



April 16, 2015

PSBA Legislative Report

[More Info](#)

The General Assembly was in session this week and will return to Harrisburg on Monday, April 20.

Top Stories

- * **House committee discusses Republican tax reform plan; will vote next week**
- * **Rep. Glen Grell selected for PSERS executive director post**
- * **Martina White becomes newest House member**
- * **Committee releases recommendations for alternative charter school authorizers**

Latest News

- * **House action**
- * **Senate action**
- * **On the Hill: Upcoming meetings**

Top Stories

House committee discusses Republican tax reform plan; will vote next week

This week the House Finance Committee met with Rep. Stan Saylor (R-York) to discuss [House Bill 860](#), the tax reform plan offered by a group of about 30 House Republicans and introduced as The House Finance Committee is expected to vote on the bill next Tuesday, April 21.

The Republican plan shifts the state's personal income tax rate from 3.07% to 3.70%, and the sales tax from 6% to 7%. The plan would use the income and sales tax to allow dollar-for-dollar reductions in property tax, but money would not be designated for additional state spending. Funds collected through these new rates would be distributed to school districts in two ways: new PIT revenue would be used to reduce local millage rates, while new revenue generated from the SUT would be directed specifically to homesteads and farmsteads.

The plan differs from the plan sought by the governor, which would use funds from taxes to provide additional support for public schools. Rep. Saylor said at the hearing that he expects education funding issues to be addressed when the Basic Education Funding Commission makes its recommendations in the coming weeks. At this point, the plan does not completely eliminate property taxes, but amendments will likely be offered that could adjust the proposal in various ways. Gov. Wolf's tax reform plan has not yet

been formally introduced, although this [draft](#) was made available earlier this year.

Rep. Glen Grell selected for PSERS executive director post

Rep. Glen Grell (R-Cumberland) will leave the House of Representatives to become the next executive director of the Public School Employees' Retirement System (PSERS). The PSERS Board of Trustees offered the position to Grell effective May 1, 2015. He will replace Jeff Clay, who retired from the position earlier this month.

“I am grateful to the Board for selecting me among many capable candidates to lead PSERS at this challenging time,” Grell said in a PSERS news release. “While I will miss representing the residents of the 87th Legislative District in the General Assembly, I believe my experience in public pension policy issues will be of great value as I work with the Board of Trustees and the men and women who make up PSERS.”

Rep. Grell was first elected a member of the House of Representatives in 2004. He has served as a member of the Judiciary, Insurance, Consumer Affairs, State Government, Health, Gaming Oversight and Appropriations Committees. He also served on PSERS Board of Trustees from 2009 to January 2015.

PSBA congratulates Rep. Grell on his new position and looks forward to working with him on pension-related issues.

Martina White becomes newest House member

This week Martina White (R-Philadelphia) was sworn into office as a member of the House of Representatives after winning a special election on Mar. 24 to fill a vacancy in the 170th House District in Northeast Philadelphia. The vacancy was created when Rep. Brendan Boyle was elected to the U.S. Congress in the 13th District.

Committee releases recommendations for alternative charter school authorizers

This week the Joint Legislative Budget and Finance Committee met to discuss the report it released this week on the feasibility of alternative methods of authorizing charter schools. The report was completed pursuant to Senate Resolution 414 of 2014.

The report focused on alternative authorizers for brick and mortar charter schools, not cyber charter schools, which are authorized by the PA Department of Education. Much of the information contained in the report was obtained from the National Association of Charter School Authorizers (NACSA) and various charter organizations. The committee also contacted the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania and the Chancellor's Office of the State System of Higher Education, and conducted a survey with all Pennsylvania charter schools. During the meeting, a question was asked if any conversations were held with public school boards in developing the report. LBFC staff responded that public school boards were not part of the study. A committee member said he would like to see additional input from public school boards, information on the appeals process, and the fiscal impact on taxpayers.

The committee made three recommendations:

- * Consider allowing institutions of higher education to authorize charter schools, at least on a pilot basis.
- * Consider establishing an Independent Charter Board.
- * Require alternative authorizers to apply nationally recognized standards in authorizing a charter school.

Click here to read the [full report](#).

Latest News

House action

The House of Representatives passed:

School Director Nominating Petitions – [House Bill 342](#) (Rep. Gabler, R-Clearfield) amends the Election Code to reduce the number of nominating petition signatures to 10 for all school board candidates. *PSBA supports this bill that corrects the inconsistency that exists as candidates are currently required to obtain differing numbers of petition signatures that sometimes even vary within the same school district.*

Epi-Pens on School Buses -- [House Bill 423](#) (Rep. Simmons, R-Lehigh) provides civil immunity to school bus drivers who administer epinephrine auto-injectors (epi-pens) to students, provided that the school bus driver complies with employer and school district policy and completes necessary training.

Work Experience for High School Students with Disabilities – [House Bill 400](#) (Rep. Gingrich, R-Lebanon) requires the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in the Department of Labor and Industry to facilitate the process of job and career development between school districts and employers to ensure the successful transition of high school students with disabilities into competitive integrated employment. The bill requires the provisions of this act to take effect upon an initial appropriation that sufficiently covers the costs of the program. When that appropriation is enacted, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will publish notice in the Pennsylvania Bulletin. According to the Department of Labor and Industry, this legislation would cost approximately \$8.5 million annually.

Meeting cancelled:

Bullying Policies and Programs -- The House Education Committee cancelled its meeting previously scheduled for this week to consider [House Bill 156](#) (Rep. Truitt, R-Chester), which requires school districts to develop a comprehensive policy to define bullying, establish procedures for responding to and reporting it, and train school district employees; and [House Bill 848](#) (Rep. Boback, R-Luzerne), which requires school districts to include in their professional education plan include a program for annual training in bullying awareness, prevention and intervention and require professional educators to complete such annual training. *PSBA had raised concerns with the new mandates and specific procedures created by these proposals.*

Senate action

The Senate passed:

Prohibition of Mandated Leave – [Senate Bill 333](#) (Sen. Eichelberger, R-Blair) would prohibit municipalities (defined as a county, city, borough, township, home rule charter, school district or similar local governmental unit) for mandating an employer to provide vacation or other forms of leave, paid or unpaid, that is not required by federal or state law. Senate Bill 333 does not invalidate mandates enacted prior to the Jan.1, 2015, and exempts mandates enacted by the municipality itself. *PSBA supports Senate Bill 333.*

On the Hill: Upcoming Meetings

Upcoming events currently scheduled include:

Tuesday, April 21

* The **House Finance Committee** will consider the tax reform plan offered by a group of House Republicans under [House Bill 860](#) (Rep. Saylor, R-York).

Wednesday, April 22

* The **House Education Committee** will consider [House Bill 833](#) (Rep. Rapp, R-Warren), which requires

school districts to allow students to apply credits earned through courses in computer science or information technology to satisfy credit requirements in either mathematics or science.

Monday, April 27

* The **Basic Education Funding Commission** will conduct a hearing on funding issues at the University of Pittsburgh.

Tuesday, April 28

* The **House Education Select Subcommittee on Technical Education and Career Readiness** will conduct its first hearing that will focus on recommendations for improving career training programs. *PSBA will be presenting testimony at the meeting.*

* The **House Democratic Policy Committee** will conduct a hearing on education and property tax reduction at the Greater Johnstown High School.