Legislative Platform and selection of top priority issues. The platform is PSBA's official record of positions on legislative issues and is the guide for the association's advocacy efforts.

The deadline for school boards to submit proposals to be considered for the 2017 Legislative Platform is Thursday, June 30. All proposals must be approved by your board before they can be submitted. They will be reviewed by the PSBA Platform Committee on Saturday, July 30 and receive final consideration by the PSBA Delegate Assembly on Saturday, Oct. 15. [Click here for details and](#)

[submission forms.](#)

In addition, this year school directors are invited to participate in a separate process to select PSBA's Legislative Priorities for the upcoming 2017-18 session of the General Assembly.

This week all school directors were emailed a priority issue survey. Please respond to the survey by June 30; the results will be presented to the Platform Committee and recommendations will be presented to the Delegate Assembly for a final vote.

Latest News

Headed to the governor's desk

- [Notification of audio on school buses](#)

Passed by the Senate

- [Property tax reduction](#)
- [Tax exemption for surviving military spouse](#)

Approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee

- [2015-16 EITC \(Educational Improvement Tax Credits\)](#)
- [Extension on professional education requirements](#)

Approved by the Senate Education Committee

- [SchoolWATCH \(Public School Web Accountability and Transparency Act\)](#)
- [In God We Trust](#)
- [College students as substitute teachers](#)

Approved by the Senate Communications and Technology Committee

- [Breach of personal information](#)

Passed by the House of Representatives

- [School security drills](#)
- [School psychologists](#)

Approved by the House Education and Rules Committees

- [E-chievement hybrid learning grants](#)
- [Teacher training for secondary transition services](#)
- [PDE online course clearinghouse](#)

Approved by the House Judiciary Committee

- [Interagency information sharing in child welfare cases](#)

Headed to the governor's desk

Notification of audio on school buses

[Senate Bill 1077](#) (Sen. Vogel, R-Beaver) removes the requirement of physical mailings for school districts regarding the use of audio on school buses. Instead, districts must include the policy in a student handbook and other publications that set forth rules and procedures of conduct. Districts also must post a notice of the policy on their website.

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Passed by the Senate

Property tax reduction

[House Bill 147](#) (Rep. Maloney, R-Berks) would allow for the elimination of residential school property taxes via the homestead exclusion. The bill proposes to amend the state Constitution by modifying the Uniformity of Taxation Clause and changing the ability of a taxing authority to move the exemption from 50% of the median assessed value to 100% of the assessed value of each homestead property within a local taxing jurisdiction. The state Constitution does not exempt property from real estate taxation; however, it does permit the General Assembly to grant exemptions within specific guidelines. An amendment to the Constitution approved by the voters in November 1997 added the exemption from the uniformity clause allowing an exclusion level of 50% of the median assessed value.

Constitutional amendments require approval in two consecutive legislative sessions and then approval by the voters through a referendum. House Bill 147 was passed by the House on Feb. 24, 2015. It will need to be passed in the next

legislative session before it could be considered by the voters.

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Tax exemption for surviving military spouse

[Senate Bill 1109](#) (Sen. Baker, R-Luzerne) is a Joint Resolution proposing an amendment to the Pennsylvania Constitution providing for property tax exemption for the surviving spouse of soldiers killed in action. Constitutional amendments require approval in two consecutive legislative sessions and then approval by the voters through a referendum. The bill is now in the House Finance Committee for further consideration.

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Approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee

2015-16 EITC (Educational Improvement Tax Credits)

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Extension on professional education requirements

[House Bill 1734](#) (Rep. Wentling, R-Mercer) provides a one-year extension to public school entities to submit a three-year professional education plan to the state Department of Education and allows the current plan to remain in effect during the extension. The bill also provides a one-year extension for of the professional education compliance period for teachers and administrators.

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Approved by the Senate Education Committee

SchoolWATCH (Public School Web Accountability and Transparency Act)

[House Bill 1606](#) (Rep. Christiana, R-Beaver) requires the Department of Education to post annual financial information related to public school entities on its Internet website. Requires the following information to be posted related to each school entity: total expenditures by category; per student expenditures; charter school tuition rates; average daily membership; average teacher salary; total revenue by source; general fund balance; a link to the school's website; a summary of financial report data; a non-administrative and administrative staff compensation report; and, a statement instructing the public to contact the public school entity for access to any union contract. The information must be posted on the entity's School Performance Profile.

No public school entity will be required to provide any additional information not specifically required as of the effective date of the legislation, and no public school

entity shall be required to provide additional information beyond the information required to be provided by any other public school entity.

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In God We Trust

[House Bill 1640](#) (Rep. Dush, R-Jefferson) allows school entities to display the motto "In God We Trust" in each building. It may take the form of a plaque or may include artwork from a student contest.

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College students as substitute teachers

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Approved by the Senate Communications and Technology Committee

Breach of personal information

[Senate Bill 1048](#) (Sen. Vulakovich, R- Allegheny) amends Act 95 of 2005 to tighten time limits for notification of personal information security breaches by state agencies, counties, school districts and municipalities and enumerates investigatory protocols. If a county, school district or municipality is the subject of a breach of security of the system, they must provide notice of the breach to affected parties within seven days following discovery of the breach. Notification must be provided to the district attorney in the county in which the breach occurred within three business days following discovery of the breach. The state Office of Administration must develop a policy to govern the proper storage by state agencies of data which includes personally identifiable information.

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Passed by the House of Representatives

School security drills

School security drills - [House Bill 2087](#) (Rep. Day, R-Lehigh) requires all school entities to conduct an annual school security drill in place of a monthly fire drill in each school building within 90 days of the start of each school year. Chief school administrators must provide advance notice to parents of students attending the building for which the drill is scheduled.

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School psychologists

[Senate Bill 772](#) (Sen. Gordner, R-Columbia) amends the Professional Psychologists Practice Act to update licensure and practice provisions. Of interest

to school districts is language that eliminates the general licensure exemption that allows school psychologists to have private practices without being licensed, but adds new language allowing school psychologists to have private practices provided they completed all requirements for state certification as an Educational Specialist I or II in school psychology on or before June 30, 2018. The bill has been returned to the Senate for a concurrence vote.

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Approved by the House Education and Rules Committees

E-chievement hybrid learning grants

[House Bill 1578](#) (Rep. Fee, R-Lancaster) as amended in committee establishes a program within the Department of Education (PDE) to award planning grants of up to \$50,000 and implementation grants of up to \$250,000 to school districts, intermediate units, area vocational-technical schools and charter schools to provide hybrid learning programs that blend digital resources with classroom teaching. School entities that want to work together may submit a joint application. Schools that are awarded grants must provide a cash or in-kind local match of money of at least 25% of the total project cost and agree to share lessons with other grantees. House Bill 1578 also would make the program subject to collective bargaining under the Public Employees Relations Act (PERA) or any provision of a collective bargaining contract.

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Teacher training for secondary transition services

[House Bill 1834](#) (Rep. Rapp, R-Warren) requires professional educators providing secondary transition services to special education students who are in grades 8-12 or are at least 14 years old to complete training within two months of assuming their duties.

They will also be required to complete this training again every five years. Secondary transition is the process of preparing special education students for life after they leave high school, including participation in post-secondary education or training, employment, and community living. The bill was amended to make the requirements applicable beginning with the 2017-18 school year.

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PDE online course clearinghouse

[House Bill 1915](#) (Rep. Ortity, R-Allegheny) requires the PA Department of Education (PDE) to establish a central repository of online courses accessible to public and nonpublic schools, home education programs and the general public. The bill establishes a two-phase implementation schedule for the clearinghouse, which will first offer free courses related to content tested by the Keystone Exams beginning in the 2017-18 school year. In the second phase, beginning in the 2018-19 school year, the clearinghouse will also offer approved online courses from providers, subject to purchase through contract. School entities that offer the courses must establish policies and procedures governing eligibility and participation and make parents and students aware of the opportunity.

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Approved by the House Judiciary Committee

Interagency information sharing in child welfare cases

[Senate Bill 917](#) (Sen. Browne, R-Lehigh) allows for collaborative arrangements to be developed for information sharing between law enforcement agencies, juvenile probation authorities, school districts, and county agencies supervising children and youth, drug and alcohol dependency, and mental health/mental retardation services in child welfare and delinquency cases.

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Pennsylvania School Boards Association

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